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**A FOREST OF MASTS:
THE IMAGE OF THE RIVER THAMES IN THE LONG EIGHTEENTH CENTURY**

GEOFFREY WILLIAM SNELL

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY – ART HISTORY

UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX

2014

STATEMENT

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been and will not be, submitted in whole or part to another University for the award of any other degree.

Signature.....

UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX

GEOFFREY WILLIAM SNELL
PHD IN ART HISTORY

A FOREST OF MASTS: THE IMAGE OF THE RIVER THAMES IN THE LONG EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

SUMMARY

The visual image of the River Thames was central to the identity of London in the long eighteenth century. Art historical engagement with the subject has been dominated by refined upriver views, especially depictions of sites of royal residence and scenes of pageantry. This focus eclipses a significant untapped body of contemporary Thames imagery which suggests the existence of a more complex relationship between the visualisation of London's river and the larger social, ideological and economic contexts of Britain's rapidly developing global maritime and imperial power. This thesis proposes that only by reconnecting these works with the more familiar visual culture of eighteenth-century maritime London, can the full extent to which the river was identified as a signifier of national and imperial consciousness be fully understood. This identification is most apparent in depictions of the commercial and naval activity in the mercantile environs of the port to the east of London Bridge which effectively constitute a visual *concordia discors* with aggrandised upriver subjects. Thames imagery is also prevalent in the genre of satire where the countercultural nature of the port, characterised via its stereotypical portrayal of a bawdy labour force, undermines the polite pretensions of high art. In topographical views of the capital the dramatic physical rationalisation of the Thames in terms of new bridges and docks was harnessed to raise the profile of London and its river to that of an efficient cosmopolitan port suited for commercial empire. Above all, the image of the Thames evolved into a powerful and widely understood symbol reflecting a patriotic national identity constructed around maritime trade and naval power. This thesis argues for an alternative, more complex image of the Thames in the long eighteenth century which is informed by a range of ideological issues centred around the meaning of commerce and empire from a period when the river became the emblem of London's increasing self-identification as the centre of a maritime nation of unprecedented scale.

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ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations are used throughout the footnotes:

| | |
|------|---|
| AM | Ashmolean Museum, Oxford |
| BM | British Museum, London |
| CLC | City of London Corporation, London |
| CDN | Collection of the Duke of Northumberland |
| EH | English Heritage |
| FM | Foundling Museum, London |
| GAC | Government Art Collection, London |
| JSM | Sir John Soane's Museum, London |
| LMA | London Metropolitan Archives, London |
| LWL | Lewis Walpole Library, Farmington, CT |
| MMA | Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY |
| MoL | Museum of London, London |
| MTB | Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid |
| NGI | National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin |
| NMM | National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London |
| NG | National Gallery, London |
| NT | National Trust |
| PMA | Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, PA |
| RIBA | Royal Institute of British Architects, London |
| TB | Tate Britain, London |
| WAG | Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester |
| V&A | Victoria and Albert Museum, London |
| YCBA | Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, CT |

INTRODUCTION

Reflecting the Nation: 'Expressing both the wealth and the bravery of the Land'¹

...you see three stupendous bridges, joining the opposite banks of a broad, deep, and rapid river; so vast, so stately, so elegant, that they seem to be the work of the giants: betwixt them, the whole surface of the Thames is covered with small vessels, barges, boats, and wherries, passing to and fro; and below the three bridges, such a prodigious forest of masts, for miles together, that you would think all the ships in the universe were here assembled.²

The visual image of the River Thames was central to the identity of London in the long eighteenth century. For contemporary Londoners and visitors to the capital the sight of the Thames and the physical evidence of the mercantile and naval activity it supported provided a constant reminder of the colossal maritime commerce underpinning the wealth and military power of the nation.³ A correlation between the physical sight of the Thames and a sense of national identity constructed around commerce can be traced back to the time of the Restoration of the English monarchy in 1660 when the role of the Port of London was deemed crucial to Britain's imperial development. Under Charles II, commercial wealth and naval power were declared mutually sustaining; the customs and excise levies from maritime trade contributed significantly towards the cost of the navy which in turn ensured access to existing and new foreign markets while further advancing Britain's imperial ambitions.⁴ This symbiotic relationship between the maritime trade that supported the navy and the navy that protected maritime trade was described in 1707 as embodying 'the wealth, strength, security and glory of Britain'.⁵ It is a sentiment which corresponds directly with the development of the river Thames as a subject for visual culture which rapidly gained momentum in tandem with the unprecedented expansion of trade and naval activity in and around the port as the eighteenth century progressed. However, the visual representation of the immense and diverse maritime commerce and naval activity facilitated by the Thames was inherently problematic. As Vicky Greenaway has written, it was 'a hidden zone within the capital, a geographical lacuna within the city's territory defined by its resistance to 'viewing' or visual access'.⁶ Depictions of this predominantly mercantile and military environment were unlikely to appeal to genteel tastes, however agreeably the spoils of maritime industry and naval supremacy chimed with the principles of the British elite and aristocracy.⁷ The dichotomy between the rising symbolic status of the Thames and the less appealing manifestations of commerce were resolved in

¹ Drayton, M. (1622), p. 259. See App. 1.

² Smollett, T. (1771), p. 94.

³ See Colley, L. (2009), p. 64.

⁴ See Brewer, J. (1989), p. 168; Baugh, D. (1994), pp. 185-87.

⁵ From a speech by Lord Haversham to the House of Lords quoted in Colley, L. (2009), p. 65.

⁶ Greenaway, V. (2012), p. 177.

⁷ See Brewer, J. (1997).

contemporary literature by condensing the mercantile and naval Thames into a single motif that could be articulated metaphorically as ‘a forest of masts’. But in visual culture the rationalisation of London’s most vital asset and the maritime trade it supported was less straightforwardly reconcilable with the demands of urbane refinement. Nonetheless the representation of London and the river in oil paintings, prints and publicly displayed sculpture evolved to represent a contemporary sense of the nation with the Thames as the symbolic embodiment of national values. The sheer quantity and variety of extant material alone is confirmation that the Georgian era saw a more extensive and significant shift in the representation of the Thames than any other period in art history.

The changes to the image of the Thames during the course of the long eighteenth century are complex and occur across a wide range of genres and media. This introduction gives context to the following chapters by providing a broad overview of the development of the early image of London and its river, with a specific focus on the representation of the commercial Thames. This is followed by a summary of the research undertaken and the methodology adopted to evaluate the image of the Thames in the visual culture of the long eighteenth century. Finally, a literature review locates the subject within existing scholarship before introducing the central themes and arguments that shape each chapter.

The early image of the Thames

The Thames was a defining feature of London in visual culture since the earliest prospects, bird’s-eye cartographic views and maps of the city were produced in the sixteenth century. Anthonis van den Wyngaerde (1525-1571) drew his panoramic view of the capital from a vantage point in Southwark in 1554. Wyngaerde’s work, when viewed in its entirety, shows the expanse of the city from Westminster to St Katharine’s Hospital in the east with the river frontage of London shown in detail from the Strand to the Tower. The concentration of riverside development is counterbalanced by the inclusion of the downriver Thames, complete with shipping, stretching to Greenwich and beyond [Fig. 1].⁸ In 1572 Georg Braun and Franz Hogenberg (1541-1622; 1535-1590) published their map of mid-Tudor London in the first volume of the *Civitates Orbis Terrarum* [Fig. 2], the earliest systematic atlas of town plans and bird’s-eye views. London was already heavily built-up and the largest city in Europe, although it barely occupied one square mile and was bounded by green fields and the Thames. Certainly its position as the first plate in the *Civitates* is in recognition of its primary importance as a maritime trading centre amongst the European cities of the sixteenth century. Delineated by the wide expanse of the Thames between Westminster and the Tower, the commercial aspect of the river is highlighted by the inclusion of merchant ships below London Bridge. Similarly, in Claes Jansz. Visscher’s (1587-1652) engraved prospect of London of 1616, the long view is dominated by the Thames.⁹ Here the rapid expansion in seventeenth-century maritime trade is manifested in the new buildings that have grown up along the river [Fig. 3]. The commercial importance of river trade also pervades Wenceslaus Hollar’s (1607-1677) etching, *London*, published in 1647 [Fig. 4]. Hollar surveys the mid-seventeenth-century city from the tower of Southwark Cathedral in a view which encompasses the commercial reaches

⁸ See Colvin, H. and Foister, S. (1996).

⁹ See Barker, F. and Jackson, P. (1974), pp. 94-6.

of the Thames as it meanders away from the city, past the maritime neighbourhoods of Wapping and Limehouse and out towards the Isle of Dogs, its surface studded with merchant shipping [Fig. 5].¹⁰ Visscher and Hollar's prospects of London mapped its geography and institutions and took an unsentimental economic and socio-political view of the river. Their works represented the authority and power of London as the administrative and trading centre of a growing maritime power. Above all, these prospects assert that London's existence as a great trading city depended on the Thames. Visscher emphasised the importance of commerce in his prospect of London [Fig. 3] with the inscription 'Emporium Toto Orbe Celeberrimum' (The Most Famous Market in the Entire World), whilst above Hollar's Thames hovers Mercury, the winged god of commerce.

By 1700, the Cities of London and Westminster and the Borough of Southwark were generally referred to as 'London'.¹¹ In its broadest sense, 'London' encompassed the great arc of continuous building along the banks of the Thames. This stretched from Lambeth in the west to the seafarers' towns of Wapping and Limehouse below old London Bridge and out to Deptford, Greenwich and Woolwich to the east. In the various prospects of London produced as the city expanded, the central, amalgamating feature is the Thames, its wide, central presence functioning as an anchor to the increasingly complex and random topography of London's streets, buildings and wharves. The representation of merchant shipping and other vessels that fill the river space as they travel to and from the city serves to emphasise the transitive nature of maritime London whilst effectively drawing the viewer into the centre of the commercial port city as if an entrant and a participant within the scene.¹²

Although the river dominates these early images of London, and despite the superlative descriptions of the river which are commonplace in contemporary literature, the London Thames was rarely represented for itself in painted views at this date.¹³ On the whole the river had a modest role in oil paintings up until the late seventeenth century, often confined to the foreground in depictions of royal palaces, particularly those at Hampton Court and Richmond [Fig. 6], or appearing as an unremarkable conduit beneath the monolithic old London Bridge [Fig. 75].¹⁴ Alternatively it was depicted as the frozen stage that supported the extraordinary contemporary phenomenon known as frost fairs [Figs 7 and 64].¹⁵ During the long eighteenth century commercial activity increased to such an extent that London became the busiest port city in the world. Whilst the capital effectively changed from a metropolitan to an imperial city, aspects considered synonymous with a British national identity were increasingly articulated as essentially maritime and commercial [see for example Fig. 20].¹⁶ As such, the image of the Thames was adopted and adapted by the visual arts as a symbol that could embrace and promote contemporary ideologies. By the 1740s, aggrandised depictions

¹⁰ Thames shipping below London Bridge is also feature of oil paintings produced by the Flemish artist Cornelis Bol (c. 1589-after 1666) who came to London in 1630 and produced a series of Thames views for John Evelyn; see *View of the Thames from Southwark, looking towards the Tower of London and London Bridge* (n.d.), Christie's, London: Sale 7054, 16 June 2005.

¹¹ See White, J. (2012), pp. 1-2.

¹² Gregg, R. (2008), p. 55.

¹³ The symbolic role of the Thames in seventeenth-century literature is discussed in Ch. 4.

¹⁴ See also *View of Hampton Court Palace* (c. 1710) by Jan Griffier I, TB: T00408.

¹⁵ See also *A Frost Fair on the Thames at Temple Stairs* (c. 1684) by Abraham Hondius, Museum of London: AN 49.80.

¹⁶ Quilley, G. (2002), p. 183.

of London's river were increasingly emblematic of commercial dominance, the perceived supremacy of the navy and the imperial aspirations of the nation.

Surveying the Thames

As part of an AHRC collaborative doctoral studentship, the research that informs this thesis was undertaken in association with the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich.¹⁷ The Museum's archives contain a wide-ranging collection of eighteenth-century images of the Thames and associated subjects constituting a principal source of primary material. The survey was then extended further to encompass other London collections: the Museum of London, Museum of London Docklands, the British Museum, the British Library and the Victoria and Albert Museum. In addition, collections in America at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, the Lewis Walpole Library, Farmington and the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, New Haven were consulted, and extensive research was undertaken at the Yale Center for British Art.

The exploration of contemporary representations of eighteenth-century London revealed a significant evolution in the image of the Thames that, with a few exceptions, had eluded scholarly enquiry. It became evident that this development in the depiction of the Thames in visual art, especially in the form of works on paper, is specific to the eighteenth century. However, the most significant changes correspond more satisfactorily with the contours of the 'long eighteenth century', a timeframe that happens to be bookended by two occasions associated with the Thames that are specifically documented in visual culture: the Great Frost Fair of 1683/84, and the demolition of old London Bridge in 1831.¹⁸ It was also apparent from the research that the imagery and iconography of the Thames in visual art functioned on multiple levels through a range of representations of maritime London extending from high art landscape to relatively inexpensive satirical prints. Such works were produced throughout the long eighteenth century, but a marked increase in Thames imagery occurs from the 1750s onwards when it becomes a more prominent and wide-ranging component of visual culture. This chimes with the effects of the Seven Years' War when, as Douglas Fordham has identified, a new generation of artists sought to represent the British state in a series of guises and genres. The image of the Thames gave form to shifting notions of national and political allegiance in the British Empire.¹⁹ By the second half of the eighteenth century the river forms the focus of works that promote the Thames by accentuating its centrality to a commercial ideology.

The survey of Thames imagery is considered in tandem with the social history of eighteenth-century maritime London.²⁰ Representative examples of the works, and the genres within which they are clustered, are evaluated within the broader disciplines of British art history and social commentary.²¹ Furthermore, contemporary notions of national identity and

¹⁷ Arts & Humanities Research Council.

¹⁸ For definitions of the long eighteenth century see O'Gorman, F. (1997); Baines, P. (2004).

¹⁹ Fordham, D. (2010).

²⁰ This methodology is adapted from a social history of art as employed by Berger, J. (1972) and Barrell, J. (1980).

²¹ See Brewer, J. (1997); Langford, P. (1989); Rosenthal, M. (1993; 1997).

commerce, which fed directly into the eighteenth-century image of the Thames, are evaluated alongside modern scholarship and art historical debate. British identity was associated particularly with the Thames because it was at the hub of the City of London, the centre of government, trade, and empire.²² The term 'national identity' here requires some qualification in terms of the debate around the origins and character of nations established by Ernest Gellner and Anthony Smith, amongst others. Smith emphasises that nations rely on actual and imagined historical roots, whereas 'modernist' theorists of nationalism like Gellner argue that the development of a nation-state is connected with processes of modernisation. Although the emergence of the nation might depend on the conditions of a modernised state, in nationalistic discourse this process tends to be overlaid by a notion of past golden ages; forging a modern aspect while looking back to an accepted historical identity.²³ This notion of national identity is fulfilled highly effectively through Thames imagery, especially when considered in terms of the classical associations with Rome and Venice in refined upriver views, the modernisation of the river (bridges and docks), and the direct relationship it has with commerce, itself inextricably linked to the perceived supremacy of the navy. The contemporary ideologies surrounding commerce are not limited to trade alone. Commerce also suggested the processes of production and exchange that had increased wealth and improved living standards. Britain was considered to be at the forefront of this progress with its vast overseas empire, frequently represented in visual culture by the Thames. Commerce was also an expression of modernity, but it also encompassed problems connected with the struggle for raw materials, tropical commodities, markets and the security of the merchant ships that served them. The moral and social consequences of commerce provoked debates surrounding the generation and control of luxury and the changes it brought to rural and urban life. Finally commerce was central to the formation of politeness which distinguished the growing ranks of a commercial middle class, a demographic that played an influential role in how the Thames was visualised in the long eighteenth century.²⁴

Scholarly engagement with the image of the Thames in the long eighteenth century is dominated by an interest in the mid-century oil paintings of refined river views, itself a subject overshadowed by the *vedute* of Canaletto or the work of marine artists whose *œuvres* include pictures of the Thames.²⁵ For the most part, the vast and rich subject of the Thames in the visual culture of the long eighteenth century has received only limited art historical attention since the exhibition of *London and the Thames: Paintings of Three Centuries*, and the accompanying catalogue compiled by Harley Preston, in 1977. The exhibition, organised by the National Maritime Museum at Somerset House, was dedicated to the commemoration of Queen Elizabeth II's Silver Jubilee and united depictions of the upriver locations with views from Greenwich. Comprising oil paintings from major collections, the exhibition presented a conservative array of works dating from 1650 to 1970 with a catalogue focussed on the biographical and historical, as opposed to the image of the Thames *per se*. It remains the only significant consideration of London's river in art for nearly forty years.

²² Cusack, T. (2010), p. 61.

²³ Cusack, T. (2010), p. 9; see also Anderson, B. (1991), Brewer, J. (1989 and 1997), Cubitt, G. (1998), Gellner, E. (1983), Hobsbawm, E. (1990), Smith, A. (1991) and Wilson, K. (1995 and 2003).

²⁴ See Langford, P. (1989), pp. 2-5.

²⁵ For example see Farrington, J. and Liversidge, M. (1993); Beddington, C. (2006).

The image of the Thames and scholarship

The first publication devoted to the topographical depictions and social history of eighteenth-century London and specifically the Thames is Hugh Phillips' *The Thames About 1750* (1951). Phillips validates his historical survey by confirming that by the middle of the eighteenth century 'London, thinly illustrated in the past, had suddenly become a 'best selling subject' for artists and writers'.²⁶ Taking Samuel and Nathaniel Bucks' 1749 panorama as 'the main topographical feature', Phillips provides a reference tool by combining contemporary depictions of locations along the river from Woolwich to Hampton Court with key aspects of its social and economic history.²⁷ Sheila O'Connell's exhibition catalogue for the British Museum's 2003 exhibition *1753* includes a section titled 'The River' which adds useful context in terms of Thames imagery in prints and other paraphernalia dating from the middle of the century. Similarly, Malcolm Warner's exhibition catalogue for the Barbican's *The Image of London: Views by Travellers and Emigrés 1550-1920* (1987) contains a chapter titled 'The New Rome' which presents the Thames as the focus of artists whose views 'presented London as a city of order and enlightenment fit for new Romans'.²⁸ Celina Fox's two publications, *London World City: 1800-1840* (1992) and *The Arts of Industry in the Age of the Enlightenment* (2009) collect together a rich account of material representing industrial and technological developments in London which includes various references to Thames-related material. This is broadly clustered towards the end of the long eighteenth century and is concerned more with the cultural and socio-economic climate in which works were produced, as opposed to the bearing they have on the visual image of the Thames in the long eighteenth century.

Texts that engage specifically with eighteenth-century Thames imagery and its art historical context are limited to essays in catalogues of related exhibitions, most recently Susan Doran's (ed.) *Royal River: Power, Pageantry and the Thames* (2012) for the National Maritime Museum. Like its predecessor *London and the Thames*, thirty-five years earlier, this exhibition was also designed to coincide with a royal celebration, Queen Elizabeth II's Diamond Jubilee – an event marked by a twenty-first century re-enactment of an eighteenth-century Thames pageant.²⁹ The exhibition catalogue contains Sarah Monks' essay 'Between Country, Court and City: Art, the Thames and the Tides of Royal Power' and John Bold's 'The Later History of Greenwich: A River Landscape and Architectural Statement'. Monks explores the royal connotations of eighteenth-century Thames imagery, while Bold reviews the significance of the popular Thames prospects from the vantage point of One Tree Hill. These texts emphasise the aristocratic nature of the Thames and its role in royal celebrations and pageantry, a focus that precludes engagement with a more inclusive repertoire of Thames visual imagery produced the eighteenth century. Charles Beddington's *Canaletto in England* (2006) and Michael Liversidge and Jane Farrington's (eds) *Canaletto & England* (1993) each contain material relating specifically to the market for eighteenth-century topographical paintings of London, particularly Mark Hallett's essay 'Framing the Modern City: Canaletto's Images of London' published in the latter. Here Hallett assesses the appeal of Canaletto's

²⁶ Phillips, H. (1951), p. 5.

²⁷ In 1749 Samuel and Nathaniel Buck produced a panorama of Georgian London from four points on the Surrey shore of the Thames between Westminster and the Tower; see O'Connell, S. (2003), cat. 2.31.

²⁸ Warner, M. (1987), p. 125.

²⁹ 3 June 2012.

views, especially his depictions of Westminster Bridge, in which 'the city is depicted as a rhythmic assemblage of architectural landmarks and the more muted façades of dockland commerce, a topographical strip juxtaposed with a river-space that supports harmonious narratives of polite passage and marine trade'.³⁰ Geoff Quilley has written extensively on the subject of British maritime art, focusing specifically on the image of the sea, the image of the sailor, the impact of the East India Company and the visualisation of 'a nation whose historical identity is so closely aligned [...] with shipping and the sea'.³¹ Quilley's work includes a discussion of Thames imagery in *The Imagery of Travel in British Painting: with particular reference to Nautical and Maritime Imagery, circa 1740-1800* (1998a, unpublished PhD thesis) and 'All ocean is her own': the image of the sea and the identity of the maritime nation in eighteenth-century British art' (1998b). Here Quilley identifies the development of the image of the Thames from its early mythical identity to 'a paradigm of modernity' by the middle of the eighteenth century and focuses on its relationship with the discursive structure of commercial theory.

More generalised approaches to river imagery and its art historical significance are explored in Andrew Hemingway's book titled *Landscape Imagery and Urban Culture in Early Nineteenth-Century Britain* (1992) which includes a chapter on 'The Contradictions of Progress: Imagery of Rivers'. Here, Hemingway suggests that 'rivers stood as symbols of the nation's power, wealth and political health' and that 'the economic and social functions of waterways and the sheer volume of discourses about them, overlapping and interlocking with one another, made rivers a crucial pictorial theme'.³² Hemingway puts forward an argument for the broad, symbolic nature of rivers while Tricia Cusack considers the general function of rivers in art in *Riverscapes and National Identities* (2010). Cusack argues that 'the riverscape played an important role in transforming an abstract idea of the nation into a potent visual image' because 'it not only offered a picture of the nation's physical character, but through aspects such as style, the figures portrayed, and the nature of the implied spectator, it presented a cultural ideal'.³³ However, Cusack maintains that 'the river [Thames] acquired a 'truly national' identity only in the nineteenth century' when 'representations of Father Thames were adapted to an imperial iconography' and 'the Thames was depicted as a site for royal and corporate display'. Whilst conceding that 'there was much interest in the visual properties and potential of the Thames' in the eighteenth century, Cusack attributes much of the patriotic attention paid to the river with the growth in nationalism following the Napoleonic Wars when 'the river's sinuous sweep through the heart of London became embedded in the idea of the capital, and increasingly also became a national symbol signalling both the nation's history and its rapidly changing present'.³⁴ Cusack focuses on depictions London's river in the nineteenth-century, but the iconography employed here is firmly rooted in the visual culture of the eighteenth century. It is this development and proliferation of the image of the Thames over the course of the long eighteenth century that has remained undetected or discounted by scholarly discourse.

³⁰ Farrington, J. and Liversidge, M. (1993), p. 48.

³¹ Quilley, G. (2000, 2002, 2011a, 2011b).

³² Hemingway, A. (1992), pp. 216 and 291.

³³ Cusack, T. (2010), p. 1.

³⁴ Cusack, T. (2010), pp. 57, 59 and 64.

Dissecting maritime London

This final section offers an introduction to the four chapters which comprise this thesis by outlining the principal arguments that inform them. The central theme of each chapter is set out with reference to *Poly-Olbion*, a topographical poem consisting of thirty songs written by Michael Drayton (1563-1631) to describe England and Wales at the turn of the seventeenth century. In this work which predates the long eighteenth century the river Thames is dramatically portrayed as a 'mighty Flood' as it flows from royal Windsor to the bustling commercial wharves beyond old London Bridge.³⁵ In Alexandrine couplets Drayton extols the 'faire and goodly' qualities of the river as it emerges from the rural environs west of London, passes by 'Kingly houses' such as the royal palaces of Windsor, Oatlands, Hampton Court, Richmond and Westminster, before it reaches the urban city where it is enveloped in the thick cluster of 'rising Spyres'. At London Bridge, the downriver Thames view is described with its 'crowded Wharves', 'people-pestred shores' and 'shoales of labouring ores'. In *Poly-Olbion* Drayton identifies several specific Thames locations which are relevant to the later development of the image of the Thames. Each site is succinctly defined within the lines of the poem by the characteristic natural and manmade qualities with which it was associated. Such contemporary associations with locations are clearly important to the assessment of topographic and site-specific imagery from any period, but the precise interplay between place and imagery here is especially relevant to depictions of the eighteenth century Thames. In visual art the reputation, notoriety and historical connections with the key sites along the river are of paramount importance to its visualisation by artists. In eighteenth-century culture, the river came to be defined according to a series of key sites of differing cultural value, and distinct geographical areas, each qualified by its ranking within a social framework that informed concepts of refinement and polite taste.

From the source of the Thames in Gloucestershire, through the Cotswolds and Chilterns to Windsor and then on towards Westminster, the banks of the river to the west of London were generally portrayed as rural or 'pastoral' environments or aristocratic strongholds. Certainly the stretch of river from Windsor to London was lined with royal palaces as well as the homes of the landed patrician élite in locations such as Twickenham.³⁶ The next 'section' comprises the urban river as it swept un-embanked through eighteenth-century London. Here, the sluggish waters that bordered the southern side of the Strand were demarcated by the two medieval bookends of Westminster Abbey to the west and the monolithic old London Bridge to the east. The final 'section' comprises what has recently been labelled 'the working river'.³⁷ This is the commercial Thames that encompassed the mercantile port, extending from the 'crowded wharves' to the immediate east of London Bridge as referenced by Drayton, and downriver past Wapping and Limehouse, to the dockyards at Deptford, Blackwall and Woolwich, and finally the estuary and the Nore where the Thames meets the sea.

The 'crowded wharfs', to which Drayton refers in *Poly-Olbion*, offer an alternative vision of the Thames when considered in the context of eighteenth-century London. As trade was increasingly recognised as the mainspring of the British economy so the Thames was seen

³⁵ See App. 1.

³⁶ See Solkin, D. (1983), p. 214.

³⁷ Ackroyd, P. (2007), p. 121; Doran, S. (2012), p. 168.

as the *sine qua non* of English prosperity. The Thames between old London Bridge and Deptford was a site of enormous commercial and naval activity with the number of ships entering the port doubling and their combined tonnage quadrupling between 1700 and 1795.³⁸ At the turn of the eighteenth century the London quays were handling as much as eighty per cent of the entire country's imports and close to seventy per cent of its exports, a scale that could scarcely be accommodated.³⁹ However, the visual accounts of the immense level of trade which underpinned London and the nation during a period that is also synonymous with naval conflict and imperial expansion have received little in the way of art historical attention. A close reading of these works form the central theme of Chapter One: *Refining the Downriver View*. Sarah Monks' essay: 'The Visual Economies of the Downriver Thames in Eighteenth-Century British Art' (2006), takes a similar approach to this subject using works by Samuel Scott, John Cleveley the Elder and John Hood as case studies and asking 'what visual economies were evoked in the depiction of the industrialised and commercialised riverscape and, ultimately, how flexible was British art to its representation?'.⁴⁰ Monks concludes that a conflict within the notion of a 'cultural and imperial modernity' was responsible for the 'near-disappearance of the downriver Thames': on one hand it had the 'status as the very crucible of Britain's modernisation' but this was contradicted by the 'inescapable connotations of bulk trade, massed labour, social heterogeneity and material surfeits and inequalities'.⁴¹ It will be argued in this chapter that, contrary to this 'near disappearance' and the assumption that 'painters seem to have avoided recording the working banks of the Thames', the sites of the commercial river actually provided a rich source of patriotic iconography for artists.⁴² Furthermore, works depicting the mercantile and naval aspects of the Thames do amount to a significant body of important contemporary Thames imagery. It is precisely this substantial yet relatively unexplored body of work featuring the commercial river that, it will be argued, once created a dynamic state of controlled tensions, or a visual *concordia discors*, when considered alongside the upriver Thames views which conveyed a complementary sense of refinement.⁴³

Despite the importance of location and the concentration of aggrandised views and imagery from the upriver reaches of the Thames, few visual images of the Thames produced during the long eighteenth century are limited in their construction to the representation of pure topography and landmark architectural sites. In *Poly-Olbion*, Drayton draws our attention to the 'people-pestred shores' and the 'shoales of labouring ores', and it is precisely this human colonisation of the river and its workaday banks that constitutes a substantive yet often hidden, disguised or stage-managed component of the Thames scene. The refined views of the river were produced in a broader arena that also supported a more widely-accessible counterculture of Thames imagery which is explored in Chapter Two: *The Carnavalesque Thames*. Here, especially and most significantly within the genre of satire, the traditions and culture of the Thames together with its notorious locations and associated 'types' were adapted and exaggerated for both comedic and political ends. The remarkable extent of river-

³⁸ 'The pace of growth accelerated from around 1770, so that the increases of the first seventy years of the century doubled again in the last thirty.' White, J. (2012), p. 168.

³⁹ See Bird, J. (1957), pp. 38-9; Davis, R. (1962), pp. 34-5, 40-43; Hancock, D. (1995), pp. 25-31.

⁴⁰ Monks, S. (2006), p. 1.

⁴¹ Monks, S. (2006), p. 16.

⁴² Galinou, M. and Hayes, J. (1996), pp. 72-73.

⁴³ See Andrews, M. (1989), p. 15.

related satirical imagery from this genre is evidence of how a series of recognisable visual tropes and stereotypes specific to the Thames and its locales were developed and employed. This rogues' gallery of what were often grotesque river 'types' was occasionally endowed with innate qualities of nationalistic spirit, the satirical prints functioning as a non-literary reinforcement of patriotic fervour.

In *Poly-Olbion*, Drayton refers to the 'beautious Strand' as an expression of 'both the wealth and bravery of the Land'. This notion of the image of the Thames and its city surroundings functioning as a signifier of both the prosperity of British commerce ('wealth') and the nation's naval might ('bravery') is a concept that gathered momentum as a form of visual currency during the eighteenth century when it seeped from literary description into artistic representation. This form of depiction was especially prevalent during the second half of the eighteenth century when the Thames underwent a series of dramatic physical rationalisations and improvements on an unprecedented scale. Pioneering civic engineering projects included ambitious bridge construction, vast new building works and colossal dock developments. These enterprises, or the prospect of them, were interwoven with an artistic epiphany in terms of the visualisation of the Thames, its riverside environment and its evolutionary potential. The proposal that depictions of improvements to the Thames functioned as signifiers of a distinctive national consciousness, forms the kernel of Chapter Three: *Reimagining the River*. The concept of the reimagining of the river by artists during the long eighteenth century is suggested in John Elgin's essay 'Venice on Thames: Venetian *Vedutisti* and the London View in the Eighteenth Century' (1999). Here, Elgin considers the relationship between the post-Great Fire improvements to London and the Venetian ideal that was transposed into paintings of the capital by visiting Italian artists. Art historical engagement with the imagery generated from the great developments along the Thames during the long eighteenth century is limited to the work of Celina Fox in the two publications mentioned above [p. 6]. Specifically, Fox focuses on the dockyards at Deptford and Woolwich and the development and subsequent depiction of the new docks constructed at the turn of the nineteenth century. This research serves to highlight the role of the new docks in the promotion of a port city that was in danger of failing to live up to its hyperbolic reputation both at home and abroad. In this chapter it will be argued that artists who incorporated the metamorphosis of London's topography into their works were promoting an idealised version of urban modernity and order, raising the visual profile of the capital city and its river to that of an efficient metropolitan port ever more suited for commercial empire.

Throughout Drayton's brief profile of the Thames in *Poly-Olbion*, London's river is referred to in the third-person singular as a masculine entity: 'this mighty Flood, upon his voyage prest', 'with his strength, his beauties still increast' and 'Upon his either Banks, as he along doth glide'. The personification of the river in literary texts is a form established through the late seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries. In visual art, the Thames was increasingly characterised as a hoary mythological river god. This generic embodiment holding an urn, based on Roman precedents, would be developed into a symbol of London's commerce as Father Thames.⁴⁴ Chapter Four: *The Thames as Allegory of Commerce and Empire*, explores the contemporary reception of Thames imagery in sculptured and painted works on public or semi-public display throughout the city and in widely-circulated prints based on pictures by

⁴⁴ In the right hand corner of Wenceslaus Hollar's *Long View of London from Southwark*, a river god is depicted to reinforce the role of the Thames as a source of power [see Fig. 5].

leading eighteenth-century artists. Whilst the appearance of the physical Thames in eighteenth-century visual culture drew attention to the commercial wealth and naval power that sustained London and the nation, key aspects of these attributes could be more effectively emphasised in allegoric form. 'Thames' appeared in sculpted form across the capital as the symbolic embodiment of the city and nation through the commerce which he metaphorically channelled directly into the lap of Britannia. By the end of the eighteenth century the image of the river was further informed by another set of contemporary ideologies associated with maritime London. Such works contributed significantly to the contemporary image of the Thames and its role in visual culture, and prolonged its function as a symbol of morally upstanding commerce and healthy imperial aspiration that was continued and developed in the nineteenth century. By means of a virtual tour through eighteenth-century London and a close reading of the symbols representing the Thames placed on display there, this chapter examines the image of London's port and its allegorical representation, arguing that the figure of Father Thames became especially suited to sculptured and painted works displayed in locations associated with commerce. This leads to a discussion of generic images of the Thames in moralising prints produced towards the end of the eighteenth century. Here, it is proposed, the image of the Thames evolved into a widely recognised symbol which echoed the prevalent ideologies of commerce and luxury and gave expression to a national identity.

CHAPTER 1

Refining the Downriver View: A 'Reflection of our National Grandeur, Strength and Security'¹

The view presented by shipping when seen from London Bridge is calculated to excite a mingled feeling of pride and astonishment; but this feeling is infinitely increased when, on descending the river, it is perceived that the forest of masts covers the Thames for several miles, and that all the adjacent docks are also full of vessels. The port of London, properly so called, extends from London Bridge to Deptford, a distance of nearly four miles...²

This affirmative statement, which extols the desirable qualities of the downstream, commercial river and highlights its vast geographical expanse, was published at the end of the long-eighteenth century in William Westall and Samuel Owen's *Picturesque Tour of the River Thames*. The book comprises a text which eulogises the Thames from source to sea in the manner of an extended advertisement alongside twenty-four coloured views by the English landscape artist William Westall (1781-1850) and marine painter and illustrator Samuel Owen (c. 1769-1857). But the hyperbolic account of Thames shipping suggests an anomaly with the art history of the eighteenth century in which the burgeoning port city at the height of its commercial prominence is generally defined by celebrated upriver views, a genre dominated by the work of visiting foreign artists. The 'picturesque' aquatints that appear in Westall and Owen's publication have been identified by Andrew Hemingway as 'flashy and slick' with 'emphasis on the views of the modern and fashionable, and the pervasive presence of bourgeois figures picked out in bright colours'.³ This describes an approach to the depiction of London's river that was commonplace.⁴ Despite what must have been extraordinary prospects encompassing the vast shipping and maritime activity to the east of the city, far more extensive than anything found to its west, the works that are generally identified with this period suggest a level of reluctance on the part of leading artists to portray the commercial sites of the Thames even when London was heralded as the world's busiest port. Furthermore, contrary to the ubiquitous literary descriptions of a river teeming with vessels of all types, 'almost hidden by merchant vessels from every country', a congested or 'prodigious forest of masts', the generally referenced representations of the Thames in visual art present it as a serene, well-ordered environment.⁵ Westall and Owen's *Picturesque Tour* exemplifies a style of reductive visual language and stock imagery that was frequently applied to the Thames during the second half of the long eighteenth century when the promotion of the colossal importance and spectacle of the commercial and naval river was often restricted to verbose textual accounts. The visualisation of the downstream river appears to have been limited to

¹ Combe, W. (1794), Vol. 2, p. 254.

² Westall, W. and Owen, S. (1828), p. 153.

³ Hemingway, A. (1992), p. 223.

⁴ For further examples see Malton, T. (1792) and Cooke, W. (1814).

⁵ César de Saussure (1705-1783) quoted in Muyden, M. Van (1995), pp. 58-9; Smollett, T. (1771), p. 94.

sketchy allusions to the forest of masts which formed a distant backdrop hidden behind old London Bridge, or as ancillary to subjects of architectural interest with intimations of national identity such as Greenwich Hospital. However, a closer exploration of lesser-known contemporary depictions of eighteenth-century London, especially those held in collections at the National Maritime Museum, the British Museum in London and the Yale Center for British Art in New Haven, has yielded a substantial quantity of material that suggests a far more expansive artistic treatment of the port city.

In the light of such evidence, this chapter argues that the ‘picturesque’ confections of the Thames, as typified by Westall and Owen, and indeed the renowned mid-century *vedute* popularised by Canaletto, ought to be re-evaluated in the context of a comprehensive survey of imagery from the commercial reaches of the river. For the purposes of this discussion, the term ‘commercial river’ refers to the downriver Thames from the eastern side of London Bridge to Woolwich and beyond. This stretch of the river was dominated by the import and export of goods, shipbuilding, the East India Company and the naval centres at Deptford and Woolwich. From the mid-eighteenth century onwards, British artists were producing a significant quantity of paintings and prints comprising a kaleidoscope of commercial river images which have been largely overlooked in broader art historical appraisals. The cumulative effect of these neglected works serves to extend the artistic profile of the Thames below London Bridge to Deptford and even as far downriver as Woolwich and beyond. This canon of downriver imagery effectively constitutes one half of an eighteenth-century *concordia discors*, that is to say a balance of contrasts between the commercial river and its associated mercantile activities and the grandiosity of the refined upriver views of the revered urban landmarks between St Paul’s and Westminster and further west towards more rural locations such as Twickenham, Richmond and Windsor.⁶ The restoration of these works into a repertoire of Thames imagery that once encompassed the entire eighteenth-century port expands the visual image of London’s river beyond its role in art history as a site associated with ostentatious displays of architectural magnificence and royal and civic pageantry. In addition, making a more thorough survey challenges notions of the river as an epitome of rural Englishness as purported in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century books populated with ‘picturesque’ views that deliberately avoided potentially problematic encounters with the workaday mechanics London’s commercial artery.⁷

In an appraisal of eighteenth century images which emerged from the business end of the Thames, east of London Bridge, Sarah Monks has commented on the lack of paintings and prints exhibited between 1760 and 1800 which had the commercial Thames as their subject. Monks cites the predominant cause for this as the introduction of annual exhibitions in 1760 and the subsequent shift in patronage from ‘mythicising aristocrats and local shipowners’ to new audiences with enhanced expectations and viewing conditions ‘in which flashy battle scenes played better than detailed views of humble riverscapes’. This, it is argued, was compounded by the dominant historic events of the period from 1760 to 1800 - the long build-up to the American War and the elimination of Napoleonic invasion threats at Trafalgar - and the concerns with Britain’s ‘increasingly bloated imperial commerce and the conditions and mentality of the labouring classes who facilitated it’.⁸ In tandem with this view, Celina Fox has

⁶ For a discussion of *concordia discors* see Andrews, M. (1989), p. 18.

⁷ For examples see Ireland, S. (1791) and Westall, W. and Owen, S. (1828).

⁸ Monks, S. (2006), p. 16.

noted a lack of eighteenth-century images of shipbuilding, despite it being one of the most important Thames-side industries employing thousands of workers until its collapse in the 1860s. Fox observes that 'ship paintings concentrated on the moment of launching' rather than portraying the process of building the ships themselves.⁹ In their assessment of early depictions of the commercial river, Mireille Galinou and John Hayes conclude that 'on the whole [...] painters seem to have avoided recording the working banks of the Thames' and 'for reasons of patronage, fashion or convention, those painters who recorded the extraordinary phenomenon exerted very little influence on the artistic scene'. They add that by the eighteenth century, when river painting emerged, 'the area east of London Bridge was well outside the fashionable western end of London' and therefore dismiss the entire expanse of the commercial river from Wapping to Woolwich as 'relatively ignored by artists'.¹⁰

The objective of this chapter is not so much to challenge these conclusions specifically, or even to test the evidence upon which they have been drawn. Instead, while acknowledging that there is a dearth of generally known works which demonstrate an artistic engagement with the commercial-industrial Thames during this period, I will argue nonetheless for the existence of a significant body of richly-coded Thames images focusing primarily on aspects of the commercial river. Such works represent a field which has remained relatively untouched by scholarly investigation, but which juxtaposes a repertoire of genteel upriver views and thereby contributes significantly to a more holistic understanding of the image of the Thames in the long eighteenth century. By focusing attention on the Thames between London Bridge and Woolwich, the stretch of river most closely associated with maritime trade, I will explore the artistic visualisation of the part of London described by French travel writer Louis Simond (1767-1831) as 'a sort of third town' through an examination of a selection of works, both paintings and prints which I believe, given their surprising proliferation, provide a reliable sample of the developments in the representation of the downriver Thames in visual art.¹¹ To give context to these images, this chapter will begin with a consideration of the ideology informing the image of the Thames as an aristocratic river as presented by Canaletto and his compatriots, and their British successors. Then, by focusing more closely on the emerging images of Limehouse Reach, Deptford, Blackwall and Woolwich and specific works by Samuel Scott, John Boydell, John Cleveley the Elder, Robert Dodd and Joseph Farington, I will suggest how these alternative representations might be better understood in terms of the social history of the eighteenth-century Thames with its burgeoning shipyards, congested wharves and transient riverside communities.¹² I will then argue that depictions of these downriver sites are as loaded with positive imagery promoting maritime commerce and naval power as the equivalent patriotic assertions more commonly associated with painted views of aristocratic or 'polite' upriver scenery.

⁹ Fox, C. (1987), p. 118.

¹⁰ Galinou, M. and Hayes, J. (1996), pp. 72-73.

¹¹ Simond, L. (1815), p. 38.

¹² This is not an exhaustive list of artists who produced images of the commercial river; works by Francis Holman, Thomas Mellish and William Anderson, for example, will be discussed in this or later chapters.

The Italianate River View

During the course of the long eighteenth century the artistic image of the river Thames between Westminster and St Paul's Cathedral increasingly represented it as standing for the glory and wealth of London and served to emphasise the financial and commercial strength of a city that was the established political centre of England. By the middle of the century the image of the Thames in the vicinity of the Pool of London in painted urban prospects and topographic engravings was a symbol of the country's power, and as such depictions of the river tended to represent it as a majestic, well-ordered and even a tranquil environment [see Figs. 9 and 10]. This sentiment was echoed in written accounts, for example in an essay for the *Spectator* in 1729 Richard Steele expounded on the pleasures of riverine trade on the Thames where 'the banks on each side are well peopled, and beautified with as agreeable plantations, as any spot on earth; but the Thames itself, loaded with the produce of each shore, added very much to the landscape'.¹³ Tricia Cusack has singled out this stretch of the Thames as representing British identity and a link between 'England's traditional past and Britain's modern imperial present'. The London Thames, Cusack suggests, 'functioned as a stage for the display of monarchy, wealth, and empire'.¹⁴

The eighteenth-century landscape tradition in Britain derived substantially from Dutch precedents. Imported from the Netherlands by artists such as Hendrick Danckerts (c. 1625-1680), Jan Siberechts (1627-1703) and the riverscapes of the Van de Velde, father and son (1611-1693; 1633-1707), at the end of the seventeenth century, the topographical approach was well-established in Britain.¹⁵ In London especially, the phenomenal rebirth of the city after the Great Fire of 1666 was recorded and celebrated in a discrete sub-genre of cityscape by Dutch- or Flemish-derived artists, particularly the Griffier family: Jan Griffier the Elder (c. 1645-1718) and his sons, Jan II, (fl. 1730-1740) and Robert (1688-c. 1750).¹⁶ The Griffiers produced an array of panoramic river views, including some from the vantage point behind Greenwich Hospital known as One Tree Hill [Fig. 8].¹⁷ These and other Flemish artists imported a landscape tradition that was taken up by the arrival of Italian landscape painters, predominantly Giovanni Antonio Canal, better known as Canaletto (1697-1768), and Antonio Joli (1700-1777) from war-torn Europe during the 1740s. Both had previously worked as stage painters and a sense of theatricality is reflected in their capricci and topographical views of London which capitalised on the implied parallels between the English metropolis and the Italian cities.¹⁸ They devised uplifting vistas of sumptuous buildings, rich pageants, and cheerful daily bustle, all shown beneath bright skies that threw everything into sparkling detail.¹⁹ Jane Farrington has suggested that in painting London, Canaletto was informed by 'the English and specifically Whig admiration for the ancient republic of Rome and also for the

¹³ Steele, R. (1729), p. 220. See Hallett, M. (2001a), pp. 151-52.

¹⁴ Cusack, T. (2010), p. 61.

¹⁵ See for example *Greenwich from the Park showing the Queen's House* (c. 1670) by Hendrick Danckerts, NMM: BHC1818; *Greenwich from One Tree Hill* (n.d.) by Johannes Vorsterman, NMM: BHC1808.

¹⁶ See Dunning, B. (1968), pp. 1240-41 and Waterhouse, E. (1994), p. 155.

¹⁷ See also *View from One Tree Hill: The Queen's House and the Royal Observatory, Greenwich* by Jan Griffier, NMM: BHC1817.

¹⁸ See Elgin, J. (1999), pp. 107-8.

¹⁹ See Vaughan, W. (1980), p. 60.

Venetian Republic of the sixteenth century', with particular reference to the notion of London as a Venice on Thames, or as a reincarnated Rome.²⁰ To Daniel Defoe, London was the new Rome: 'Such a prodigy of buildings, that nothing in this world does, or even did, equal it, except old Rome in Trajan's time'.²¹ John Elgin has argued that 'transplanting Rome to London [...] advanced the notion of the city as a centre of polite civilisation; in superimposing Venice upon London, [Canaletto] called attention to its commercial importance'. In addition, both Elgin and Maria Schoina have suggested that the appeal of painted Venetian and Roman scenes to British Grand Tourists, buyers and private collectors, was underpinned by the ideological analogy of London as the new centre of civilisation, political power and commercial supremacy.²² Furthermore, by purchasing or commissioning a painted view of London by an Italian artist the British Grand Tourists might validate their experience of Italy because ownership and display of such works served as a tangible sign of their classical travels, their refined taste and their membership of the cultural élite.²³ The airy Thames views of Joli and Canaletto obviously recall Venice, but their deeper resonance was that they presented London as a city of order and enlightenment, and a city fit for new Romans.²⁴

Canaletto arrived in England in 1746 and his prolific output together with influential patronage cemented this new vision of English topography in art, especially that of London's townscape. Criticised, most famously by John Constable, for making his English *vedute* shimmer in the light of an Italian sun, Canaletto's paintings tend to present the viewer with a highly selective account as though he has taken his constructed image of Venice as a city of leisure and permanent summer, and transferred it to London, for example *The Thames from the Terrace of Somerset House, Looking toward St Paul's* (c. 1750) and *The Thames from the Terrace of Somerset House, Looking toward Westminster* (c. 1750) [Figs 9 and 10].²⁵ Both of these panoramic visions of the Thames and the London skyline import a clear, clean ideal which have much in common with Canaletto's sanitised and staged images of the Grand Canal and the architecture of Venice. Canaletto's compositional arrangement of the London riverscape and St Paul's capitalise on the success of his views of Venice, particularly the Bacino al Sta Maria della Salute and the Bacino di San Marco, and invite positive comparisons between Venice, the renowned Renaissance civic state and maritime empire, and London as its eighteenth-century counterpart.²⁶ Such Thames views are highly constructed and not a straightforward reflection of a given reality. They are emblems of calmness, magnificence and dignity, expressing an essentially aesthetic view with an outward show of optimism and prosperity. Canaletto presents a river shorn of the visual evidence of workaday mercantile activity. The business of maritime trade is reduced, through the artist's shorthand, to a concentration of masts and sails giving a sense of harmonious order between the river space and the hustle and bustle of commerce.²⁷ The spatial expanse and enormity of the city is

²⁰ Farrington, J. and Liversidge, M. (eds) (1993), p. 74.

²¹ Defoe, D. (1724), p. 95.

²² Elgin, J. (1999), pp. 103 and 108; Schoina, M. (2009), p. 36.

²³ See Schoina, M. (2009), p. 37.

²⁴ For further examples, see Warner, M. (1987), pp. 39 and 126; Preston, H. (1977), p. 21.

²⁵ See Warner M. and Asleson, R. (2001), p. 76.

²⁶ See for example *The Molo with Santa Maria della Salute* (c. 1740-45) by Canaletto, Wallace Collection, London: P516. For further reading see Elgin, J. (1999); Dunning, B. (1968), pp. 1241-42.

²⁷ See Hallett, M. (1993), p. 48. The Thames as a dissonant social space is discussed in Ch. 2 and as a congested and chaotic environment in Ch. 3.

exaggerated through the manipulations of angles and proportions, and this illusion is compounded by an imaginary high vantage point which enables the artist to encompass a much greater area than would be possible from any actual view. Artistic license to produce an idealised and coherent pictorial composition notwithstanding, it is the 'guise of verisimilitude' in Canaletto's art that so successfully persuades viewers of the accuracy of his views.²⁸ Canaletto's polished compositions with their elegant sweep of water and fine architectural detail all reproduced in bright colours transformed the traditions of cityscape and landscape painting, as practised in Britain, and exerted a direct and significant influence on the success of British topographical artists such as Samuel Scott (c. 1702-1772) and William Marlow (1740-1813) who continued to paint London and the Thames after the Italian artist's departure.

The British River View

As Sarah Monks has summarised, 'London-based artists increasingly found and created a speculative demand for views of recognisable urban landscapes with which buyers were most likely to identify and with which they might easily live', especially 'since many of these artists' potential customers could be expected to have gained their income from the commercial and political activities on its banks'.²⁹ The Thames riverscape post-Canaletto became a favourite subject for many of the most skilled draughtsmen of the age, including the brothers Thomas and Paul Sandby (1721-98; 1725-1809) and the Thomas Maltons, father and son (1726-1801; 1748-1804), the latter being a landscape artist especially interested in architecture.³⁰ For those with access to it, old Somerset House, situated on a bend on the river, boasted the finest views with which to commemorate the newly restored London, looking towards St Paul's in one direction and the towers of Westminster in the other, as painted by Canaletto in 1750 [Figs 9 and 10].³¹ John Bonehill has commented that 'views from the gardens and river walk of old Somerset House had long been popular with artists and urban tourists'. In relation to the panoramas attributed to Paul Sandby (1731-1809) made from this vantage point in 1776, Bonehill draws attention to the contrasts between 'the manicured, ornamental gardens and the irregular layout of riverside warehouses and wharfs' and 'between the polite, leisured assembly of [...] foreground figures and the busy, industrious activity of the waterway stretching out a few feet below' [see Figs 11 and 12].³² Sandby's pictures invite the viewer to empathise with the refined strollers and to share in their admiration for the magnificence of the expansive prospects of the river. This carefully constructed delineation, in the form of a solid wall between the wide open river and the neatly bordered formal gardens, safely separates the strollers from the mundane activity of maritime labour whilst acknowledging its existence and necessity to London's commercial economy. This presents an example of *concordia discors* where contrasting or conflicting aspects of the Thames are united pictorially

²⁸ See Roman, C. and Roider, C. (1998), pp. 7-8.

²⁹ Monks, S. (2012), p. 29.

³⁰ See Bonehill, J. and Daniels, S. (eds) (2009); Malton, T. (1792).

³¹ Old Somerset House was demolished in 1776 to make way for William Chambers' new building. The Thames as a site of major architectural development is discussed in Ch. 3.

³² Bonehill, J. and Daniels, S. (eds) (2009), p. 150.

to present a harmonious whole.³³ This is further highlighted in another painted view by Paul Sandby, also from the grounds of old Somerset House, in which a small child placed up on the wall points excitedly towards the expanse of the river and its workaday activities whilst his mother or guardian appears to be anxiously protecting him from toppling into it [Fig. 13]. The artistic device thus provided a model of an elite or safe viewing platform from which 'polite' society could engage with images of the commercial river. This notion of a barrier between refined spaces, such as the grounds of old Somerset House, and the commercial aspects of the river had a precedent in riverside architectural development, for example in the smart new houses which had been constructed in nearby Essex Street in c. 1675. Here, the architect incorporated a triumphal archway into the scheme creating a grand terminating feature to the view along the street. The archway effectively masked the transition between the luxury residential housing on one side and the wharfs and commercial activity situated by the Thames on the other, harmonising the wealthy residential space and the commercial function of the river whilst maintaining an appropriate division.³⁴

The gilded views from Somerset House produced by Canaletto and the Sandbys diverge from the experience of the eighteenth-century Thames recorded by the French visitor to London, the sometime travel writer Pierre-Jean Grosley. In 1772 Grosley observed:

The spacious canal formed by the Thames might present us with as noble and striking an object as the great Canal of Venice, lined with palaces of the most sumptuous magnificence and the most pleasing variety [...]: but the banks of the Thames are occupied by tanners, dyers, and other manufacturers [...]. The streets where these manufacturers are carried on are the dirtiest in the city [...].³⁵

Grosley complained that the only possible means by which he could view the Thames between Westminster and St Paul's was if he entered a house or workplace which backed onto the river. Particularly remarkable is his assertion that even 'the bridges have no prospect of the river' due to the impenetrable balustrades, an account that suggests the river Canaletto portrayed in paint was not only an impossible view, but a privileged one.³⁶ This is borne out by the view of the river Canaletto presented in *London: The Thames and the City from Richmond House* (c. 1747), where the artist's aristocratic patronage by the Duke of Richmond gave him access to another privileged view.³⁷ In this painting the promenading gentry are notionally disconnected from the hubbub of the Thames by a fine network of wrought iron railings. This disconnection is reaffirmed in terms of the physical hefty balustrades to either side of Westminster Bridge which restricted Londoners' view of the river. Grosley insinuates that these are required because of 'the natural bent of the English, and in particular the people of London, to suicide', a suggestion which further separates and distances the workaday Thames

³³ See Solkin, D. (1983), pp. 68-69.

³⁴ The Essex Street Archway by Nicholas Barbon (c. 1675), London WC2. See McKellar, E. (1999), p. 24.

³⁵ Grosley, M. (1772), p. 426

³⁶ See Anderson, E. (ed) (2003).

³⁷ The Trustees of the Goodwood Collection, West Sussex; see Beddington, C. (2006), Fig. 25 and pp. 40-41.

from artistic pretensions.³⁸ By the time Canaletto had produced his lauded vistas of the Thames, the south bank of the river, from Deptford to Vauxhall and the north bank from Blackwall to Wapping, was already almost entirely given over to maritime industry and commerce. As early as 1724 when he published his *A Tour Thro' the Whole Island of Great Britain*, Daniel Defoe defined the 'Modern Acceptation' of London to encompass 'that vast Mass of Buildings, reaching from *Blackwall* in the *East*, to *Tot-hill Fields* in the *West*'.³⁹ The celebrated and majestic Thames views of Canaletto certainly provided a visual feast of river imagery, but they are representative of a patrician view of London and the river. These works offer a very partial visual account of the river and therefore need to be contextualised against a much broader range of imagery of the commercial and maritime Thames.

The Italian *vedutisti* raised the profile of Thames in topographical art by focusing attention on the post-Great Fire architectural achievements, such as Westminster Bridge, and highlighting the river's role as the stage of spectacular river-borne pageantry. Both aspects prompted favourable comparisons with Rome and Venice. In contrast works by English painters of the urban topography, such as Samuel Scott and his pupil William Marlow, move away from references to classical Italian models and present London's port more plainly as the commercial centre of the British nation. To account for this development, these works need to be understood within the wider cultural and ideological contexts of expansionist imperialism that followed the British victory in the Seven Years' War (1756-1763).⁴⁰ They should also be considered alongside subsequent ideas of physical regimentation, reorganisation and regulation such as those expressed by John Gwynn (1713-1786) with his advocacy for a radical series of urban improvements to London itself. These comprised proposals for grand new palaces, streets and squares affording striking vistas which Gwynn presented in his *London and Westminster Improved* (1766).⁴¹ Suggestions of the type of ambitious, imperial concepts set out by Gwynn can be traced in the work of contemporary artists and architects, for example in magnificent bridge designs produced by William Chambers, Paul Sandby, John Soane and George Dance.⁴² Gwynn advocated the advancement of the 'state of the arts' by linking it to what he described as an 'urban improvement' which was connected to Britain's new, post-war imperial glory. In terms of the professional aims of artists, Gwynn argued for 'the advancement of grandeur and elegance' now that 'the English are [...] what the Romans were of old'.⁴³ This was manifested not only in a growing artistic awareness of how the image of the Thames symbolised London's great and growing naval power and trading wealth, but also in the very setting of the Royal Academy which moved into the rebuilt Somerset House on the river in 1780. In producing images of a well-ordered river and surrounding urban topography, artists such as Scott and Marlow were appealing to both the sensibilities and approval of

³⁸ For images that convey the restricted view from behind the balustrades of Westminster Bridge see *An Arch of Westminster Bridge* (c. 1750) by Samuel Scott. TB: T01193 and *Westminster Bridge under Construction from the South-East Abutment* (1747) by Canaletto, CDN.

³⁹ Defoe, D. (1724), p. 95.

⁴⁰ See Fordham, D. (2010), p. 130.

⁴¹ Gwynn, J. (1766). Gwynn's proposals are discussed in Ch. 3. Gwynn's treatise advocated a re-building of London on the lines of Rome - a close alignment with Catholicism which was controversial in the wake of the Jacobite Rising of 1745: see White, J. (2012), pp. 504-9.

⁴² See Figs 59, 61 and 62; for Chambers' *An Elevation of a Triumphal Bridge for Blackfryars* see Harris, J. and Snodin, M. (eds) (1996), p. 188.

⁴³ Gwynn, J. (1766), p. xv. See Fordham, D. (2010), p. 130.

aristocratic patrons and, when reproduced as more affordable prints, the patriotic hearts of a wider audience who increasingly subscribed to the idea of the Thames as the embodiment of British national identity.⁴⁴ In doing so, the views shifted away from the river at the heart of the city to locations further downstream towards the royal dockyards at Deptford and Woolwich, to which my discussion will now turn.

Travelling downriver: A Peregrination

Walpole defined Samuel Scott as ‘an artist who seems born for an age of naval glory, and is equal to it’, but Scott was certainly more than solely a marine artist.⁴⁵ Samuel Scott is remembered chiefly for his views of the Thames and the buildings that line the waterfront between Westminster and the Tower and his finest work demonstrates he was a skilled topographical, riverside and urban landscape artist. But Scott’s reputation has often been reduced to the moniker, ‘the English Canaletto’, even though he was an established marine painter when Canaletto came to London, and his Thames-based work, including that which precedes the arrival of the Venetian, exhibits a fascination with both quayside activity and Thames shipping. Indeed, it was Scott’s expertise as a marine painter which led him to concentrate the majority of his London scenes around views on the Thames. Scott’s earliest recorded commission, in 1732, was to add ships to six views of East India Company settlements by George Lambert for the Court Room of East India House in Leadenhall Street.⁴⁶ From that year on Scott continued to paint views of shipping on the Thames, chiefly to reflect the interests of the East India Company and other patrons whose wealth depended on maritime trade.⁴⁷ In addition, during this period naval commanders were making substantial fortunes by way of prize money gained in action and successful captains commissioned artists to record their triumphs for posterity exemplified by the paintings commissioned from Scott by the Anson family for the Shugborough Estate in Staffordshire as part of a celebration of Lord Anson’s (1697-1762) victories.⁴⁸ The description of Scott as a second-rate Italian *vedutisti* that once dogged the artist’s reputation probably arose because the majority of his dated London views were painted subsequent to 1746, but this is more likely an indication that the demand for this type of subject, that is Thames views, had been bolstered by Canaletto’s residency.⁴⁹

Scott, along with his pupil William Marlow and the Welsh landscape painter Richard Wilson (1714-1782) produced works which whilst idealising the Thames also introduced elements of carefully observed detail relating specifically to the practices of the commercial

⁴⁴ References to patriotism and a national identity here and elsewhere in the text are based on a sentiment attached to Britain’s ‘prestige in a context of foreign relations; to its arms, flags, and power in the international sphere’: Newman, G. (1987), pp. 52-4.

⁴⁵ Quoted in Warner, O. (1948), p. 13.

⁴⁶ East India House is discussed in Ch. 4.

⁴⁷ See *The Thames by the Tower of London* (undated), NT, Felbrigg Hall, Norfolk: 1401194; *Sheerness with Warships at Anchor* (undated), GAC: AN 5519; for further examples see Kingzett, R. (1980-82).

⁴⁸ For example *Lord Anson’s Victory off Cape Finisterre, 3 May 1747* (c. 1750) by Samuel Scott, NMM: BHC0369.

⁴⁹ Hayes, J. (1965), p. 458.

river.⁵⁰ The painting *Entrance to the Fleet River*, for example, has the primary purpose of bringing all the principles of elegant harmony to what was in reality an incommensurable and insalubrious Thames neighbourhood [see Fig. 14]. The Fleet River was commonly known as the Fleet Ditch: it was notoriously filthy and described as a 'a nauseous [*sic*] and abominable sink of nastiness' by Defoe in 1722.⁵¹ Max Byrd has observed that 'it drained some of the most wretched areas of the City' including 'slums like Grub Street, Moorfields (the site of Bedlam Hospital), and Snow Hill, all the way down to Fleet Prison'.⁵² In *Trivia*, John Gay described the Fleet riverbank as a 'black shore' lined with coal wharves, butchers' stalls, and other small shops, all of which contributed to the pollution.⁵³ Conversely the painting presents a romanticised impression of the same location with Fleet Bridge transformed into an elegant crossing over a wide canal, reminiscent of the Rialto in Venice. Ten years after it was painted, work began on Blackfriars Bridge and the stinking Fleet was ignominiously covered over and replaced with New Bridge Street, further evidence that this location was far from delightful. In the painted view of the Fleet, the artist has included lighters moored along the quay and two sprit-rigged sailing barges. Elsewhere the wherries and the barges have been carefully positioned in the Thames to lie in perspective formation. There are indications of trade here, with various cargoes including bales of wool being transported downriver, and the wherryman awaiting passengers at Blackfriars Stairs, but even these activities appear leisured and the overall impression is one of gentle calm and serenity.

Scott frequently made specific references to maritime trade in his depictions of the Thames. Such allusions are innovative and significant at a time when such references were uncommon and views of the Thames were dominated by depictions of its rural or non-commercial reaches. This can be seen in three examples from Scott's *œuvre*: *A Danish Timber Bark Getting Under Way* (1736) [Fig. 15], *Shipping on the Thames off Rotherhithe* (1756) and *A Thames Wharf* (c. 1757).⁵⁴ The almost-square format of the first two of these paintings suggests that they were intended for prominent display over a mantelpiece, providing a novel celebration of the maritime trade that was understood to be the foundation of England's prosperity in the mid-eighteenth century.⁵⁵ *A Danish Timber Bark Getting Under Way*, completed ten years prior to Canaletto's residency and subsequent influence, is set near the mouth of the Thames. It shows a cat bark, a type of Danish trading vessel designed to be both sturdy and capacious for the transport of large quantities of essential raw materials, especially timber. Scott exaggerates the power and immensity of the vessel, and therefore its association with maritime trade, by reducing the scale of the figures on deck. Amongst the general bustle of human activity on the crowded deck men can be seen heaving on halyards and making ropes fast while high up above them sailors are perched on the yard-arms as they loosen the sails. *Shipping on the Thames off Rotherhithe* shows the Thames with Rotherhithe on the south bank, with John James's church of St Mary (1716) visible under the bowsprit of

⁵⁰ See for example *The Thames, Westminster Bridge Under Construction* (1745) by Richard Wilson, PMA: M1928-1-43; *The London Riverfront from Westminster to the Adelphi* (1771-72) by William Marlow, MoL: A25874.

⁵¹ Defoe, D. (1722) quoted in George, D. (1996), p. 85.

⁵² Byrd, M. (1978), p. 55.

⁵³ Gay, J. (1716).

⁵⁴ *Shipping on the Thames off Rotherhithe*, Christie's Sale 6104 Lot 10, sold 23 May 2012; *A Thames Wharf*, V&A: FA.249[0].

⁵⁵ Kingzett, R. (1980-82), p. 80, D13.

the yacht to the right. To the left is a cat bark unloading Baltic timber, the major source of the wood used for masts and spars in shipbuilding, in this case specifically for commercial use. Further left is a smaller merchantman also laden with timber; on the shore in the far left distance are two of the windmills lining the Isle of Dogs and delineating the busy trade route into the commercial port. *A Thames Wharf* is a pure image of the mercantile Thames with warehouses, a man-of-war, a crane to winch goods ashore and attendant representatives of Customs and maritime labour. Each of these three images meticulously interprets and documents the processes of commerce and shipping on the Thames, and serves to emphasise the importance of river trade to the capital. The inclusion of additional ships in *A Danish Timber Bark* is yet another reference to the international scale of commerce coming out of London and the importance of the lower reaches of the Thames to the country's prosperous economy. As the eighteenth century progressed, so the supply of such views of blatantly commercial Thames locations, away from the familiar sights in the centre of London, became increasingly commonplace.

In a pair of oil paintings executed by Scott about 1760, the artist presents a scene from the east of London which is dominated by shipping, *A Morning, with a View of Cuckold's Point*, and sets it against a rural, upriver Thames-side scene, *A Sunset, with a View of Nine Elms* [Figs 16 and 17]. These pictures, set at opposite ends of the London Thames, epitomise a vision of the Thames that fits with the concept of *concordia discors* by presenting a georgic balance between labour and rest. This is achieved by the juxtaposition of a commercial river scene at the outset of the working day with the pastoral charms of the patrician river in the evening. The upriver location of Nine Elms is presented as a quiet and leisurely stretch of the rural river while *A Morning*, set in a downriver location where the Thames meanders towards Deptford, Blackwall and Woolwich, is bustling with human activity: the passenger in the stern on the boat grounding on the shore is singing and waving a bottle in the air; beyond, a smack has been beached and three men are breaming the hull.⁵⁶ On the left, beyond the Peter-boat, a ship is being loaded with timber. The representation of these commonplace maritime activities such as breaming and the loading of materials in contrast with the leisured, rural river at Nine Elms is significant, not least because it marks a departure from the more grandiose themes generally adopted in paintings of the Thames. Scott's inclusion of the downriver location at Cuckold's Point not only expands the geographic boundaries of Thames imagery, it also embraces a scene of mundane labour that is a direct contrast to the activities associated with the upriver sites west of London. This polarisation of the Thames with distinctions between downriver and upriver Thames locations, together with the positive and negative connotations of commerce, had a precedent in the work of William Hogarth.

Hogarth, Cleveley and Limehouse Reach, 1747

During the same period that saw Canaletto produce his version of London and the Thames in views seen through the arches of the new construction of Westminster Bridge or from the privileged viewpoint of an upper back window of Richmond House in 1747, the river also came to feature in the work of William Hogarth (1697-1764), specifically in Plate 5 of his twelve print

⁵⁶ Breaming was a process that involved burning off barnacles and treating the planks with molten tar.

Industry and Idleness series [see Fig. 18]. However, Hogarth's choice of location was not one of the majestic sites favoured by the Venetian artist, but the downriver Thames at Limehouse Reach and the unremarkable riverbank opposite Deptford Dockyard. In this scene, *The Idle 'Prentice turn'd away and sent to Sea*, the protagonist, Tom Idle, is accompanied by his weeping mother and two sailors as he is rowed to an awaiting ship at Deptford. The sailors are goading Tom Idle in various ways, one by pointing to a gibbet complete with dangling corpse on the riverbank, behind which can be seen the swampy flats of the Isle of Dogs, the exact location identified by the row of windmills which stood along its western edge. There was another well known gibbet further downstream opposite Blackwall, and a short distance upstream at Wapping was the location of the notorious gibbet at Execution Dock. These upright posts with projecting arms, from which were hung the bodies of executed pirates and other maritime criminals as warnings, were a familiar sight along the river at this time. In Hogarth's image, the symbol of death in the form of the gibbet and the skull-like visage of the oarsman are compounded by the choppy waves of the Thames and the stormy sky portending a violent and insecure future for Idle.⁵⁷ Often Hogarth chose settings which conveyed the feeling that the action was going on in an identifiable part of London and lending a sense of immediacy to the scene to strengthen the credibility of the fictional story. This suggests that the location for *The Idle 'Prentice turn'd away and sent to Sea* was also familiar to his audience.⁵⁸ Here, Hogarth's presentation of the topography of the river and its banks at Limehouse Reach is conventional, perhaps relying on the associations of immorality and criminality with the downriver within maritime culture, thus playing on upon a stereotype of the maritime.⁵⁹ Hogarth had personal experience of the full extent of these lower-class Thames locations that stretched from Billingsgate to Gravesend, in part from the river journey he made with four friends, including Samuel Scott, recorded by Ebenezer Forrest in the *Five Days' Peregrination*, a trip which seems to have been an extended drinking bout. At the outset of this journey, Forrest recorded such landmarks as Cuckold's Point, where the party 'sung "St. John-at-Deptford Pishoken"' and Blackwall Reach where 'hung beef and buiscuit [sic]' and 'right *Hollands*' were consumed.⁶⁰ Although the meanings of such phrases as 'St. John-at-Deptford Pishoken' and 'right *Hollands*' are lost, this relaxed referencing, unhindered by the necessity for further explanation, indicates a colloquial familiarity with the Thames' downriver locations and their association with traditional song or local specialities. This provides further evidence of a wider familiarity with the location and its maritime associations. This is significant here because it suggests the downstream Thames, although generally underrepresented in visual art, was by the mid-eighteenth century a moralised site, in contrast to its upstream representation. Hogarth was not alone in engaging with this downriver site. In the National Maritime Museum collection is a painting of the Thames at Deptford dating from the same year, and this provides a contemporary foil to Hogarth's satirical *mise-en-scène*.

⁵⁷ See Paulson, R. (1974); Hallett, M. and Riding, C. (2006), pp. 185-6; the oarsman with the skull-like visage is emphasised in Hogarth's preliminary drawing for this plate, see BM: 1896,0710.12.

⁵⁸ For example see: *Morning from The Four Times of Day* (1736), Upton House, Warwickshire: NT Inv. No. 446680, set in Covent Garden; *The March to Finchley* (1749-50), FM, set at the Tottenham Court Turnpike.

⁵⁹ This subject is explored further in Ch. 2.

⁶⁰ See Forrest, E. et al (1782), p. xvi; Mitchell, C. (1952) (ed.); 'Hollands' may be Dutch gin; according to Barlow, J. (2005), p. 6, the full meaning of the line 'St. John-at-Deptford Pishoken' is a mystery.

In 1747 John Cleveley the Elder (c. 1712-1777) painted '*St Albans' Floated out at Deptford* (1747) [Fig. 19]. Cleveley was a resident of Deptford and well experienced in the work of the shipyard, reputedly learning his painting skills from decorating the sides of actual ships.⁶¹ From about 1747 until the middle of the 1750s he produced a series of paintings featuring ship launches, mainly at Deptford, and by doing so was a pioneer in the depiction of the commercial reaches of the Thames. The painting of the '*St Albans*' depicts a sixty-gun man-of-war being launched from Deptford's Royal Dockyard. The building on the left, with a woman in an apron standing in the doorway, can be identified as the master shipwright's house and on the right is the Great Storehouse.⁶² Alongside these accurately reproduced topographical features, Cleveley has included a wealth of detail along the quayside and a variety of figures positioned to draw attention to the matters of maritime activity. The spectacle of the launch is witnessed by clusters of well-dressed observers who, it might be assumed, have a vested interest in the successful 'floating out' of this particular vessel.

As the eighteenth century progressed, ship launches were given more publicity as shipbuilders gained experience in launching warships down slipways and the likelihood of accidents was reduced. The launch of a very large warship would have been a talking point for weeks beforehand, and attracted thousands of onlookers.⁶³ As well as their draw as great spectacles in themselves, ship launches were also invested with a religious quality which further swelled the crowds of onlookers. As Margarett Lincoln has suggested, the ship launch, a public, noisy event, also had metaphorical associations with the passage of the Christian soul.⁶⁴ In one sermon given by a congregationalist minister in Deptford and later published, it was explained that a ship launch with its excitement and danger offered the public an emblem of human life, full of vicissitudes, while the ship was like the virtuous man launched into this life, an ocean of trouble and dangers, with spectators feeling their hopes and fears alternate with each stroke of the axe severing the props and shores securing the ship on land, a metaphor for the gradual loss of all supports in life and the launch of the soul into eternity.⁶⁵ Spiritual associations in Cleveley's ship launch paintings, whilst geographically centred around Deptford where this sermon was both preached and published, are not obvious. However, the pictures signify more than the commercial prestige of ship owners and investors and the pride of shipbuilders and it is worth noting that Cleveley, in association with Thomas Milton and Pierre Charles Canot, produced cycles of images used to decorate the borders of plans and elevations of the dockyards at Deptford and Woolwich, depicting the various stages in a ship's 'life' from its launch to its potential wrecking upon rocks at sea [see Fig 83].⁶⁶ Cleveley's son, John, also produced a series of shipwreck paintings titled *Twelve Views of Ships in Variety of Weathers*.⁶⁷ The shipwreck was a recurrent theme in religious and secular literature and in the visual arts at this time, its dramatic representation symbolising a moment of crisis when assumptions about divine Providence and the national character, for

⁶¹ Archibald, E. (2000), p. 138.

⁶² See Phillips, H. (1951), p. 24.

⁶³ *The Times* estimated that the launch of the *Queen Charlotte* on 17 July 1810 attracted 20,000; the *Naval Chronicle* 100,000: Lincoln, M. (2002), p. 134.

⁶⁴ See Lincoln, M. (2002), pp. 126-30.

⁶⁵ Barker, J. (1810), p. 13.

⁶⁶ These plans and elevations are discussed in Ch. 3.

⁶⁷ For example, *A Shipwreck by Night with Lightning* (1 Jan 1772), NMM: PAD7543.

example, are thrown into sharp definition.⁶⁸ Another painting by Cleveley, *'The Royal George' at Deptford showing the launch of 'The Cambridge'* (1757) presents a further scene of the majestic shipping on the downriver Thames, this time as a society celebration.⁶⁹ It has been established that the scene is not historically accurate as the 'Royal George' would have been too large to anchor as far upstream as Deptford, but the precise treatment of the subject matter in Cleveley's work suggests that these pictures were often made for patrons of the dockyard community, but they also appealed to a wider public when the artist exhibited at the Free Society of Arts.⁷⁰

Boydell's Downriver Views

Three years after Hogarth published his *Industry and Idleness* series and Cleveley had painted *'St Albans' Floated out at Deptford*, John Boydell (1720-1804) completed his first major collection of prints, *A Collection of One Hundred Views, & C. in England and Wales*. The work consisted chiefly of reproductive landscape prints engraved by Boydell from his own drawings. Boydell's selection process for his views is suggested in a surviving fragment of manuscript from his unpublished autobiography in which the printmaker describes his upbringing and training: 'The Prints mostly published in London were Views, Col'd and common Mezzotintes' and 'I was obliged to follow at that time the taste of the Public but was desirous to draw views of various places myself and to Engrave them'. Boydell continues:

I therefore began studying Books of Perspective and learnt so much of the Rules that enabled me to draw Views from Nature. [...] ...my first Publication was Six Landscapes called the Bridge Book [c. 1747], Price 1s. after large Drawings of my own Invention, they pleased, the success I had in them encouraged me to proceed rapidly in other Publications [and] employ^d myself in making Drawings on the Thames, in London &c and engraving them.⁷¹

Boydell went on to establish a substantial print business with the opening of The Boydell Shakespeare Gallery in Pall Mall in 1786. As a print publisher, Boydell's output contributed towards raising the profile of the art form and in redressing the imbalance in the trade between Britain and France in engravings. As early as 1767 Boydell stopped engraving his own prints and began to rely exclusively on commissions and this profitable trade fuelled his ascent to the top of London's burgeoning print publishing business.⁷² However, Boydell had only just set out in business when he published his series of shilling views of London and the river.⁷³

⁶⁸ Lincoln, M. (1997), p. 155.

⁶⁹ NMM: BHC3602.

⁷⁰ The rise of exhibiting societies from 1760 allowed artists to have their work seen by a wider audience. Thames artists adapted their subjects from the specific celebration of ship launches to more general shipping scenes. John Cleveley the Elder exhibited with the Free Society of Artists from 1765.

⁷¹ Bell Jones, W. (1925), p. 83-6.

⁷² Bruntjen, S. (1985), p. 20.

⁷³ These prints were later included in Boydell's *Collection of One Hundred Views in England and Wales*, published in 1770.

Sheila O'Connell notes that these early works evidently sold well enough to contribute towards the establishment of his business, maintaining that Boydell was aiming 'at an audience that wanted visual information rather than works of art'.⁷⁴ In this respect works of visual information provided Boydell with the opportunity to map the Thames pictorially without resort to artifice or enhancement. In his early work the young Boydell is a proponent of informative topographic views of the downriver Thames and as such his images are set apart from the more widely available prints of London's river in its most familiar rural and urban environs, for example Thomas Bowles II majestic bird's-eye view that radiates out from St Paul's at its centre, *A General View of the City of London, next the River Thames* published in the series *Perspective Views* (1751) and reproduced in various forms thereafter [see Fig. 20].⁷⁵ Instead, by including amongst his Thames views the visually uncharted downriver locations of Limehouse, Deptford and Woolwich, Boydell's views of the commercial Thames, together with the contemporary works by artists such as the Cleveleys, form an important visual counterpart, a *concordia discors*, which strikes a balance with the more familiar depictions of upriver scenery. Significantly, Boydell's images are the forerunners of a tradition of printed Thames views that recorded popular riverside sites to illustrate popular history guides such as *Harrison's History of London* (1775) or as pictorial accounts of linear journeys from source to sea, for example Samuel Ireland's *Picturesque Views on the River Thames* (1791).⁷⁶ Such collections of views of the metropolis and its river generally terminated at London Bridge or the Tower (with the exception of views of Greenwich Hospital) and inclusion of the peripheral sites along the commercial Thames between Wapping and Woolwich was unusual. The lack of artistic engagement with these important Thames sites suggests a conflict: the locations were politically and economically significant yet they remained problematic. This contradiction harks back to the same associations with a maritime culture of immorality and criminality exploited by Hogarth in *The Idle 'Prentice turn'd away and sent to sea*. Consequently visual and textural references to these districts were dominated by references to the immense profits attributable to the Thames and an adherence to what Monks describes as the 'prevailing rhetoric of refinement, liberty and leisure'.⁷⁷

From 1750, when Boydell's *Collection of One Hundred Views* were first published, prints generally were available primarily to the upper and middle strata of society. Economic limitations would have excluded the majority of workers from all but limited participation on the fringes of the trade in illustration. For a working man in London, to own a picture book or a single print was an uncommon luxury and access to the printed image might have been through coffee-houses and displays in print and bookshop windows.⁷⁸ For leisured connoisseurs on the other hand, the engravings presented a remarkable level of fine detail which would have gone unnoticed without the aid of a powerful magnifying glass. This suggests an almost military way of seeing, and in relation to the river, one that is closely connected with surveying and the mapping of the landscape.⁷⁹ James Taylor has noted that

⁷⁴ O'Connell, S. (2003), p. 106.

⁷⁵ For further examples from this series see BM: 1880,1113.1429; 1880,1113.1655.

⁷⁶ Harrison's depictions of downriver locations bear marked similarities to Boydell's engravings, for example see *A View of Deptford* (1775), NMM: PAD1047.

⁷⁷ Monks, S. (2006), p. 1.

⁷⁸ See Anderson, P. (1991), pp. 17-19.

⁷⁹ Paul Sandby's watercolours and prints contained this element based on his earlier career working for the Military Survey. See Bonehill, J. and Daniels, S. (eds) (2009), pp. 74-5,

maritime prints were often promoted as subjects for viewing through a perspective glass, known too as a diagonal mirror, or optical pillar machine.⁸⁰ According to Taylor, this novel way of viewing prints was quickly adopted by English print-sellers in the 1740s and remained popular into the nineteenth century, and it is likely to have influenced Boydell's approach to his images at this early stage in his career.⁸¹ Boydell had a low regard for his own engravings made at this time which he felt had little artistic merit, stating modestly that they were included in a catalogue of plates published in 1803 'more to show the improvement of art in this country, since the period of their publication, than from any idea of their own merits'.⁸² Despite Boydell's apparent modesty, his shilling views are important in that they provide a series of richly coded depictions of the underrepresented downriver locations along the commercial Thames

On first impression Boydell's *A View taken near Limehouse Bridge, looking down the Thames* is an unassuming river prospect, the main interest being the choice of location which in 1751 was highly unusual in visual art [Fig. 21]. The print delineates a collection of outwardly respectable houses and shipyards crowding onto the riverfront, several landing places and a few vessels in the Thames which is at low water. However, Boydell's print and indeed his series of prints depicting various locations along the commercial river, reward a closer reading because of the remarkable level of detail specific to the mid-eighteenth century port. For example, although the vessel in the foreground is shown pierced with guns ports it is an ordinary trading ship, conventionally armed against the perpetual threat of piracy particularly in the Mediterranean.⁸³ Before analysing the contemporary connotations of the maritime imagery contained within Boydell's downriver works, I would like to explore the broader socio-economic context of the locations they depict. This will provide evidence of the significance of Limehouse and its adjacent riverside neighbourhoods of Ratcliff, Shadwell and Wapping to mid-eighteenth century maritime London thereby broadening the discussion of Boydell's objectives.

Limehouse was originally a village which grew up during the Middle Ages. The area takes its name from the lime-burning industry, already established by the fourteenth century, when lime kilns or 'Lymehostes' used in the production of building mortar and pottery were built there. A combination of tides and currents made Limehouse a natural landfall for ships. Wharves had existed there since the fourteenth century. Together with Ratcliffe, Shadwell and Wapping, these densely populated riverside areas were home to thriving maritime communities that comprised a labour force responsible for the essential servicing of ships as they entered and left the Port of London and the legions of lightermen and watermen who plied their trade along the Thames. According to Marcus Rediker, as early as 1702-3 in excess of 12,000 Londoners worked in the international trades, and several thousand more laboured on voyages that ranged the coasts of England.⁸⁴ Most settled in this part of London when they were not at sea. The very nature of Limehouse and other areas like it across the east of London were directly derived from their maritime population because, as Peter Linebaugh

⁸⁰ The perspective glass is traditionally believed to be a French invention that exaggerated correct linear perspective.

⁸¹ Taylor, J. (2000), p. 66.

⁸² Boydell, J. and J. (1803), p. xv.

⁸³ Phillips, H. (1951), p. 27.

⁸⁴ See Rediker, M. (1987), pp. 21-29.

suggests, 'the ships' crews compromised men from all over the world' and therefore 'London was cosmopolitan because of the sailors'.⁸⁵

Ratcliffe, situated between Shadwell and Limehouse, was an overcrowded and squalid district made up of lodging houses, bars and brothels notorious for its large and transient maritime population. Roy Porter describes it as 'a chaos of cramped courts twisting off the main streets [...] all occupied by sailors, lightermen, pawnshops, pothouse boys and porters'.⁸⁶ Other occupations traditionally held by the residents of these neighbourhoods were shipbuilders, shipwrights, mariners, ship's chandlers, sawyers, coopers, carpenters, painters, boatbuilders, bargebuilders, ropemakers, mastmakers, watermen and victuallers. Wapping itself consisted of a fringe of buildings and market gardens bordering the Thames. In 1697 a stereotype of Wapping's maritime inhabitants is suggested by Ned Ward in *The London Spy* where they are described as 'salt water vagabonds' who had developed a language of their own, which was 'all Heathen Greek to a Cobbler'.⁸⁷ This reputation appears to have survived intact through much of the eighteenth century for in 1776, Sir John Fielding wrote of Wapping:

The seamen here are a generation differing from all the world. When one goes into Rotherhithe and Wapping, which places are chiefly inhabited by sailors, but that somewhat of the same language is spoken, a man would be apt to suspect himself in another country.⁸⁸

Linebaugh and Rediker have described the waterfront taverns here as the 'linchpins of waterfront economy [...] where soldiers, sailors, slaves, indentured servants, and apprentices met to sell illegally appropriated goods and pad their meagre or nonexistent wages'.⁸⁹ Wapping was notorious for its 'Execution Dock' which Strype described as 'the usual Place of Execution for hanging of Pirates and Sea-Rovers, at the low Water Mark, there to remain till three Tides had overflowed them'.⁹⁰ The bodies of the executed were then hung in gibbet irons along the Thames banks and allowed to decompose, serving as a grim deterrent to lawless seamen, such as Hogarth's *The Idle 'Prentice turn'd away and sent to Sea* [Fig. 18].⁹¹

Boydell's depiction of Limehouse [Fig. 21] presents us with a well-ordered Thames-side location, a calculated contrivance which condenses various aspects of the commercial river into a unified urban riverscape. Boydell shows the stretch of the river dotted with a range of craft which include heavy commercial barges positioned on or near the foreshore awaiting a high tide, a sailing barge with furled sails and a naval cutter conveying a party of well-dressed passengers who are travelling downstream. Elsewhere, two men, each with an oar, are shown standing as they manoeuvre the wherry which serves the seafaring ship to the right and in the distance can be seen the tall masts of a large ship under repair in what would have been Lime Kiln Dock. Five years earlier in 1746 the location of Limehouse had been included on John Rocque's map of London [see Fig. 22] in which the cartographical representation of the

⁸⁵ Linebaugh, P. (1991), p. 133.

⁸⁶ Porter, R. (2003), p. 11.

⁸⁷ Quoted in Linebaugh, P. (1991), p. 134; see also Ward, N. (1708).

⁸⁸ Fielding, J. (1776), p. xiii. See Schwarz, L. (1992), p. 8.

⁸⁹ Linebaugh, P. and Rediker, M. (2000), p. 181.

⁹⁰ Strype, J. (1720), Vol. 2, p. 37.

⁹¹ Phillips, H. (1951), pp. 24, 28-9; Rediker, M. (1987), pp. 24-7.

Thames below London Bridge is studded with sailing vessels. This plan charts the areas surrounding Lime Kiln Dock and Narrow Street and sets them within this redefined 'London'. Boydell's view of this newly charted location focuses on the backs, or river frontages, of the houses which lined Narrow Street, the Limehouse pottery and beyond including the various private shipyards (individually delineated by Rocque) which existed along this stretch of the river. The first of the windmills on the western edge of the Isle of Dogs can be glimpsed as the river begins its meander around the peninsula. For a view of one of the most densely populated areas in London, Boydell's scene is largely uninhabited, but there are some traces of human existence. The artist has drawn the riverside buildings complete with latrines, built out so as to overhang and therefore void over the river. The wooden floor of one of these protruding privies has given way and dangles precariously. Nearby a group of three men are hidden in the shadows on the riverbank: one looks out across the river, another reclines lazily on the ground whilst a third appears to be engaged in picking through some rubble. Downriver a line of washing has been hung out to dry and it flutters in the breeze near a sign displaying the single word 'WINE', an advertisement visible only to a river-going audience.

Boydell's *Limehouse* print was produced only a few years after Hogarth's image of this river location in *The Idle 'Prentice turn'd away and sent to sea* from the *Industry and Idleness* series. Hogarth, working in a very different genre, chose imagery of an entirely alternative nature to Boydell, and this he employed to dramatic effect in his depiction of a river scene that was only a short distance further downstream towards Deptford. Hogarth's downriver view presents a bleak and hostile environment, pregnant with implicit danger. Aside from the stark row of windmills which mark out the western shore of the Isle of Dogs, the landscape is remarkably barren, devoid of buildings or any suggestion of human habitation. Outside the confines of the rowing boat the only sign of life is indirectly conveyed via the presence of ships moored on the river. Onshore, the desolation is compounded by the presence of the single dead body which dangles portentously from a gibbet. In contrast, Boydell's riverscape is well-ordered and serene. The buildings, though ramshackle in places when examined closely, appear to be of a generally sound and solid construction and, with the offer of refreshment indicated by the advertisement of wine, welcoming and hospitable too. The men on the shore in an otherwise unpopulated scene are relaxed in their postures, apparently relatively free from the cares and strains of hard maritime labour more commonly associated with the commercial river. Even the sky lends a degree of optimism to the scene as it floods the view with a sunlight which brightens the river frontages and illuminates the Thames as it begins its meander around the Isle of Dogs and onwards towards the Royal Docks at Deptford and Woolwich via the majestic river frontage of Greenwich's Royal Naval Hospital and the great shipyards at Blackwall. Instead of Hogarth's hapless cargo of delinquents, Boydell places a wherry carrying a company of well-dressed passengers in the centre of his river scene, day-trippers who closely scrutinise the surroundings of the downriver Thames. From this evidence it is possible to conclude that beyond his expressed desire to present an informative view, Boydell's intention is that the viewer might relate to the party of civilised travellers taking pleasure in the spectacles of Limehouse Reach. Such a display of civility, order and efficiency has, in Boydell's hands, the potential to evoke civic, national and even imperial pride in an otherwise unedifying stretch of the commercial Thames in an impoverished and dangerous neighbourhood.

The disparity that exists between Hogarth's unembellished and brutal representation of the commercial river and Boydell's arguably idealised image was further magnified in subsequent views of Limehouse Reach in which Boydell was also highly influential. Robert Dodd (1748-1815) painted and engraved a series of six dockyard views, which were published by John Boydell and his nephew Josiah (1752-1817) as a set in their 1794 catalogue, demonstrating the senior publisher's continued interest in the downstream, commercial Thames in spite of his primary commitment to the Shakespeare Gallery venture at this stage in his career. In addition to the dockyard subjects considered later in this chapter, Dodd produced images of Thames subjects which included *Greenwich from the Isle of Dogs* (1792) and *View of the River & Shipping at Limehouse* (1793) [Fig. 23].⁹² The Isle of Dogs picture shows people at leisure with cattle grazing beside the wall which protected this tongue of reclaimed marshland from flooding, while the latter was published as a hand-coloured aquatint in 1793 and formed part of the collection of prints called *Seaports*. Dodd made two series of seaport and dockyard prints, the first and earlier collection comprised the royal dockyards at Woolwich, Deptford, Portsmouth, Plymouth and Chatham. The second series consists of views at Greenwich, Limehouse, the Tower and Dover. In the same way that Rocque's map and Boydell's view aligns the commercial Thames with locations of national importance, Dodd gives Limehouse equal billing with renowned river sites and seaports. In Dodd's hands, locations such as the Isle of Dogs, Limehouse Reach and the adjacent riverside environments were transformed into georgic idylls. In *View of the River & Shipping at Limehouse* Dodd's composition captures the broad sweep of the Thames at Limehouse Hole where, beneath a sturdy windmill and the tower of St Anne's church, cows graze on the grassy banks, reminiscent of the more rural environment through which the western reaches of the Thames flowed. Beyond the windmill, one of two at Limehouse Hole with a further eight along Millwall used for crushing oilseed, can be seen Hill and Mellish's Breach Dockyard. These references point very specifically to the commercial nature of this section of the river without dominating the scene with a mercantile theme. In this respect Dodd's Thames images are a paradigm of the works of artists such as William Anderson, Thomas Mellish and Francis Holman [see Figs 27, 28 and 90] who also present a positive, patriotic slant in their depictions of the commercial reaches of the Thames.⁹³ In Dodd's *Limehouse* there are well-dressed children at play and in the foreground coopers employ traditional craft skills in repairing barrels on the raised river wall. All is apparently calm on the river too, with a small quantity of moored ships in the foreground and in the distance as the river curves towards the city, unlike Pennant's account in *Of London* published in 1790, in which he described 'the whole river [...] for a vast way, [...] covered with a double forest of masts, with a narrow avenue in mid-channel'.⁹⁴ The Thames' foreshore as shown in Dodd's print is populated by various river workers and their uniformed superiors who are in the process of discharging a cargo of Baltic timber from ship to lighter and timber rafters are preparing rafts for towing to timber yards and shipyards, but even these workers are portrayed in relaxed postures with leisurely attitude.

At the centre of Dodd's composition is a group of elegant strollers, their presence echoing the role of Boydell's river-borne spectators [see Fig. 21]. These figures include a well

⁹² NMM: BHC3867.

⁹³ For Francis Holman and William Anderson see Ch. 3, pp. 110-11.

⁹⁴ Pennant, T. (1790), p. 281.

turned-out gentleman sporting a conical black hat which identifies him as a Quaker, a religious group generally respected for their commercial nous.⁹⁵ Here the Quaker indicates his regard for the river view and what it represents by proudly encompassing the scene with a sweep of his cane. His two fashionably attired female companions gaze upon the scene, their stances intimating that they too are impressed by the view before them. In this composition, the viewer engages with the commercial river from the perspective of this leisured assembly as they promenade in the heart of one of the most densely populated and transient neighbourhoods in London as if they are taking a stroll in the grounds of a private country estate. Here, Dodd has successfully couched the commercial nature of the downstream Thames in georgic terms by presenting the river and its associated activities as virtuous.⁹⁶ At this time many viewed the urban centre of London with suspicion, associating it with the crueller aspects of commerce and trade such as greed, corruption and poverty, while in the British imagination the country landscape was associated with social virtue.⁹⁷ By softening the edges of the commercial reaches of the Thames with pastoral imagery more commonly associated with the Thames as it flows through valleys flanked by the Chilterns and Cotswolds from its Gloucestershire source, Dodd has taken an important yet predominantly urban location on the commercial Thames and moulded it into a scene permeated with Englishness and devoid of negative associations. While Boydell's version of Limehouse aligns itself with the aggrandisement of the urban riverscape more in tune with views of colonial landscapes or ports, Dodd's Thames might be viewed as a physical and metaphorical conduit connecting town and country and linking the countryside to the city.⁹⁸ A similar effect can be traced in contemporary works featuring the Thames, especially those taken from the popular artistic viewpoint of One Tree Hill above Greenwich. For example, in *The Evening Coach, London in the Distance* (1805) by Philip James de Loutherbourg, the viewer is presented with the image of a speeding evening coach as it travels away from London and passes across rural Blackheath, effectively escaping the town for the country.⁹⁹ The downriver Thames, busy with commercial shipping, appears in the distant background, a cipher for the urban life that is left behind.

From Wapping to Woolwich

In their images of Limehouse both Boydell and Dodd have taken a notorious workaday Thames location and presented it in a positive light. Limehouse was more commonly associated with the seamy nature of London's maritime community. Here, the shipping that was emblematic of Britain's commercial and naval power is majestic and well ordered and, it is suggested, that

⁹⁵ In the eighteenth century Quakers were widely perceived as being trustworthy and many were successful in commerce through their integrity in economic matters; see Davies, T. (2000).

⁹⁶ For a discussion of georgic and the links between the economic realms of country, city and empire, see O'Brien, K. (1999), pp. 160-79: '...British versions of the georgic mode presented [...] a model of social self-understanding which allowed them to comprehend the country and the city as separate yet integrated spheres of activity within an expanding British Empire'.

⁹⁷ See Williams, R. (1985), pp. 46-54.

⁹⁸ For views of colonial ports and comparisons with London see McCreery, C. (1999); for an examination of Britain's early imperial landscape art see Crowley, J. (2011).

⁹⁹ YCBA: B1981.25.219.

the patriotic qualities of the Thames might be admired by genteel spectators from either the river or its banks. John Boydell's print *A View taken near the Store House, at Deptford* (1750) offers a further example of early artistic engagement with the commercial river [Fig. 24]. On the face of it, *Deptford* is a passive image comprising of a quiet stretch of open river, a few ships and some sturdy buildings. But in a similar way that a closer inspection of Boydell's *View of Limehouse* reveals significant details which may not be immediately obvious to the modern observer, *Deptford* also holds clues which point to preparations for war, signifiers within the image which are likely to have been more relevant to the middling commercial ranks that would have formed the most ready audience for prints of this type. For instance, on the far right of the image Boydell includes a glimpse of a large vessel under construction in the Naval dockyard. Even with a restricted view of this vessel, it is clear that the ship's deck, when completed, will be higher than the roof-level of the three-storey storehouse, giving scale to the vastness and dominating power of the warships that were constructed here. In Boydell's view, the expanse of river dominates the scene and the eye is drawn towards the familiar outline of Greenwich Hospital in the distance, but not before it pauses to assess the hulls of two small vessels anchored midstream. The ships are only partially constructed, and they are being completed by means of a floating workshop barge which is positioned between them. This practice and its depiction in Boydell's view of Deptford indicated the practical necessity to free up urgently needed space in the shipyards on shore during what was a period of intense activity in preparation for war. The storehouse itself, known as 'The Grand Storehouse', might have been familiar to Boydell's intended print audience by its reputation as the repository for vital supplies of sails, ropes, blocks and similar equipment essential for the fitting-out of newly-built men of war.¹⁰⁰ In peaceful times, the main function of Deptford was storage of such equipment, but in periods of stress like those around the year Boydell produced this image, these yards were fully engaged in building warships.¹⁰¹ The inclusion of subtle references to the war effort provides sufficient evidence to suggest that through his print Boydell intended to lay specific emphasis on Britain's strength and to instil a level of confidence in her stability and preparedness for impending naval action which would also present a solution for the demobilisation crisis and associated moral panic that followed the War of Austrian Succession in 1748 when thousands of unemployed soldiers and seamen found themselves on the streets of London ready to roister the town and steal when necessary.¹⁰² All this, while simultaneously presenting an overall impression of stoic calm, order and efficiency in relation to the commercial river. Furthermore, Boydell has included lines of masts on the central horizon. These masts represent the commercial ships in the process of loading and unloading in Deptford Creek, a detail which points to a continuation in the healthy and resilient river economy: the import and export of goods facilitated by the Thames.

Deptford, positioned downstream from Limehouse Reach, also boasted an active maritime community. The labourers here were engaged in the commerce of the river as well as the two wet docks and the naval dockyard. In the course of this consideration of images of the commercial river, the significance of the naval dockyards on the Thames at Deptford and

¹⁰⁰ Phillips, H. (1951), p. 24.

¹⁰¹ See CDP (2013). 300 ships were built at Deptford over 308 years between 1551 and 1869. Of these, 72 ships, or 24 per cent of the dockyards total output, were built in the 20 years between 1740 and 1760.

¹⁰² See Rogers, N. (2012).

Woolwich (as well as those at Chatham, Sheerness, Portsmouth and Plymouth) should not be underestimated. Up until the nineteenth century they were the greatest industrial establishments in the country. The dockyards, such as those at Deptford and Woolwich, also took on a symbolic role as not only did they represent the origin and muscle of Britain's Navy, they were also powerful manifestations of the state and, therefore, of royal power.¹⁰³ From the middle of the eighteenth century they grew both in size and significance when international conflict, especially with France, necessitated a naval expansion with an increased demand for warships. The aftermath of the inconclusive War of the Austrian Succession (1740-48) was a time of national anxiety when, as Lincoln has commented, 'the British public was intensely aware of the threat from France, and this influenced debate about the position of British commerce and the role of government in supporting it'.¹⁰⁴ From the 1750s, commerce and national interest came together in ways that promoted patriotic unity and with their reputation of national importance and symbolic significance, the naval dockyards, specifically those situated within a few miles of London on the commercial river, and the launching of ships from them, became a focus for patriotic fervour. This was succinctly put by Jonas Hanway, traveller, Russian trader and pillar of the merchant community, when in 1754 he summed up the priorities of the nation: 'The splendour of this monarchy is supported by commerce, and commerce by naval strength'.¹⁰⁵ Furthermore, a strong merchant marine workforce was essential to the Navy since in wartime it was a source of manpower.¹⁰⁶ In 1761 the merchant Wyndham Beawes expressed a widely held belief when he described the interdependence of trade and the Navy. It was the nation's 'fundamental Maxim', he thought, that 'Trade is the Nursery of Sailors, that Sailors are the Soul of the Navy, that the Navy is the Security of Commerce, and that these two united, produce the Riches, Power and Glory of Great-Britain'.¹⁰⁷ Deptford therefore, as a naval base situated on the commercial river, had very specific national importance.

Echoes of Boydell's 1750 print of Deptford can be identified in Robert Dodd's *A View of the Royal Dockyard at Deptford* (1789) [Fig. 25] which presents a highly detailed scene which is unusual in that the view is looking upriver towards Limehouse rather than downriver towards the architectural grandeur more usually associated with Greenwich. This view forms part of a series of large-scale prints of the dockyards commissioned by Boydell, including Woolwich, Blackwall and Chatham, which emulates Joseph Vernet's series *Portfolio of Prints of French Ports* published in 1765, and the depictions of the royal dockyards at Deptford and Chatham made in 1775 by Richard Paton and John Hamilton Mortimer, the only completed works from a proposed series of prints designed to show the dockyards at full stretch in preparation for the war with America.¹⁰⁸ In his image of Deptford in 1789, Dodd focuses on recording the grandiose sweep of the topography and the ships under construction, with relatively few figures, mostly carpenters and other workers, to represent the human dimension of labour in these images of patriotic endeavour. *Deptford* is a carefully balanced view which takes in the

¹⁰³ See Doran, S. (ed.) (2012), p. 236.

¹⁰⁴ Lincoln, M. (2002), pp. 77-8. France was pursuing a policy of military revival with an intention to dominate both India and America and drive out the British; the Seven Years' War started in 1755.

¹⁰⁵ Hanway, J. (1754), vol. II, p. iv.

¹⁰⁶ Lincoln, M. (2002), p. 78.

¹⁰⁷ Beawes, W. (1761), p. 573.

¹⁰⁸ Clayton, T. (1997), p. 243; for Vernet see NMM: PAH9381-PAH9396; for Paton and Mortimer see NMM: PAH9712 (Chatham) and PAH9729 (Deptford).

expanse of the river from the shoreline, where lighters and rowing boats are shown transporting barrels between ships and the dockyard where ships on the stocks are in varying stages of completion. In the foreground a party in a rowing boat surveys the whole scene from the river along which they are propelled by a pair of leering watermen. On the shoreline, two finely-dressed women promenade beneath a parasol and a gentleman doffs his hat to them in a polite greeting intimating that this was, or at least ought to be, considered as a 'polite' or genteel environment.

Boydell included *A View of Greenwich Hospital* (1751) in his series. Here Deptford, like Greenwich in *A View taken from the Store House, at Deptford* [Fig. 24], appears in the distance.¹⁰⁹ Views of architectural magnificence at Greenwich are ubiquitous, but Boydell's image is particularly rich with maritime connotations. For example, the foremost yacht is the *Caroline*, the vessel used by George II when he visited wounded sailors at the Hospital.¹¹⁰ There are also the more common links which might be drawn between the pensioners who lived in the Naval Hospital and their inherent association with past conflicts. This is reinforced by the backdrop of Deptford and its men-of-war production line. But it is Boydell's *A View of the Blackwall looking towards Greenwich* (1750) which, of all his downriver images, provides perhaps the most revealing information in relation to the commercial Thames [see Fig. 26]. Blackwall Yard, also known as the East India Yard, was founded in about 1587 and was the largest private shipyard on the Thames. The East India Company was formed in 1600 as an organisation of merchant adventurers. The Company took ownership of a substantial part of India under licence from the Crown, supplying its army and managing all its trade with their own funds and their own fleet of ships until 1858, when, following the Rebellion, it was taken over by the Crown and the Company was dissolved. The East India Company's trading vessels were often as large as the biggest men-of-war. They were built to weather the harshest storms of the Atlantic and Indian Oceans and because of the constant threat of piracy they were nearly as heavily armed as naval vessels. Their necessary size combined with the prevalence of mud banks in the Thames meant the Company's vessels could not sail up to the Pool of London like ordinary ships. Instead, they unloaded their cargoes at Blackwall, where the Custom House had a special officer to deal with their imports, and a location which was as synonymous with the commercial aspects of the downstream river as the Legal Quays and Custom House located within the vicinity of the London Thames.¹¹¹ In addition, the East India Company was by far the most prosperous and global maritime trading organisation of the time, and as such it became emblematic of the commercial and political state of the nation.¹¹²

Boydell's view of Blackwall is taken from the northern bank and it features an area known as Perry's Yard which can be seen on the right side of the print, compositionally balanced with merchant shipping which is shown moored offshore. Thames wherries and lighters are scattered across the vast expanse of river, and in the distance Greenwich Hospital appears beyond the low green promontory of the Isle of Dogs. With the predominant business at Blackwall being that of the East India Company rather than the Navy, it is likely that it is the Company's vessels, anchored together in a cluster, that Boydell included in the centre of his

¹⁰⁹ NMM: PAH3287.

¹¹⁰ Phillips, H. (1951), p. 20.

¹¹¹ Maitland, W and Entick, J. (1756), Vol. II, p. 1037. For further reading see Quilley, G. (2002).

¹¹² Francis Holman produced various paintings of ship-building and launches at Blackwall, see for example Fig. 90 discussed in Ch. 3, pp. 110-11.

image. This can be read as an allusion to the commercial wealth of the Company which reflects on the economic strength of the nation as a whole.¹¹³ The large vessel nearing completion shown on the right is probably 'The Falmouth' East Indiaman, which was under construction in 1750, and the inclusion of such a historically accurate detail supports the observation that Boydell was weaving elements of contemporary factual maritime events into these works and thereby tailoring them toward the patriotic discernments of the middling ranks most likely to have kept abreast of maritime events and the machinations of the navy.¹¹⁴ In addition, Boydell's view of Blackwall is teeming with minutely-observed and precisely reproduced detail. For example, in addition to shipbuilding, Blackwall was known for its whitebait and Boydell has included figures fishing for whitebait in the image.¹¹⁵ As with the collapsed latrine in his *Limehouse* view, Boydell adds humour to this river scene. Two heavily-laden barges appear in the lower left of the picture, one with a recumbent bargeman relaxing against the tarpaulin-covered cargo while two barge dogs bark at each other in canine conversation across the water, a sight and sound that was likely to have been both evocative of the commercial river and reminiscent of Hogarth's visual plays on sound and language.¹¹⁶

The representation of Thames workers in the form of jolly bargemen with their skittish dogs in Boydell's *A View of Blackwall* can also be linked to the wider representation of the working poor in eighteenth-century visual culture. Akin to the relaxed figures that loll on the foreshore in his *Limehouse* view, Boydell's characters here exhibit a cheery disposition. In his book on the representation of the rural poor in English landscape painting, John Barrell considers the ideology of landscape representation in relation to rural labour.¹¹⁷ Barrell suggests that artists would have been sensitive to 'the threat which workers themselves might represent as an undisciplined, collective force' and so depictions of the rural poor were 'bound to raise issues about their relation to the classes for whom that art was produced'.¹¹⁸ It is certainly true that the working poor in Boydell's images are generally shown to be in good spirits, living in close harmony with their riverine environment and merging with their surroundings. To follow Barrell's argument, by representing them as such, the artist was consciously 'protect[ing] the sensibilities of the polite' and thereby the images 'express what they [the artist] or their customers wish to believe was true about the [...] poor and their relations [...] with the rest of society'.¹¹⁹ The Thames, especially the downstream, commercial river, provided artists such as Boydell and Dodd with an opportunity to introduce representations of the rural poor into pictures of London in much the same way as the sets of figures known as 'Cries' depicting hawkers and traders that had been a commonplace in European art since the sixteenth century.¹²⁰

¹¹³ Quilley, G. (2011b), p. 145; Quilley argues that 'Being identified so closely with India and the East Indies, with all their long-standing associations in European culture of material luxury and corruption, the company was also a touchstone for cultural anxieties over the effect of luxury upon the nation and its people'. The subject of 'luxury' and its representation is discussed in Ch. 4, p. 138.

¹¹⁴ See Green, H. and Wygram, R. (1881).

¹¹⁵ Below the cluster of East India Company vessels is seen a small boat with fishermen using a fine-mesh net to catch whitebait.

¹¹⁶ For example, *The Enraged Musician* (1741), TB: TO1800.

¹¹⁷ Barrell, J. (1980).

¹¹⁸ See Barrell, J. (1980), pp. 14-16.

¹¹⁹ Barrell, J. (1980), pp. 17-18.

¹²⁰ See Bonehill, J. and Daniels, S. (2009); Fig. 56.

It is possible to draw a direct lineage between Boydell's workers and those represented by Samuel Scott, also c. 1750, in *An Arch of Westminster Bridge*.¹²¹ Alongside the main subject of the bridge's newly built facade, Scott, like Boydell, provided an abbreviated but figural narrative of labour. For instance, on the last piece of scaffolding attached to the bridge two masons exchange a tankard of ale and on the river a boatman puffs contentedly on a long pipe. Elsewhere two other boatmen pause from their work to smoke and talk at leisure. Mark Hallett has surmised that the artist has added these tableaux of relaxed labour as reassurance that 'the conflicts generated within urban society by capitalist expansion, and the gaps which inevitably emerged between the demands of a commercial patriciate and the desires of a plebeian workforce, have [...] been ironed out'.¹²² Similarly, Geoff Quilley has identified that in another painting of the new bridge by Scott, *The Building of Westminster Bridge* (1747), the river workers are so engrossed in their work in the timber yard in the vicinity of the construction site that they do not see the emerging bridge which is the result of their labour.¹²³ Here, maritime labour represents the private industry of the yard which is linked to the political public of Parliament by the emergent bridge.¹²⁴ A further connection can be made here with the manifestation of imperial georgic and its specific association with the colonial landscape as described by Karen O'Brien. O'Brien links the 'georgic revolution' in the seventeenth to eighteenth centuries to 'a new and growing awareness of the British Empire [and a] sense of spatial and economic community with the wider imperial world'.¹²⁵ Such conventions of social understanding can be found in Boydell's patriotic visual articulation of a contented labour force engaged in shipbuilding and the commercial business of London's port, physically and conceptually connected by the Thames to global imperialism. This is compounded by the imagery towards the right hand side of *A View of Blackwall* where the artist includes three ships on the stocks in varying stages of completion. The surrounding dockside is piled high with timber, some of which is in the process of being either winched up from a boat by crane or hauled up the quayside with ropes and sheer manpower. The image of one of the ships under construction is filled with detail representing the bustle of labour; these toiling workers are tiny in proportion to the vast ships they are constructing for the greater good of the nation. Here, Boydell has successfully included a reference to a reassuringly well-organised, efficient and machinelike maritime workforce that symbolises British expansion overseas, presented through the largely distant imagery of labour and the Thames.

In the lower right hand corner of Boydell's Blackwall print, a well-dressed couple survey the entire scene as they are rowed by two smartly attired oarsmen in hats and jackets. Again, Boydell supplies the scene with polite spectators. In this image which is predominantly representative of maritime labour, the artist reassures his audience by including figures with whom the viewer might connect and identify. Dwarfed by the awe-inspiring scene of the vast, open river with its massive industry of shipping and shipbuilding, they look on with what might be perceived to be pleasure, pride and wonderment. This contemplation of a breathtaking view by polite visitors to the commercial Thames, resonates to a certain extent with the

¹²¹ TB: T01193.

¹²² Hallett, M. (1999), p. 204.

¹²³ MMA: 44.56.

¹²⁴ Quilley, G. (1998), p. 145.

¹²⁵ O'Brien, K. (1999), p. 162.

contemporary understanding of the aesthetic quality of the sublime in nature, as set out by Joseph Addison, Mark Akenside and later, Edmund Burke.¹²⁶ Addison's concept of the sublime, for example, was that the three pleasures of the imagination that he identified; greatness, uncommonness, and beauty, 'arise from visible objects', that is, from sight rather than from rhetoric. Increasingly people were travelling to see sights for themselves and to satisfy their curiosity about their country and its past.¹²⁷ The mountains of Wales, the Lake District and Scotland were a particular draw, with travellers paying to visit specially constructed vantage points to sit and contemplate a particularly sublime view or they might take a pleasure boat which would anchor under the more awesome cliffs. Beneath all this was a strong moral theme that reached back to classical Roman antiquity: the contrast between the corrupt city and the virtuous countryside. Whilst the downriver Thames is clearly not the countryside, the manmade scenery that existed there, as described by William Combe in 1794, 'rather calculated to astonish by the peculiarity and grandeur of its objects, than to delight by any native charms', and, as I have described, there is nothing here to imply corruption; just simple honest labour.¹²⁸ Boydell, I suggest, here introduced an element of the industrial sublime which is derivative of the vogue for viewing not just the mountain scenery of Britain, but also the new industrial technology translated into the conventions of sublime landscape. In this case, the depiction of the awesome sight of Thames shipbuilding looming over spectators who gaze up from a diminutive wherry on the vast open river is redolent of the eighteenth century's concept of sublimity achieved through the emphatic grandeur of scale and an early manifestation of the emergent consciousness of the sublimity of London.¹²⁹

Further east on the southern bank of the Thames is Woolwich, also one of England's oldest dockyards with royal connotations harking back to the sixteenth century when it became a naval station under the reign of Henry VIII. In 1748 Thomas Mellish (*fl.* 1761-1778) painted a view of Woolwich from the north bank [Fig. 28]. *Shipping off Woolwich* dates from the end of the war with France but nevertheless evokes the qualities of refinement, liberty and leisure more often associated with the upriver Thames. In Boydell's *A View of Woolwich* (1750) [Fig. 29] the busy scene depicted evokes instead the naval expansion of the mid-eighteenth century. The print shows every shipyard along the riverfront with a new battleship on the stocks. Two men-of-war are at anchor in the foreground. The view looks downriver obliquely making the dockyard the central subject with the Royal Arsenal appearing in the far distance. At the forefront of the image on the right, is a collection of buildings and timber yards. Dockworkers carry goods up a flight of steps which allow for the loading and unloading of barges and other vessels directly from the river. Well-dressed couples promenade along the waterfront to the edge of the docks indicated by a row of masts, one topped with a flagpole. Beyond the masts is shown the clock house and the newly-built church perched solidly on the hillside. On the river itself several wherries transport well-dressed passengers who observe all this activity, their vessels dwarfed by the sheer scale of the men-of-war and the vast expanse of the built-up Woolwich riverfront. Such optimistic imagery employed by Boydell here and

¹²⁶ See Addison, J. (1813); Akenside, M. (1744); Burke, E. (1757).

¹²⁷ See Plumb, J. (1980), p. 129.

¹²⁸ Combe, W. (1794-6), Vol. 2, p. 254.

¹²⁹ See Liversidge, M. and Farrington, J. (1993), p. 175. Liversidge makes this observation with regard to *Blackfriars Bridge, London* (c. 1795) by J. M. W. Turner, WAG, which he compared to Piranesi's prints of monumental Roman structures; Robinson, A. (2004), p. 9.

elsewhere in his downriver views can be framed within discourses of patriotism set against the context of recent war with France.¹³⁰ The scene at Woolwich both presents a means of understanding the scale of potential conflicts through the depiction of the rearmament in progress and at the same time mollifies through a sense of control and reassuring imperialistic muscle. This is reinforced again nearly forty years later when Boydell published Robert Dodd's *The Royal Dockyard at Woolwich* (1789) [Fig. 30] as part of a *Royal Dockyard* set.¹³¹ This Thames scene succeeds in balancing taste and refinement with images of labour. The downriver view is framed with a ship's mast and rigging on the left and the Woolwich Dockyard on the right, with a boat hard up against the lower edge of the picture space. The three occupants of the boat appear to be making their way towards the moored ship which can be glimpsed on the right of the picture. Men are climbing aboard this ship via a rope ladder, whilst others are already balanced high up in the rigging, presumably preparing the vessel for sailing. To the right and slightly behind this grouping, a pair of watermen in their wherry row a party of four passengers, two ladies wearing ostentatiously extravagant hats, and two men, one of whom is indicating the time by standing up and pointing towards the clock house. Their dress and deportment identifies them as members of polite society. On the distant shore, tiny figures can be seen labouring in the dockyard, some clambering over ships and others positioned high up in the rigging.¹³² One of the oarsmen waves his hand in the general direction of the dockyard, encompassing the scene in the manner of the Quaker stroller in Dodd's *View of the River and Shipping at Limehouse* [Fig. 23]. The presence of these visitors and their accompanying gestures impart a sense of nationalistic pride in this downriver location. The dockyard at Woolwich is a site of labour, but like Boydell's depictions of Limehouse, Deptford and Blackwall, Dodd presents a cohesive scene filled with patriotic imagery of economic stability and military strength.

The Picturesque Filter

For forty years after the publication of his original Thames river view series, John Boydell, later in partnership with his nephew Josiah, oversaw the development of a hugely successful print business. In 1789, Boydell began a large Shakespeare venture that included the establishment of a Shakespeare Gallery, the publication of an illustrated edition of Shakespeare's plays, and the release of a folio of prints depicting scenes from Shakespeare's works. Some of the most illustrious painters of the day contributed, such as Benjamin West and Henry Fuseli. Throughout his life, Boydell dedicated time to civic projects, donating artworks to government institutions and standing for public office, even following the trajectory of Hogarth's

¹³⁰ For example see Quilley, G. (2011b), p. 202: '...Lord Kame's remarks on patriotism being inculcated by war, in that war more than any other human activity induces 'sympathetic feelings' across the entire spectrum of the nation, and thereby provides a uniquely powerful force for social cohesion in commercial society.'

¹³¹ The set comprised views of Woolwich, Deptford, Portsmouth, Plymouth and Chatham.

¹³² The convicts held in floating prison hulks at Woolwich and forced to work on the foreshore were an attraction for sightseers. Like the well-ordered maritime labour force presented in Boydell's views, these river workers were also promoted as a model of keen efficiency, for example see *A View near Woolwich in Kent, shewing the Employment of the Convicts for the Hulks* (n.d.), Anon., NMM: PAJ0774. For further reading see Branch-Johnson, W. (1957).

industrious apprentice and becoming Lord Mayor of London in 1790.¹³³ Despite his successful career, the French Revolutionary Wars led to a cessation in Continental trade in prints and without this business, Boydell's firm went into decline. By the time of his death in 1804 Boydell was close to bankruptcy. It was during the period of decline in the 1790s that Boydell returned his attention to the subject of the river Thames, a move that was almost certainly galvanised by nationalistic intentions for the second time in his career as a printmaker and publisher.

Views of the commercial Thames, underpinned with nationalistic imagery as premeditated by Boydell's 1750-51 series, had become increasingly popular during the second half of the eighteenth century and in its closing years two popular collections of Thames prints bound into picture-books were published. The tradition of picture-books of 'picturesque' views of rivers began with the work of William Gilpin, a pioneer in the appreciation of the British landscape who recorded his *Observations on the River Wye* in 1770.¹³⁴ The associations between landscape and 'picturesque' principles date back to Joseph Addison's 1712 series on 'the pleasures of the imagination'. Addison compared landscapes to verbal and visual representations of them, concluding 'we find the Works of Nature still more pleasant, the more they resemble those of Art'.¹³⁵ Gilpin popularised the modern sense of the word 'picturesque' by using the term 'to denote such objects, as are proper subjects for painting'.¹³⁶ Under these terms an appreciation of 'picturesque' scenery is a sign of sensibility and taste. However, Gilpin's definition was contested by Uvedale Price who instead identified the 'picturesque' by distinguishing it from the sublime and the beautiful, asserting that the word 'is applied to every object, and every type of scenery, which has been, or might be represented with good effect in painting'.¹³⁷ Furthermore, in 1805 Richard Payne Knight published his associationist argument about natural scenery's having greater appeal for the person familiar with classical pastoral poetry: 'The spectator, having his mind enriched with the embellishments of the painter and the poet, applies them, by the spontaneous association of ideas, to the natural objects presented to his eye, which thus acquire ideal and imaginary beauties'.¹³⁸ These arguments, from Gilpin to Payne Knight, coincided with the publication of several books of views along the Thames. In the context of these images, particularly those of the commercial river below London Bridge published by Boydell, the principles of the 'picturesque' can be considered as a visual ideology that staged a national identity.¹³⁹

The first Thames picture-book was instigated by Samuel Ireland when he produced his own collection of modest sepia aquatints published in two volumes as *Picturesque Views on the River Thames* in 1791, a book which was the second in his series of picturesque views which he followed with similar treatments of the rivers Medway, Warwickshire Avon, Wye and Severn.¹⁴⁰ In *Picturesque Views on the River Thames* Ireland describes London's river, specifically referring to it as 'a scene of industry, and a source of opulence, to which we owe so much both in convenience, salubrity, and every relative blessing that can add to the greatness

¹³³ This is discussed in Ch. 4.

¹³⁴ Gilpin, W. (1782).

¹³⁵ Addison, J. (1813), 3. p. 550;

¹³⁶ Gilpin, W. (1792), 2, p. 42.

¹³⁷ Price, U. (1810), 1, p. 37.

¹³⁸ Knight, R. (1805), p. 150.

¹³⁹ See McLean, I. (2007), p. 26.

¹⁴⁰ Ireland, S. (1791).

of the first commercial city in the world'.¹⁴¹ As the author leads the reader into the less familiar territories below London bridge the emotive descriptions compensate for what might have been lacking in terms of fully 'picturesque' imagery:

Our attention is now pointed to the glorious scene which presents itself from Tower-wharf down the river, through what is called the Pool; where groves of shipping of all nations appear emulous to unlade their burthens, from each quarter of the globe, into the lap of Britannia; and "*Where the crowded ports
With rising masts, an endless prospect yield,
With labours burn, and echo to the shouts
Of hurried sailor, as he hearty waves
His last adieu, and loosening every sheet,
Resigns the spreading vessel to the wind.*"¹⁴²

John Boydell, in his bid to capitalise on this emergent demand for the picturesque, specifically picturesque Thames views, combined his firm's existing facilities with his own forty years of experience in the topographical print market and commissioned a book titled *An History of the Thames* (1794-6).¹⁴³ The anticipated revenue from this venture might have been intended to counteract the impact wrought by the decline in the continental print market or, as Sven Bruntjen has suggested, it was a poorly considered luxury 'for a firm whose primary occupation should have been the rapid completion of the Shakespeare [Gallery]'.¹⁴⁴ However, it is likely that Boydell's inspiration derived from Ireland's project and, as Bruntjen speculates, Boydell even attempted to dissuade Ireland from completing his *Picturesque Views* by publishing misleading information about his own *An History's* probable publication date.¹⁴⁵ It had been Boydell's original and ambitious intention for *An History* to be the first in a series of five volumes devoted to the rivers of Great Britain including the Severn, the Forth and the Clyde. However, due to the constant financial losses experienced by Boydell and adverse criticism of *An History*, it was decided soon after the appearance of the second volume to suspend publication of the three remaining rivers in the series.

Boydell commissioned Joseph Farington (1747-1821) to illustrate *An History*, with William Combe (1741-1823) engaged to provide the text. Relying on his personal ties with the gentry and the hospitality they extended to him, Combe focussed his attention on their Thames-side estates and the associated commanding prospects. His preference for these upriver locations is reflected in the wealth of description of grand properties and details of the families who lived in them. But when Combe describes the views of the river below London Bridge, the commentary halts at the Tower and judiciously skips ahead to Deptford, without so much as a mention for the bustling maritime neighbourhoods of Wapping, Ratcliffe and Limehouse. In the second volume of the publication, Combe exhibits a thinly-veiled distaste for the commercial Thames below London Bridge:

¹⁴¹ Ireland. S. (1791), p. xi.

¹⁴² Ireland (1791), pp. 234-5.

¹⁴³ Combe, W. (1794). See also Harrison, W. (1775) *A New and Universal History* with views of Deptford, Greenwich and Woolwich.

¹⁴⁴ Bruntjen, S. (1985), p. 113.

¹⁴⁵ Bruntjen, S. (1985), pp. 158-162.

The scenery of the river in this part of it, is rather calculated to astonish by the peculiarity and grandeur of its objects, than to delight by any native charms [...and when] considered more by the mind than the eye, [...] produce an impressive effect, on the reflection of our national grandeur, strength and security, than as objects to adorn or enrich a picture.¹⁴⁶

An History of the River Thames was not well-received by the Georgian public. To a large extent criticism was related to the aquatinting and colouring of the prints (executed by Joseph Constantine Stadler (fl. 1780-1822)) and the verbosity of Combe's text, but there was also disapproval of Farington's depictions of the Thames, particularly the images of locations below London Bridge. It seems that few critics appreciated Farington's intention of producing topographically accurate views which avoided painterly 'picturesque' qualities.¹⁴⁷ In addition, a public nurtured on sepia-toned aquatints reflecting the popular picturesque theories of the day were not convinced by Farington's depictions of the downriver Thames.¹⁴⁸ As Sven Bruntjen has noted, it was Henry Fuseli (1741-1835) who both recognised and defended the importance of the topographical qualities of Farington's Thames views, in terms of their nationalistic significance:¹⁴⁹

When the topographer directs his labours to describe spots important to all ages from their celebrity of situation, or the achievements of their inhabitants, no minuteness of detail, no delineation of mouldering objects and fugitive appearances, can be deemed trifling...and this we join the delineator of the banks and shores of the Thames, though he neither astonish with cataracts, nor enchant with elysiums, whilst to present and future contemplation he traces the most important part of a country dear to fame, whose race nearly peopled one hemisphere, balances the power of both, distributes the wealth of the globe, irradiates science, soars on the wing of fancy, the first in discovery and every useful art.¹⁵⁰

It is precisely this inclusion and exclusion of 'minuteness of detail', 'mouldering objects' and 'fugitive appearances' in the visual representations of the river below London Bridge which proved problematic when depicting the downriver Thames. Fuseli is suggesting that topographical views assume significance by their association with historical or ideological content, and this resonates especially with the commercial Thames in the locations discussed in this chapter. Early representations of the commercial river may be less common than upriver views, consisting principally of glorifications of the royal architecture and the view

¹⁴⁶ Combe, W. (1794), Vol. 2, p. 253.

¹⁴⁷ See Andrews, M. (1994), p. 290: 'In a period of rapid change, as had been experienced over the architectural and industrial revolutions in the last decades of the eighteenth century, the remains of the obsolescent culture acquired an antique charm which grafted itself onto the new developing taste for the Picturesque.'

¹⁴⁸ See Copley, S. and Garside, P. (eds) (1994).

¹⁴⁹ Bruntjen, S. (1985), p. 177.

¹⁵⁰ *The Analytical Review*, Vol. 19, p. 113, June 1794; Farington identified Fuseli as the author of the review referenced in Bruntjen, S. (1985), p. 177.

from One Tree Hill at Greenwich, but as the eighteenth century progressed the commercial river appears to have attracted marine artists who recognised the potential of images which made the sort of associations Fuseli identified, for example the great activity and industry of the downstream river, even if Fuseli's 'mouldering objects' and 'fugitive appearances' had to be disguised or replaced to present, instead, a charming 'elysium'.

An History is largely concerned with the riverine views to the west of London Bridge, echoing the spirit of Gilpin's *Observations on the River Wye* in its suggestion that the reader, instead of conforming to the usual unimaginative, eighteenth-century practice of getting across the country as quickly and as safely as horse or vehicle would permit, should actually stop and look around, even pause before certain set-piece views which were calculated to give aesthetic pleasure amounting to exaltation. These text-based publications offering a programmatic, theoretical approach to picturesque views, such as Gilpin's *Observations*, prompted a new generation of English travellers to explore the British countryside just as war with France made the 'Grand Tour' too dangerous.¹⁵¹ During such periods the delights of the national scene were offered up as an alternative destination. In these terms, to view the Thames and to appreciate 'its native beauty, the private taste, the public magnificence, the general wealth, the universal commerce', and the 'unrivalled prosperity of our country' was to be conscious of an important aspect of national identity.¹⁵² In 1807, Southey wrote:

Within the last thirty years a taste for the picturesque has sprung up, and a course of summer travelling is now looked upon to be essential as ever a course of spring physic was in old times. While one of the flocks of fashion migrates to the sea-coast, another flies off [...] to take views of the country [...] to study the picturesque.¹⁵³

Furthermore, as Malcolm Andrews has identified, this period saw the beginnings of a picturesque tourism of London which developed into depictions that he describes as 'the metropolitan Picturesque', a phenomenon borne out in both publications, the histories and the picturesque views, which continued to be produced well into the early nineteenth century.¹⁵⁴

Farington largely represents the lower stretches of the river in the City of London within the format of Canaletto type compositions. However, this treatment changes below London Bridge with the first picture to accompany Combe's description of the commercial river which is *A View of Greenwich from Deptford Yard* [Fig. 31]. This is a simple image that is free from the traditional motifs associated with great events, such as the launch of a vessel or imposing scenery featuring ships under construction. Instead, Farington takes a viewpoint west of the riverfront at the Royal Dockyard, Deptford, to provide a clear view towards Greenwich Hospital which can be seen in the far distance. The accompanying text by Combe enthuses on the extent of the private docks at Deptford, commenting that in terms of their

¹⁵¹ Although the demography the 'Grand Tour' had changed from strictly aristocratic to a more bourgeois pursuit, it was interrupted by the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars.

¹⁵² Combe, W. (1794-96), Vol. 2, p. 294.

¹⁵³ Quoted in Adams, B. (1983), p. xx.

¹⁵⁴ See Skrine, H. (1801); Cooke, W. and Owen, S. (1811); Havell, W. (1811); Westall, W. and Owen, S. (1828); Tomblason, W. and Fearnside, W. (1834). Andrews, M. (1994), pp. 282-98.

quantity, the number of ships being built in them and the associated stores they 'seem to be rather so many naval arsenals of a considerable kingdom, than a mere partial apparatus employed in the service of commerce'. Combe adds that 'These docks offer their wonders in all the forms and operations of ship-building to the contemplative voyage of the river'.¹⁵⁵ However, the text is not supported by Farington's view which instead looks away from Deptford towards the attractive buildings at Greenwich, tactfully avoiding a visual confrontation with the commercial dockside that might detract from its stirring description.

The refining treatment of the commercial Thames and Farington's arguably 'picturesque' approach in his views, conforms to the generalised observation by Dan Cruikshank and Neil Burton that eighteenth-century artists depicted London in a manner which ignored 'the evidence, recorded by numerous foreign visitors that Georgian London was covered with a pall of sooty coal smoke' and 'invariably took a cheerful view, preferring imagined sunlight and blue sky to the reality of black clouds and smog'.¹⁵⁶ In terms of the physical work along the commercial river, Andrew Hemingway has noted that although many of Farington's river scenes contain representations of barges, there are few images of labour, partly because the artist concentrated on commanding views in which, as already has been noted with reference to Boydell's 1750-1 series, figures are generally reduced and distanced.¹⁵⁷ The people introduced into these river views have been handled with caution. Gilpin's words are particularly relevant to a consideration of Farington's treatment in *A View of Greenwich from Deptford Yard*: 'the industrious mechanic is a more pleasing object, than the loitering peasant. But in a picturesque light, it is otherwise: the arts of industry are rejected and even idleness [...] adds dignity to a character'.¹⁵⁸ This downriver Thames image, published by John Boydell, encapsulates the late eighteenth-century style of depicting the commercial reaches of London's vast river. Looking out from Blackwall, the industrial shipbuilding docks are kept hidden behind the viewer but their existence is alluded to by the lifting tackle which dangles in the view much like the workman's bucket that represents the construction work in progress in Canaletto's *The City seen through an Arch of Westminster Bridge*.¹⁵⁹ The massive maritime workforce for which the downriver locations from Woolwich to Wapping were renowned, are represented by the group of only seven figures on the quayside, two of whom stand at leisure. The shipping on the river is ordered and the river is calm, uncongested and serene. Finally, the view focuses on the architecture of the Royal Naval Hospital in the distance, the downriver equivalent of St Paul's or the Tower.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have challenged the assumption that the visual imagery typically associated with the port city during the long eighteenth century rarely engaged with its downriver locations. Certainly the image of the Thames during this period tends to be associated with the work of Dutch and Italian-derived artists who successfully associated the post-Great Fire

¹⁵⁵ Combe, W. (1794), Vol 2, p. 242.

¹⁵⁶ Cruikshank, D. and Burton, N. (1990), p. 4.

¹⁵⁷ Hemingway, A. (1992), pp. 220.

¹⁵⁸ Gilpin, W. (1786), p. 10. See Klingender, F. (1972), pp. 73-4.

¹⁵⁹ CDN; see Beddington, C. (2006), Fig. 24, pp. 104 and 107.

Thames cityscape between Westminster and St Paul's with Italian classicism. With its new bridge and buildings, there was an image constructed to present London as Venice on the Thames or a reincarnated Rome in views that kept polite society noticeably separate from the workaday mechanics of the river space. However, this was not the definitive image of the Thames in eighteenth-century visual culture and the volume of art historical attention it attracts eclipses a significant output of contemporaneous depictions of the river by British artists. These works are important because they are evidence that although the purely commercial reaches of the Thames presented an undefined and problematic environment for artists, the port city was given a far more expansive treatment than has been previously considered by art historical scholarship. Furthermore, images of the commercial river present carefully considered visualisations of the downriver Thames which are shown to produce a *concordia discors* when considered alongside more familiar images of locations above old London Bridge. This argument is substantiated by the evidence of works by Samuel Scott, John Cleveley, John Boydell, Robert Dodd and Joseph Farington, whose depictions of the downriver Thames as a well-ordered and civilised arena are loaded with symbolic assertions of economic vitality and naval strength. These topographical views contain judicious allusions to the importance of the commercial Thames via imagery that connected the river with a patriotic national identity in response to what was implicit further upriver where the Thames was more conveniently furnished with the emblems of royalty, church, government, trade and empire.

Central to this chapter is the repositioning of culturally significant depictions of London's commercial river into the wider context of the image of the Thames in the long eighteenth century. It establishes that the depiction of the Thames was more widespread, especially in the medium of print, and reached a broader audience than the relatively expensive oil paintings produced for patrician audiences. However, printed works featuring the commercial aspects of London's river are not limited to views of Limehouse, Deptford, Blackwall and Woolwich. Alongside the proliferation in the visual representation of the Thames in the mid-eighteenth century was a growing alternative counterculture of satirical works in which the polite view of the port was frequently subverted. Here, the image of the Thames was employed to draw attention to topical concerns, or to upset the patrician order by promoting the seamier side of London's great river to centre stage. In the next chapter I will argue that instead of disguising the mercantile associations of the port or reducing its workers to 'picturesque' figures in the landscape, there was a significant output of visual material that highlights, embraces and even celebrates the excitements and degradations of the urban maritime Thames.

CHAPTER 2

The Carnavalesque Thames: 'Confronting the polite with the vernacular'¹

Nothing is more charming and attractive than the Thames on a fine summer evening: the conversations you hear are most entertaining, for I must tell you that it is the custom for anyone on the water to call out whatever he pleases to other occupants of boats, even were it to the King himself, and no one has the right to be shocked. [...] Most bargemen are very skilful in this mode of warfare; they use singular and even quite extraordinary terms, and generally very coarse and dirty ones, and I cannot explain them to you.²

During the course of the long eighteenth century artists turned the image of the Thames into a symbol of commercial wealth and naval power in pictures of London which came to represent a national identity.³ Alongside such glorious views which accentuated the positive existed a raft of images, mainly satirical, reflecting an alternative, conflicting version of the capital's river together with its associated maritime communities and characters. Such interpretations were expressed both in visual art and literature and suggest that the celebratory images, which represented an aristocratic, triumphant and commercially unparalleled Thames, were underscored by a contradictory corpus of river imagery in the form of satirical or humorous engravings. Described by Vic Gatrell as 'the reverse of polite', these printed works were 'bought by well-born or prospering customers' and effectively 'open the way to a panoramic survey of metropolitan mentalities and manners'.⁴ This world of satire gave vent to the subversive qualities of London types amongst whom transgressive characters from the world of the Thames, such as watermen and sailors, linked impoliteness with a patriotic discourse. Whilst many of the social satires were commentaries on current gossip and scandal, manners and fashions, there was also a category which mined the comic potential offered by the shared experience of the pleasures and vexations of London living. As such, these satires frequently defined and reinforced stereotypical characteristics of those whose lives were inextricably entwined with the nature of the working Thames. The imagery employed has its emphasis on the earthy and grotesque and often signifies the symbolic destruction of authority and official culture in relation to the river space. This chimes with aspects of carnival or 'carnavalesque' as defined by Mikhail Bakhtin in his analysis of works by Rabelais. Carnavalesque refers to a mode of expression that subverts and liberates the assumptions of more dominant styles using humour and chaos achieved most notably through what Bakhtin describes, rather aptly for this discourse, as the 'various genres of billingsgate: curses, oaths, popular blazons' or 'folk humour, reflecting [...] a single humorous aspect of the world'.⁵ In this respect, the more

¹ Maidment, B. (2001), p. 44.

² César de Saussure (1705-1783) quoted in Muyden, M. Van (1995), pp. 58-9.

³ Eighteenth-century national identity was defined and national progress or decline was measured by reference to the dominant concepts of commerce and luxury; see Quilley, G. (2011b), p. 145.

⁴ Gatrell, V. (2006), p. xxi.

⁵ Bakhtin, M. (1968), p. 5.

dominant styles are the representations of London's river as an organised and polite space as it appeared in exhibited oil paintings. By turning this on its head, it is as if the Thames and those notorious locations along its banks such as Billingsgate and Wapping represent spaces within which, much like during a carnival, 'there is a temporary suspension of all hierarchic distinctions and barriers among men and of certain norms and prohibitions of usual life', which is evidenced in depictions of fishwives, watermen and sailors.⁶ Moreover, this genre of satirical representation of London's relationship with its river often included explicit imagery which was accepted and understood by an audience that was, for example, equally inclined to associate the Fleet Ditch with filth as they were to compare it favourably to the Rialto Bridge in Venice in high art [see Fig. 14]. Satirical scenes located in London linked plebeian lowlife and transgression in an expression of impolite street culture which undermines the veneer of polite presentation in high art paintings. Satirical prints were produced rapidly and spontaneously. Consequently subjects that were considered amusing illuminate what people felt about the city.⁷ Here the Thames becomes central, forming a linking theme between a cross-section of various types that represent a form of Englishness constructed through a sense of people. Mark Hallett has argued that 'graphic satire enjoyed a crucial but ambivalent relationship with the narratives and representations of 'politeness' [...] central to the cultural make-up of urban society in this period'.⁸ This chapter will explore such conflicting and overt images of Thames-related subjects in drawings, prints and paintings by artists such as Francis Hayman and George Morland and humorous caricatures by James Gillray and Thomas Rowlandson. Their subjects include spendthrift cavorting sailors, violent press gangs, ribald watermen displaying their outrageous 'water wit', brawling fish-wives with their Billingsgate bawdry and other problematic characters taken from neighbourhoods commonly associated with the port city. These pictures, in deviating from the celebratory and idealised view of the Thames found in high art, instead represented the transient, socially isolated and frequently criminalised class who eked out a living from the working river.⁹

Relentless Ruffians

When James Boswell and Samuel Johnson travelled by river from Temple Stairs to Greenwich on a morning in July 1763, they 'were entertained with the immense number and variety of ships that were lying at anchor, and with the beautiful country on each side of the river'.¹⁰ Boswell records that upon arrival in Greenwich he took from his coat-pocket a copy of Johnson's poem *London* (1738), and read out aloud the lines:

On Thames's banks in silent thought we stood:
Where Greenwich smiles upon the silver flood.¹¹

⁶ Bakhtin, M. (1968), p. 15.

⁷ See Gatrell, V. (2006), p. 31.

⁸ Hallett, M. (1999), p. 2.

⁹ For eighteenth-century Thames-side labouring classes see Rediker, M. (1987), pp. 21-31; Linebaugh, P. (1991), ch. 4.

¹⁰ Boswell, J. (1791), Vol. 1, p. 204.

¹¹ Johnson, S. (1738), pp. 21-22.

Johnson's *London* is based on Juvenal's *Third Satire* in which the narrator's friend Umbricius is about to leave Rome to live in Cumae and escape from the vices and dangers of the capital city.¹² In Johnson's version the character Thales is the modern equivalent of Umbricius. Thales travels to Cambria (Wales) in order to escape the problems of London. These are identified in *London* as crime, corruption and the squalor of the poor which disables natural social progress and harmony: 'Slow rises worth, by poverty depressed'.¹³ Personifications of Malice, Rapine, and Accident 'conspire' to attack those who live there and destroy London. It is significant that Boswell recites from this poem because the overall theme of *London* is at odds with the meaning of the chosen lines. These lines, taken out of context, refer only to a smiling Greenwich and the Thames as a 'silver flood'; whereas Johnson's polemic is a rail against the 'relentless ruffians' that supposedly populate the city. This suggests that Boswell and Johnson were perfectly aware that the 'smiling' image of Greenwich and the Thames was illusory, and were intending the lines to be understood ironically.

Boswell is making a reference to the mythical river: the picturesque river of the eighteenth century that by dint of association and tradition remained the paradigm of the Thames in a period when it was in fact undergoing extensive redevelopments in terms of new bridges and docks. This topographical transformation of the Thames during the eighteenth century and its representation in visual culture will be explored in Chapter 3. In this chapter I will consider the eighteenth century representation of the Thames through the portrayal of those Londoners who were inextricably linked to the river because of where they lived and how they earned a living. The Thames brought them prosperity through trade and communication with what was outside the city, as well as the water which resourced so much industry along its banks. But for others the Thames represented a myriad of fears over the ungovernability of the river, the dangers of pollution and disease and anxieties over what was foreign to the city, whether in the form of immigrants or culture.

Pollution, disease and the anxiety over the character of the maritime communities are the subject of *The Alley* by Alexander Pope (1688-1744), a six-verse poem written in 1709 and published in 1727. Here Pope provides a piece of low realism which offers a disdainful view of riverside working-class communities at the opposite end of London to his own Twickenham retreat and to other places with pastoral (and Spenserian) associations such as Richmond and Windsor.¹⁴ Pope describes the poor living conditions of families who live in 'houses low' in the 'bad neighbourhood[s]' of the downriver communities. Pope's mention of broken pavements, the stench of rotting fish, brandy and tobacco shops, sailors' jackets hung up to dry, fishing nets and foul language conjure up an image of a poor and degenerate maritime environment. Contemporary writers described the smell of the riverine environment as spicy with the scent of cargoes: a heady concoction of cinnabar, ginger, teas, sandalwood and hemp underpinned with the whiff of sea-worn ropes and tar, not to mention the pungent stench of copper salts from the ink and dye works at Deptford and the many leather tanneries around Bermondsey, or the choking stink of the whale oil produced at the Greenland Docks.¹⁵ Pope draws the

¹² Juvenal. Trans. Rudd, N. and Barr, W. (2008).

¹³ Bate, W. (1955), p. 18; Johnson, S. (1738), p. 177.

¹⁴ See Allen, R. (1998), p. 33-35. Allen notes that 'Pope employs the *Faerie Queen* stanzaic form' which while remote from the Spenserian romance reinforces the contrast with pastoral upriver locations of the 'silver Thames'.

¹⁵ See Stockwin, J. (2012).

reader's attention to a retired Billingsgate fishwife: 'There learned she speech from tongues that never cease' and now "bitch' and 'rogue' [was] her answer to all'. Pope was offering a generalised description of places such as Deptford, Woolwich and Wapping 'smelling strong of pitch' which, in the final lines of his poem, he counterbalances against the 'grots, statues, urns' and 'Vales, spires, meand'ring streams' which adorn 'the silver Thames' providing a satirical subversion of the idea of a *concordia discors* between the upriver and downriver locations discussed in Chapter 1. The downriver locations like Wapping were represented as squalid and malodorous places rife with disease, dangerous for the unwary with their disorientating mazes of tiny streets and alleys, with intimidating names like Cat's Hole, Shovel Alley, Harebrain Court, Hog Yard, Black Dog, Black Boy Alleys, the Rookery and Dark Entry. In *The Journal of a Voyage to Lisbon* (1755) Henry Fielding adopts a sardonic tone when he describes being delayed on the Thames in the vicinity of Wapping and Redriffe and 'tasting a delicious mixture of the air of both these sweet places and enjoying the concord of sweet sounds of seamen, watermen, fish-women, oyster-women, and of all the vociferous inhabitants of both shores'.¹⁶ Wapping is held up as a lawless area, with its dangerous central road of Ratcliffe Highway running through it. The highway was lined with shops, ship's chandlers, doss-houses, brothels, 'low' taverns, tenements, and alleyways and populated by vagrants and impoverished sailors. Wapping and its inhabitants lay beyond the jurisdiction of the City, but nevertheless the location accommodated Execution Dock where those accused of crimes at sea, particularly piracy, were hanged.¹⁷ Here their bodies, bloated by the river, were displayed in iron gibbets so they were clearly visible from the river as both a form of deterrent and also part of the spectacle of the maritime, lower-class river.

Tobias Smollett's novel, *The Adventures of Roderick Random* (1748) offers an account based on the author's firsthand knowledge of life amongst the maritime labourers inhabiting the Thames-side neighbourhoods.¹⁸ The narrative is set in the 1730s and 1740s and recounts the life story of the naïve yet resourceful Roderick "Rory" Random and his companion Hugh Strap. Following a somewhat erratic education, the protagonist embarks on a series of adventures and misadventures, visiting *inter alia*: London, Bath, France, the West Indies, West Africa and South America. Roderick ends up serving twice on British ships, once on a privateer and once on a warship after being captured by a press gang. Smollett offers a vicious portrayal of the hypocrisy, greed, deceit and snobbery peculiar to the times, especially among London's upper and middling classes, but particularly he satirises the brutality, incompetence and injustice of the Royal Navy. The life on board ship described by Smollett, himself a navy surgeon's mate in the 1740s, is one of extreme brutality and corruption exemplified by the sick bay:

Here I saw about fifty miserable distempered wretches, suspended in rows, so huddled upon one another, that not more than fourteen inches of space was allotted for each with his bed and bedding; and deprived of the light of day, as well as of fresh air; breathing nothing but a noisome atmosphere of the morbid steams exhaling from their own excrements and

¹⁶ Fielding, H. (1755), pp. 44-5.

¹⁷ Ratcliffe Highway now forms route of The Highway which runs between Tower Hill and the Limehouse Link tunnel.

¹⁸ Smollett, T. (1748). For further reading see Ennis, D. J. (2002).

diseased bodies, devoured with vermin hatched in the filth that surrounded them, and destitute of every convenience necessary for people in that helpless condition.¹⁹

Johnson's inference that the 'smiling' face of the Thames was illusory, Pope's thoroughly unattractive simulation of the downriver locations of Deptford, Woolwich and Wapping and Smollett's description of the appalling conditions on board the ships that populated the port draw attention to an alternative version of lives lived in proximity to the Thames. Whilst these often played on conventional stereotypes of the maritime community, these literary evocations had their visual equivalent in an abundant strain of caricature and social satire produced throughout the city.²⁰

Artists such as James Gillray (1757-1815) and Thomas Rowlandson (1756-1827) were part of a growing number of engravers producing graphic satires in the English capital. Their work catered to the many prints-shops where the satires might be hung in windows or pinned to boards standing outside the shop.²¹ Satiric prints were also displayed in the engravers' own print-shops adjoining their workrooms, or they were supplied to the owners of city-centre coffee-houses and taverns where they were often displayed or made available to be handed around by customers. Via such outlets, satiric prints were on display to the urban public in London, as well as being posted to out-of-town collectors and regional print-shops, and as a product they were a regularly encountered and widely discussed part of urban culture. Mark Hallett suggests that satirical engraving 'appealed to a public that extended beyond the traditional patrons of the fine arts, the landed gentry and aristocracy, and took in that 'middling' class of individuals drawn from the commercial and professional classes'.²² These relatively inexpensive and more widely accessible prints established a cast of recognisable Thames-stereotypes and depicted them variously as menacing press gangs stalking the wharves around the Tower, vulgar watermen plying their trade on the riverbanks, swindling Wapping landladies, naïve sailors and feisty Billingsgate fishwives.

Sold down the river

Satirical prints made and sold in London relied on the collective recognition of familiar stereotypes in order to convey a humorous comment or barbed attack on contemporary city life. Identifiable amongst the repertoire of London types was a subset drawn from the port's various maritime communities. The ubiquity of these caricatures provides evidence of prevalent contemporary attitudes and ideologies towards the Thames, dominated by the naval and commercial interests it represented. In this discussion I will focus on the portrayal of traditional Thames characters whose various inherent natures effectively politicised the river: press gangs, watermen, prostitutes, sailors and fishwives. Beginning with a consideration of the image of press gangs and associations with Liberty, I will then turn to the image of the

¹⁹ Smollett, T. (1748), p. 153.

²⁰ For discussions of the image of the sailor see Watson, H. (1931); McCreery, C. (2000); Quilley, G. (2011a).

²¹ Hallett, M. (2001b), p. 27. See also Clayton, T. (1997); Donald, D. (1996); Gatrell, V. (2006); Maidment, B. (2001).

²² Hallett, M. (2001b), p. 27.

Thames watermen upon which the gangs famously preyed and follow his journey upriver to Vauxhall Gardens where his 'polite' passengers would dine in the supper boxes and encounter Francis Hayman's version of the Wapping Landlady. The generic image of the infamous Thames brothel keeper will be considered alongside depictions of the prostitutes in her employ and their hapless customers, the sailors. Finally, the image of vengeful and untamed sailors and brawling Billingsgate fishwives will be explored for further evidence of a patriotic discourse.

In the mid-eighteenth century the Impress Service or press gangs, working under a regulating captain, were sent out to roam the streets and round up recruits. Professional sailors and fishermen coming ashore could be seized and forcibly 'pressed' into joining the King's Navy, a fate which befell Smollett's Roderick Random as he 'crossed Tower-wharf' on his way to find employment as a ship's surgeon in Wapping. The specification of the location is historically accurate for this place was notoriously dangerous for the solitary pedestrian without social protection or official pass. Tower-wharf near Wapping was the oldest and most popular rallying point of the men whose job it was to impress for the fleet, mainly because of the concentration here of their prey: disembarked sailors who had just collected their back pay from the Navy Office, situated quite nearby.²³ In 1779 W. Humphrey published a print of an engraving by James Gillray [Fig. 32]. The print, titled *The Liberty of the Subject (The Press Gang)*, depicts a chaotic street scene in the City of London where a crowd of men and women struggle and brawl in their efforts to save a terrified tailor (the scissors and tape measure of his profession can be seen in his waistcoat pocket) who has been seized by a Naval press gang. The blue-jacketed press gang threaten dissenters with their cudgels while the angry women attempt to retaliate, one by brandishing a mop overhead and another by pulling with all her weight on the central character's hair, oblivious to the raised cudgel which threatens to knock her senseless. A dog barks at their ankles and children clamour at their mothers' skirts, but the resistance made by this poor tailor and his defenders is clearly futile. In the background, at the end of a street behind the madding crowd is the dome of St Paul's Cathedral which locates the scene to within a short distance of the Thames. This setting against St Paul's subverts the aesthetic of artists such as Scott; here its presence is heavily ironic, for the 'liberty' to which the title alludes can be understood as the general principal of 'British liberty'. Gillray is satirising the supposed 'liberty' of the common Englishman at a time when it is implied that anybody – even a tailor – could be swept up at anytime by the ruthless press gang into the navy which purportedly underpinned the concept of British liberty.

Although only used in times of war, the press gang was probably the most infamous method of recruiting for the navy. Here, the inappropriate seizure of the tailor, probably the most useless profession to have on board a ship, further emphasises the mindlessness of the practice. N. A. M. Rodger claims that 'it is ridiculous to suggest that honest citizens, unconnected with the sea, were afraid to walk the streets for fear of being swept in by the press, for the press was quite unable to 'sweep' the streets of any sizeable town'. Rodger argues that the press gangs' work was planned and based on good intelligence which often depended on 'the malice of rivals in love or law, of relatives eager for an inheritance, or jilted sweethearts, unhappy wives and enemies of every kind'.²⁴ However, the press gangs did resort to violence to obtain the quota of men they needed. Peter Linebaugh and Marcus

²³ Smollett, T. (1748), p. 139. See also Boucé, P. (1976), p. 263; Hornak, A. (1999), p. 34.

²⁴ Rodger, N. A. M. (2007), pp. 150-1.

Rediker have written at length about the violence and terror employed by the state in order to man its ships cheaply, 'preying on the poorest, most ethnically diverse populations'.²⁵ The high demand made by the state for maritime labour led to the press gang tactic of boarding incoming vessels in an attempt to capture crews, but the seamen were often willing to risk everything to escape capture by them. Elsewhere the resistance of sailors to enforced labour in the Navy took the form of portside riots and even self-inflicted disabilities and painful imitations of the symptoms associated with scurvy. For those who failed to escape the press gang's cudgel, the chances of survival were slim as characterised by Tobias Smollett's Roderick Random:

...as I crossed Tower-wharf, a squat tawny fellow, with a hanger by his side and a cudgel in his hand, came up to me, calling, 'Yo, ho! Brother, you must come along with me'. [...] after an obstinate engagement, in which I received a large wound on the head, and another on my left cheek, I was disarmed, taken prisoner, and carried on board a passing tender; where, after being pinioned like a malefactor, I was thrust down into the hold, among a parcel of miserable wretches...²⁶

In the House of Commons in 1749 the retired Admiral Edward Vernon argued passionately against impressments complaining that the British fleets were 'manned by violence'. Vernon branded the practice 'horrid and barbarous' stating that those taken by press gangs were 'condemned to death' as they were 'turned over from ship to ship...without any regard to the hardships they have undergone' often 'without their pay' before 'they shall be consumed by the scurvy or die of some other distemper'.²⁷ Harsh conditions aboard ship were compounded by the risk of disease, especially typhus, to say nothing of the dangers of battle. Almost half of all those pressed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries died at sea.²⁸ Those who survived could not even expect to be paid, and consequently the figure of the starving, often lame soldier became a permanent fixture in the Thames-side neighbourhoods.

Through the emphasis on the impassioned resistance of this London crowd, Gillray draws attention to the general unpopularity of the press gangs' activities. This collective dissent can be seen as an expression of the radical sympathy which existed for the American rebels of the War of American Independence which had just started when this print was published.²⁹ In addition, it was an acknowledged paradox that, in a land which boasted of the liberty of its subjects, the very men who helped to preserve this freedom, that is the seamen, seemed to have no liberty at all.³⁰ In *The Liberty of the Subject*, Gillray employs satire as a means to highlight the perceived frightening and indiscriminate actions of the thuggish uniformed Naval officers against the common people. Those captured by a press gang would be taken to press boats and, along with other recruits, put aboard ship to face a dangerous and

²⁵ Linebaugh, P. and Rediker, M. (2000), pp. 150-1.

²⁶ Smollett, T. (1748), p. 139.

²⁷ Scott, A. (1970), p. 402.

²⁸ Rediker, M. (1987), p. 32.

²⁹ The print was published after France and America became allies in 1778 and Spain joined forces with France in 1779.

³⁰ See Lincoln, M. (2002), p. 14.

highly uncertain future. Gillray portrayed the Naval officers as an ugly assortment of ruthlessly determined men, their faces either contorted in defiance or grinning with cruel arrogance as they go about their violent business of recruitment. This highly unpleasant practice was taking place on the streets of Thames-side neighbourhoods while just a short distance downriver at Deptford and Blackwall, mighty ships were being launched into the Thames to the rapturous and proud approval of crowds of well-dressed spectators in patriotic scenes of Naval might recorded in high art paintings.³¹ The contradictory image of the violent press gang, taken from this alternative genre of satire, presents a barbed attack on the concept of liberty as it applied to ordinary Londoners whose lives could be blighted or ruined in the processes of power and coercion employed by the Navy and thus offers a very different, radical and politicised view of maritime life from that portrayed in high art intended for exhibition.³²

More printed images of impressment appeared around the turn of the century, and the National Maritime Museum collection holds a coloured pen and ink drawing by Thomas Rowlandson with the title *The Press Gang* (undated) [Fig. 33]. Although there are no extant records of a finished or engraved version, Rowlandson's drawing takes up Gillray's theme in evoking the havoc wrought by a press gang and dwelling on the ensuing destruction of ordinary people's lives. At the centre of the image is a woman who has collapsed in her distress. Another female administers a drink in an attempt to revive her while a distraught child writhes on the ground. On the right hand side of the image the press gang are in the process of dragging away a struggling man whose hat has already fallen to the ground in his attempt to escape his captors. Other women and a man attempt to wrestle the man from the grip of the press gang, but it seems his fate is already sealed. A doorway symbolises the family home, suddenly bereft of its main breadwinner. Above the doorway Rowlandson has faintly sketched a spectator observing the scene from an upstairs window. A woman on her knees pleads with the thuggish gang, meanwhile another press gang in the distance (or the same press gang if this is read as a sequential image) lead their captive away, a cudgel raised over his head to indicate that it is unlikely that anybody will be spared. This is an image of merciless street violence represented as a contest between the helplessness of the ordinary working man and the institutional might of the Navy: the riverside neighbourhood is here shown as a place of fear and dread with the proletariat powerless against the juggernaut of commerce and imperial expansion.

The year 1790 saw the publication of a further depiction of impressment with a widely reproduced print titled *Attic Miscellany: Manning the Navy* engraved by Inigo Barlow after Samuel Collings and published by Bentley & Co. [Fig. 34]. Collings was deeply engaged in London literary and artistic life in the ten years up until his death in 1791, working for *The Wit's Magazine*, *The Carlton House Magazine*, and, especially *The Attic Miscellany*, and he regularly collaborated with better known artists including William Blake, Thomas Rowlandson, Henry Singleton and George Morland for whom Collings wrote verses and suggested subjects

³¹ As considered in Ch. 1. For examples see *Launch of HMS Alexander at Deptford in 1778* (c. 1778) by John Cleveley the Younger, NMM: BHC1875; *Blackwall...at the Launch of the 'Bombay Castle'* (1789) by Robert Dodd, NMM: PAH9724.

³² The phenomenon of the press gangs and their *modus operandi* was also taken up as the theme for a musical interlude called *True – Blue; or, the Press Gang* performed in London theatres from 1765; see Carey, H. (1765).

in the late 1780s.³³ Whether it was Collings who suggested the subject for Morland's painting of 1790, *The Press Gang* [Fig. 36] or who influenced Rowlandson's drawing of the same subject [Fig. 33] is not known, but these artists' shared interest in producing negative depictions of naval impressment suggests not only the weight of public opposition against it but also a clear association between press gangs and specific locations along the Thames such as Tower Wharf and Wapping.

Collings' scene is located specifically in the notorious area on Tower Hill where Smollett's Roderick Random lost his liberty. The action takes place in front of the Tower, either side of which appear the masts of the ships moored in the Thames, notionally awaiting their newly 'recruited' crewmen. On the right of the image, a uniformed Naval officer stands with one hand resting on his cutlass while placing the other on the head of a short pot-bellied character who gestures towards the terrified-looking men who have been captured by the press gang. It might be assumed that this man is to be rewarded for the part he has played in the drama, perhaps as a crimp in delivering the unwitting men to the press gang. Crimps were gangs of men and women who got seamen drunk and then delivered them to the press gang on payment of head money.³⁴ In an identical pose as that adopted by Gillray's tailor [Fig. 32], the captured men throw up their hands in despair as they find themselves roughly manhandled and threatened with cudgels, one falling to his knees in submission, his hat already tumbled to the ground. Behind the struggling men appears a woman dressed in a bonnet who, it might be assumed, is either the distraught wife of one of the captured men or a reluctant accomplice to the crimping; she holds her hands together in a gesture of prayer.³⁵ Brian Maidment has concluded that Collings 'belonged both stylistically and morally more to a declining Hogarthian line of urban representation than to the increasingly savage, politicised caricature tradition of Gillray and his followers'.³⁶ Even in the limited comparison between this and Gillray's *The Liberty of the Subject*, Collings' work stands in obvious contrast to the vivid line and grotesque exaggeration of his contemporary; here he avoids his figures becoming stylised into total grotesques, and the energy and vigour of his scene is restrained. Collings presents the viewer with a frieze of fully realised characters who are set against a sketchier, greyer, less differentiated backdrop of the Tower and the ships' masts, an effect gained through vigorous cross hatching. Despite the humour in his caricature, by locating the practice of impressment to within sight of the Tower, Collings' *Press Gang* reaffirms the association with the Thames. Gillray may have employed a satirical edge to present what he perceived as a groundswell of feeling on the street, but Collings' political motivation for his work is less clear. There are, it appears, few sober and realistic depictions of impressments, but as N. A. M. Rodger has stated, the action of press gangs was a gift to satirists when depictions of the phenomenon could be used to make various social points bolstered by the weighty political significance of the practice and its direct association with the complex concept of liberty.³⁷ We can also assume that Collings' image reached a relatively broad audience given that it reappeared as a design on a creamware mug manufactured in Staffordshire at the turn of the

³³ See Maidment, B. (2001), pp. 41-2. For example see Fig. 108.

³⁴ See Lincoln, M. (2007), pp. 150-1; Rodger, N. (2007), p. 151.

³⁵ Crimps sometimes employed prostitutes to decoy suitable men.

³⁶ Maidment, B. (2001), p. 42.

³⁷ Rodger, N. (2009), pp.150-2.

century.³⁸ Certainly this demonstrates the wider dissemination of Collings' satirical depiction of impressment and implies that the associated dangers of the practice had very real and meaningful connotations directly linked to the London Thames.

Apprentices to Thames watermen represented easy-pickings to the press gang. According to a contemporary commentator these young men were 'liable to be impressed after they have served three or four years of their time' and such a practice 'checks the nursery of waterman on the river Thames, which has hitherto considerably augmented the number of our sailors, and which has always proved a great advantage *at the breaking out* of a war, by affording a large supply of skilful hands so near home'.³⁹ This controversial relationship between press gang and waterman became the subject of a work by George Morland (1763-1804) who painted *The Cottage Door* and its companion picture, *The Press Gang* in 1790 [Figs 35 and 36].⁴⁰ These two pictures present opposing images: the tranquil upriver Thames, home to the gentle waterman, and the dangerous downriver Thames where press gangs roam.⁴¹ The first painting of the pair does indeed present a sentimentalised and idealised image of a Thames waterman relaxing outside his cosy riverside cottage home. Roses climb around the door and the wherry with which he earns his livelihood is safely moored close by. As part of a family grouping, the waterman leans contentedly against the back of a chair holding his long-stemmed pipe as his wife gazes up from her needlework and a child plays before him with a doll. By his side a younger man, identified in some descriptions as the waterman's partner Joe, is shown seated upon an upturned barrel and holding a jug of beer.⁴² A dog lies prostrate on the ground facing his master and a pig can be seen munching happily from a shallow bowl of slops. It is evening, and this group of working people are evidently relaxing after a day's labour. The rural scenery is suggestive of an upriver location, certainly somewhere that is distanced from the town and safely hidden from the hustle and danger of city life. It is likely that Morland has created this nonspecific site for the waterman's home to achieve maximum dramatic effect in contrast with the distinctly urban setting of the companion painting.⁴³

The waterman's facial expression is severely altered in the companion painting, *The Press Gang* [Fig. 36], or as its printed version was known, *Jack in the Bilboes*.⁴⁴ In this picture, the protagonist has been set upon by a press gang consisting of three thuggish men in blue

³⁸ NMM: AAA6329.

³⁹ Anon. (1807), p. cclix.

⁴⁰ Both pictures have had various titles in painted and printed forms: *The Cottage Door* was originally titled *The Contented Waterman* then in print form it was *My Poll and My Partner Joe*; *The Press Gang* was originally known as *Jack in the Bilboes*. See Chapel, J. (1982), pp. 116-7. For printed versions see NMM: PAH7340 and PAH7341.

⁴¹ Morland's used generic locations for *The Contented Waterman* and *Jack in the Bilboes*, but given the contemporary topicality of the subject matter in London, it is reasonable to accept the river is intended to represent the Thames.

⁴² See Hassell, J. (1806), pp. 70-1.

⁴³ From the seventeenth century the majority of Thames Watermen lived in the poor district of Southwark, with smaller populations to be found in Lambeth, Westminster, Greenwich and Gravesend. The primary reason that so many watermen settled in areas well away from the City was to reduce the risk of impressment, which may have informed Morland's choice of pastoral setting. See Boulton, J. (1987), p. 71; Cruden, R. (1843), pp. 283-4.

⁴⁴ A bilboe was a long iron bar with a sliding shackle to confine the ankle of a prisoner, and a lock to fasten one end of the bar to the floor or deck. The name was taken from the steel made at Bilbao, and sailors referred to them as iron garters.

jackets that have come armed with cudgels. One brute hauls the boat towards the river stairs while another, his hat already knocked into the water in the struggle, holds the waterman by his waistcoat whilst a third aims his fist at their captive's face. The waterman clasps his hands and raises his eyes to the sky in prayer. In his *Memoirs of the Life of George Morland*, John Hassell wrote: 'All the horrors of an agitated mind are expressed in the countenance of the once happy waterman, while the most ferocious passion and barbarism are exhibited by the press gang'.⁴⁵ The waterman's two fashionably dressed passengers and his faithful spaniel look on helplessly. In the same way that the waterman's cottage has a nonspecific location, there are no obvious landmarks in this riverside scene, the background containing only generic river scenery such as a solidly built wharf-side building and the masts of moored vessels.⁴⁶ It had been suggested that the waterman has been 'sold down the river' by his wife and his partner Joe who have led him into a trap.⁴⁷ Certainly in *The Cottage Door* there appears to be some conspiratorial eye contact between the two characters, and some crumpled papers in Joe's jacket pocket can be taken as an indication of his treachery. Whether or not this is the case, the pressing of Thames watermen was a real hazard for the younger men.⁴⁸ This last conjecture is raised to another level in the printed versions of the two paintings engraved by William Ward and first published in 1790. Here, the images are accompanied by lines from Charles Dibdin's song, *My Poll and Partner Joe*, as follows.⁴⁹

The Contented Waterman:

*My Cot was snug, well fill'd my keg
My grunter in the sty*

Jack In The Bilboes:

*Till woe is me so lubberly,
The press gang came and pressed me.*

Dibdin's lyrics for *My Poll and Partner Joe* describe how the waterman plied his trade between Richmond and Horsleydown, the latter being a parish which then existed opposite the Tower, and the former supporting Morland's choice of a rural upriver location for the cottage homestead. The narrative of the song follows the fortunes of the protagonist after he is 'press'd' and he is taken abroad, braving many perils including quicksands and gales. When peacetime finally arrives, he returns home to find Joe and his wife have betrayed him by setting up home together in his absence. Realising he 'was foully trick'd' he kicks them 'to the devil'. George Cruikshank provided an illustration for the final instalment of the story which appeared in an 1841 collection of Dibdin's works.⁵⁰ In this image, it is the waterman, now an experienced sailor, who holds the cudgel, his foot raised as Joe runs to the door behind Poll, her right foot being the only portion of her that is visible as she flees the house and her husband.

⁴⁵ Hassell, J. (1806), p. 71.

⁴⁶ Chapel states this is 'a scene beside the sea', but the river stairs and the warehouses contradict this reading; Chapel, J. (1982), p. 117.

⁴⁷ See Wilson, D. (1907), pp. 87-8.

⁴⁸ See Mitchell, R. and Leys, M. (1968), p. 148.

⁴⁹ See Dibdin, C. (1841), pp. 23-4.

⁵⁰ See Dibdin, C. (1841).

Morland's original paintings were almost certainly inspired by the lines of Dibdin's song which would accompany the printed versions. Many such genre scenes were produced for conversion into printed form, which offered a more lucrative form of visual production.⁵¹ Morland has been described as the most prolific and popular painter of the life of rural England during the second half of the eighteenth century, and he is noted for having a complete aversion to anything resembling polite society.⁵² In keeping with his cultivation of rustic scenes which tended towards the sentimentalisation of the rural life of late eighteenth-century England, Morland depicts his *Contented Waterman* as an honest, hardworking and loyal river worker living within the 'polite' reaches of the upriver Thames. His life becomes sullied, disrupted and corrupted, it is implied, when it is infiltrated by the vice of the city, represented by the treacherous Joe, and he is attacked in the vicinity of the city, probably near the Tower where the press gangs roamed. The combination of Dibdin's popular song and the repeated publication of the engraved images which continued into the nineteenth century, indicate that this theme of the honest river folk, and the danger and potential corruption of the city, held a timeless appeal amongst the print buying and picture viewing public. Both Dibdin and Morland present a thoroughly decent version of an eighteenth-century Thames waterman. Honest, loyal and morally upright, Dibdin's character is 'as tight and spruce as any' who does his duty to his Majesty.⁵³ Morland's waterman is a wholesome and well presented family man living in a comfortable cottage and praying when faced with the dangerous press gang. However, this is an unusually sympathetic portrayal of the Thames waterman which is in contrast to his usual stereotypical representation as a coarse, ribald Thames labourer, more in keeping with the depiction the London maritime in satirical prints.

Oars Sculls, Sculls, Oars Oars

*An academy of ill language [...] I observe 'tis as great a Pennance for a Modest Man to go a Mile upon the River as 'tis for him to run the Gauntlet thro' an Alley where the Good House Wives are picking Okum.*⁵⁴

Until the final decades of the eighteenth century, with the exception of those images already mentioned, the representation of the Thames watermen in visual art was rare, this despite their ubiquitous presence as part of the London scene. Since the thirteenth century the profession of the watermen represented a sizeable industry with estimates in Tudor times of as many as forty thousand being employed in, or dependent upon, the trade.⁵⁵ This was surely an exaggeration, although the inability to assess numbers implies that there were a vast number of watermen on the Thames. By the mid-eighteenth century many ferries operated across the Thames and there were some thirty landing-stages between London and Westminster bridges alone. The Waterman's Company controlled all the passenger boats

⁵¹ See for example *Slave Trade* (1814) by George Morland, NMM: ZBA2507; the original painting was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1788.

⁵² See Barrell, J. (1995), pp. 89-129; Dawe, G. (1807), p. 29; Collins, W. (1805), p. 54.

⁵³ See Dibdin, C. (1841), pp. 23-4.

⁵⁴ Ned Ward quoted in Troyer, H. W. (1968), p. 40.

⁵⁵ Taylor, the Water Poet quoted in Littell, E. (1831), p. 310.

working on the Thames, and the boatmen, taking advantage of their monopoly, were typically abusive and belligerent. The river was said to resound to the watermen's cries of 'Oars, skulls, skulls, oars, oars'.⁵⁶ From the thirteenth century, the Thames watermen were notorious for their insulting and foul language. The violent and ribald abuse they used was known as water-language, Thames wit or water wit, from which no one was immune no matter their position in civic or royal rank. This reinforces the concept of the Thames as a space which is comparable to that of Bakhtin's definition of carnival, with its 'suspension of hierarchic distinctions and barriers among men and of certain norms and prohibitions of usual life' but more specifically here, in terms of the watermen, the Thames might be considered as a marketplace where it is 'characteristic for the familiar speech [...] to use abusive language, insulting words or expressions, some of them quite lengthy and complex'.⁵⁷ Anecdotes dating from the turn of the eighteenth-century onwards suggest that it was generally accepted that the moment anybody entered a boat on the Thames they were liable to be insulted in the most revolting manner by any passing waterman, and also by his passengers, and it was the custom to repay abuse with abuse.⁵⁸ For example, Ned Ward gives a fine account of this ritualised raillery in *The London Spy*. The narrator explains that he entered the wherry of 'a Jolly Grizzle-Pated Charm,' when:

...a scoundrel crew of *Lambeth* Gardeners attacked us with such a Volley of saucy Nonsense, that it made my Eyes stare [...]. One of them beginning with us after this manner, *You couple of treacherous Sons of Bridewell B—s, who are Pimps to your own Mothers, Stallions to your Sisters, and Cock-Bawds to the rest of your Relations; Who were begot by Huffing, spew'd up, and not Born; and Christen'd out of a Chamber-pot; How dare you show your Ugly Faces upon the River of Thames, and Fright the Kings Swans from holding their heads above Water?* To which our well-fed Pilot [...] most manfully Reply'd, *You Lousie starv'd Crew of Worm-pickers, and Snail-Catchers; You Offspring of a Dunhill, and Brothers to a Pumpkin, who can't afford Butter to your Cabbage, or Bacon to your Sprouts; You shitten Rogues, who worship the Fundament, because you live by a Turd; who was that sent the Gardener to cut a hundred of Sparragrass, and dug twice in his Wives Parsley-bed before the Goodman came back again? Hold your Tongues, you Knitty Raddish-mongers, or I'll whet my Needle upon mine A—s and sow your Lips together.*⁵⁹

In 1765 P. J. Grosley was astonished by an encounter with the Thames watermen, noting in his *A Tour to England* on passing through Chelsea: 'a number of watermen drew themselves up in a line and attacked [...] with all the opprobrious terms which the English language can supply'.⁶⁰ 'It is well known,' wrote James Boswell, 'that there was formerly a rude custom for those who were sailing upon the Thames, to accost each other they passed, in the most

⁵⁶ See Baskett, J. and Snelgrove, D. (1977), Fig. 7.

⁵⁷ Bakhtin, M. (1968), pp. 15-16.

⁵⁸ See Morton, H. (2006), p. 352.

⁵⁹ Ward, N. in Hayward, A. (ed) (1927), p. 118.

⁶⁰ Grosley, P. quoted in Scott, A. (1970), p. 22.

abusive language they could invent, generally however, with as much satirical humour as they were capable of producing'.⁶¹ In *Anecdotes of the Customs and Manners of London During the Eighteenth Century*, James Peller Malcolm recorded that 'the Thames seems to have a charter for rudeness; and the sons of Triton and Neptune have not only a freedom of, but a licence for, any sort of speech'.⁶² Their notoriety continued into the nineteenth century when Henry Mayhew described the Thames watermen retrospectively as 'often saucy, abusive, and even sarcastic' with 'the interchange of abuse with one another, as they rode on the Thames, [...] remarkable for its slang'.⁶³ As Howard Troyer has commented, this exchange of a river vernacular would have been impossible on the streets without precipitating a brawl.⁶⁴ The fact that it was tolerated, anticipated, even relished and indulged, and that it was generally accepted as an intrinsic constituent of the Thames river travel experience, makes it a site-specific phenomenon which resulted in a total distortion of hierarchy within the river space.

The limited visual image of the infamous Thames waterman suggests a tendency to sentimentalise his character. This elevation could well be linked to the reliance of the Navy, and therefore the nation, on the 'recruitment' of watermen when the Thames was regarded as 'the great nursery of the Navy'.⁶⁵ This is supported by porcelain figures of Thames waterman made at the Bow China Works in London in the 1750s. Wearing a Doggett's coat and badge and standing with one arm raised to attract a fare, the figurine is set in a pose which projects the cheerful attitude of a fine, upstanding and even heroic labourer [Fig. 37].⁶⁶ In addition to this portrayal of the waterman as heroic, elsewhere visual images contained a sexual subtext. For example, *Thames Watermen* (c. 1785) depicts the oarsman as a chivalrous gentleman as he escorts two fashionably-attired female customers towards his wherry [Fig. 38]. One of the women looks admiringly upon the good-looking waterman, partially covering her face with her fan in a coquettish manner, implying that she is not as virtuous as she might appear. The other woman points her fan at the waterman as she looks out of the picture towards the viewer, having already turned her back on a red-jacketed soldier. The implication is clear, as it is in *Gentleman Helping a Lady Into a Wherry* (n.d.) [Fig. 39]. Even the straightforward image titled *Waterman* (n.d.) [Fig. 40] contradicts the earthy, coarse and ugly characterisation explicit in textual accounts.

Unlike Morland's sentimentalised and victimised Jack or the generic visualisations of a polite, heroic, even sexualised oarsmen offering their services to supposedly genteel customers, Thomas Rowlandson's impression of Thames watermen as they compete for custom at Wapping in *The Miseries of London....being assailed by a group of watermen....* (1816) reverts to type and conveys the impression of loud-mouthed exchanges and chaotic rivalry. These caricatures give full weight to the worst side of the watermen's reputation as coarse and expansive bullies willing to get hold of trade by any means [Fig. 41]. In his satirical works, Rowlandson frequently identified the comic potential of disaster and disorder and regularly recorded and exaggerated the city's collisions. His *Miseries of London* series

⁶¹ Boswell, J. (1791), p. 26.

⁶² Malcolm, J. (1810), p. 259.

⁶³ Mayhew, H. (1861), p. 328.

⁶⁴ Troyer, H. (1968), p. 40.

⁶⁵ Littell, E. (1831), p. 310.

⁶⁶ Dogget's coat and badge was the prize for winning an annual race for Thames watermen held since 1715; the prestigious prize helped talented watermen attract customers and the race raised the profile of the trade generally.

celebrated everyday comedy, using the streets and byways of London as the arena for tumbles and punch-ups.⁶⁷ In his caricature of watermen taken from the series, Rowlandson selected Wapping Old Stairs as the setting for the shambolic scene. A hefty woman heavily laden with packages and dressed in a billowing gown and beribboned bonnet, has been besieged by at least four Thames watermen as she attempts to descend the steps whilst being buffeted by the wind blowing off the river. The watermen, identifiable by trademark brassards or arm badges sewn to the sleeves of their coats, are aggressively touting their trade as they compete for this customer's business. The drawing is accompanied by the following handwritten text:

Going upon any of the bridges of London, or any of the passages leading to the Thames, being assailed by a group of watermen holding up their hands and bawling out 'Oars Oars. Skulls Skulls. Oars Oars'.

In the lower right of Rowlandson's caricature, a chubby fisherman's boy sleeps in a dinghy on a pile of nets. With his eyes closed and a cherubic smile playing on his lips, he appears as a picture of innocence almost impossibly oblivious to the hullabaloo going on around him.⁶⁸ Another waterman stands in his wherry which he has pulled up near to the steps. Leaning out from a balcony which overlooks the entire scene are an amused couple who appear to enjoy the spectacle below, the man puffing on his pipe. In the background a church tower which can be identified as Hawksmoor's St George in the East is clearly visible, as are the collected masts of general shipping associated with this part of the Thames.

Rowlandson's grotesque and aggressive types depicted here in the process of ambushing a customer on Wapping Old Stairs represents one of the traits through which Thames watermen were caricatured in satirical prints. Other depictions illuminate different facets of the watermen's temperament, for example in the anonymous print published by Robert Sayer in 1790 which also locates the scene at the foot of a flight of Thames riverside stairs [Fig. 42].⁶⁹ This print is titled *Taking the water for Vauxhall - Be cautious my love - don't expose your leg*, and depicts a waterman apparently thigh-deep in the river as he holds his wherry steady while a young man assists his fashionably attired young female companion as she gingerly embarks near Westminster Bridge visible in the background. Given the close proximity of the waterman to the dry shore upon which the couple are standing it would appear impossible for him to be so deep in the water, but overlooking this artifice the clearly intended result of this peculiar alignment is that the waterman's gaze is in direct line with the woman's dainty lower leg as she raises her petticoats and puts forward her elegant foot in its pointed shoe. The notoriety of the watermen for lewd language and bawdy behaviour would have contributed to the undertone of sexual suggestion presented by this image, an insinuation which is then encapsulated by the irony expressed in the warning words: 'don't expose your leg'. The satire is ultimately compounded by the couple's choice of destination – the Vauxhall Pleasure Gardens notorious for prostitution, where the exposure of an ankle would have paled into insignificance compared with what else was on offer. Much of Vauxhall's attraction lay in the romantic thoroughfares where it was not unusual for young

⁶⁷ See Gatrell, V. (2006), pp. 45-50.

⁶⁸ Young apprentices to Thames fishermen slept in their master's boat to prevent its theft.

⁶⁹ Sayer was responsible for the publication of a number of prints which took the Vauxhall Pleasure Gardens as their subject, as well as a series of London *Cries* and general topographic views.

men to ogle the ladies as they passed. Walpole commented on this in 1750 when he wrote of 'the young bloods lying in wait for unprotected females on the lesser avenues, known as the Dark Walk, the Druid Walk and the Lover's Walk'.⁷⁰ Additionally in the years running up to 1790, when this print was made, there was a particular problem with rowdy behaviour at the Vauxhall Pleasure Gardens, especially as it became customary for visitors to 'go wild' on the last night of the season.⁷¹

Before Westminster Bridge was built nearly all visitors to Vauxhall arrived by water, a tradition which was to continue for the remainder of the century and the Thames would have presented an animated scene at such times. Visitors apparently took great delight in the journey, a river phenomenon which Tobias Smollett mentions in *The Expedition of Humphrey Clinker* (1771) when Miss Lydia Welford exclaims:

At nine o'clock, in a charming moonlight evening we embarked at Ranelagh for Vauxhall, in a wherry, so light and slender that we looked like so many fairies sailing in a nut-shell.

The pleasure of this experience was 'damped' somewhat by the landing when:

...there was a terrible confusion of wherries, and a crowd of people bawling, and swearing, and quarrelling; nay, a parcel of ugly-looking fellows came running into the water, and laid hold on our boat with great violence, to pull it ashore; nor would they quit their hold till my brother struck one of them over the head with his cane.⁷²

This resonates with the account provided by the anonymous author of *A Trip to Vauxhall* (1737), giving a poetic description of their departure from Whitehall Stairs:

Last night, the evening of a sultry day,
I sailed triumphant on the liquid way,
To hear the fiddlers of 'Spring Gardens' play.

On arrival at the destination, the exciting 'new scene' of Vauxhall fills the waterborne company with 'pleasure and surprise', but on closer inspection the glamour is revealed to be illusory:

The motley crowd we next with care survey,
The young, the old, the splenetic, and gay,
The fop emasculate, the rugged brave,
All jumbled here, as in the common grave.⁷³

The image *Taking the water for Vauxhall* [Fig. 42] offers a visual equivalent for the same narrative arc which is implied within the written descriptions of both Smollett's 1771 novel and the anonymous poem from 1737: a night out at Vauxhall which begins in a highly cordial fashion with an excursion on the Thames. That a journey on the Thames could be deemed as a

⁷⁰ Walpole, H. (1895), p. 50.

⁷¹ See Coke, D. and Borg, A. (2011); Downing, S. (2009), pp. 33-4.

⁷² Smollett, T. (1771), p. 95.

⁷³ Walford, E. (1873), Vol. 6, pp. 447-467.

refined means of travel for polite personages comparable to the Grand Canal with its artful gondoliers in elegant liveries reciting poetry is in keeping with the majestic mid-eighteenth century image of the river as presented in high art by Canaletto.⁷⁴ At the same time, the subtext of the image, revealed by the waterman's lascivious ogling of the woman's exposed ankle, shares common ground with the satirical and comical caricatures of which Rowlandson's watermen are an example [Fig. 41]. If the river journey to Vauxhall Gardens was as genteel and civilised as contemporary literary texts purport, the polite veneer would soon be offset by the confusion, bawling, swearing and violence of the arrival. At Vauxhall Gardens, visitors would leave the chaos of the river and the watermen behind them, only to come face-to-face with the image of another notorious Thames character.

The Dance of the Wapping Landlady

A chief attraction of Vauxhall Gardens was the Grove, the square enclosed by the principal walks and the western wall of the Garden with temples and pavilions and a colonnade for use during bad weather. Under this were over one hundred 'arbours' or supper boxes, which were ornate wooden shelters formed of two side walls and a roof, framing picturesque views through the Gardens, where guests could take supper. Soon after 1740 Jonathan Tyers, the proprietor of Vauxhall Gardens, appears to have commissioned Francis Hayman to execute a series of supper box paintings. These were unveiled in 1742 and formed an attraction with which Tyers hoped to lure the fashionable crowds.⁷⁵ The interiors of the supper boxes were also painted by other members of Hogarth's St Martin's Lane Academy, but Hayman provided most of the subjects, which were rapidly executed by students and assistants.⁷⁶ At a certain moment in the evening's entertainment, Hayman's paintings were 'let fall' at once to form the back of the supper boxes, the front being left permanently open for the fashionable occupants to view and be viewed.⁷⁷ The paintings offered a suitable backdrop, one observer thought, for the live beauties of London.⁷⁸ Such was the interest in these paintings that they had to be regularly touched up due to wear and tear caused by the overenthusiastic examination of the curious patrons.⁷⁹

Hayman included a range of subjects in his paintings for the supper boxes, which mostly tended towards idyllic playful pastoral scenes. The pictures became extremely popular with the ordinary visitor and a series of engravings after a selection of the paintings were published by Thomas Bowles in 1743/4, a set which ran to three editions, and together with the pirated versions this made the 'Vauxhall cycle' together with Hogarth's *Harlot's Progress*

⁷⁴ See Baretti, G. (1768), pp. 153-4.

⁷⁵ Allen, B. (1987), p. 107. See also Gowing, L. (1953).

⁷⁶ Copies of Hogarth's designs were also used in the supper boxes.

⁷⁷ See Allen, B. (1987), pp. 62-70; Coke, D. (1984), pp. 74-81; Downing, S. (2009), pp. 19-24; Gowing, L. (1953), pp. 4-19.

⁷⁸ 'And what adds not a to the pleasure of these pictures, they give an unexceptionable opportunity of gazing on any pleasing fair-one, without any other pretence than the credit of a fine taste for the piece behind her', Toupee, S. (1739), pp.322-4

⁷⁹ 'At Vauxhall...they have touched all the pictures, which were damaged last season by the fingering of those curious Connoisseurs, who could not be satisfied without *feeling* whether the figures were alive.' *The Gentleman's Magazine*, (1755), XXV, p. 206.

and *Rake's Progress* the best known pictures in England.⁸⁰ Among Hayman's subjects was a painting titled *The Wapping Landlady and the Tars Who Are Just Come Ashore*.⁸¹ Judging from a comparison of the remaining fragment of this painting with two engraved versions of the whole picture, *The Humours of A Wapping Landlady* (1743), it can be assumed that these provide a reasonable facsimile of Hayman's painting of an interior scene with a sailor dancing in a tavern watched by other sailors, one lolling on a bench, his arm around a female companion [Fig. 43]. In the background the cloaked figure of the landlady stands before a blackboard where she has chalked up the tally and is seen refilling cups with punch. This printed version includes the following inscription:

Representing *Jack Bowline* after calling for 'Punch and Flip', sits down by his Landladys Daughters, who seems Enamour'd with him, whilst he can treat and make her Presents, then Tom Gunter bids the Fiddler strike up a hornpipe which he foots about with such Agility; that *Oakum* the Cabin Boy is Delighted with the performance of his Ship's Mates, whilst the *Landlady* plys them with Liquors and Scores two for one whereby the fruits of the Honest Sailor's Industry are squandered away, after which the *Old Wife* gives her Lads the Advise to look out for another Voyage because she thinks it a shame that such brisk Hands stand Idle on Shore.

The term, 'a Wapping landlady' was well used in the eighteenth century to describe a certain type of untrustworthy innkeeper.⁸² In Smollett's *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker* a character describes various amusing 'follies' he encounters in London including 'a broken-winded Wapping Landlady', who is clearly identified as a contemporary London 'type'.⁸³ The dishonest Wapping landlady, or at least the stereotype constructed around such a figure, is reflected in a newspaper article which highlights the plight of sailors who are not paid their prize money: 'He is obliged to beg and pray for a pint of beer of a Wapping Landlady, who is sure to score him two for one, till he can obtain no more credit...'.⁸⁴ In Wapping especially, but also across the river in Southwark and Rotherhithe every kind of sharp practice was used to part the sailor from his hard-earned silver. When a sailor returned after a voyage it was generally accepted that he would be on the 'ran-tan' ashore at the earliest opportunity. The notion that the sailor on shore leave is, like the proverbial fool, easily parted from his money, is the crux of Hayman's *The Wapping Landlady* picture and this is particularly relevant here because, as Geoff Quilley has pointed out, the image of sailors enjoying 'the lowest forms of sensual gratification' in Wapping has been produced specifically for and installed in 'that

⁸⁰ Coke, D. (1984), p. 79.

⁸¹ V&A: P.12-1847 reproduced in Doran, S. (ed.) (2012), p. 143, cat. 96.

⁸² For example, the fourth image of a 'humorous set' of prints entitled *The Sailor's Progress* by Mackenley was described as 'His wedding entertainment and the humours of a drunken crew, with the care and industry of a Wapping Landlady' (*Daily Advertiser*, 26 May 1743) and at Bartholemew's Fair at Hallam's Great Theatrical Booth was advertised 'The Sailor's Wedding with the Humours of the Wapping Landlady' or even 'The Dance of the Wapping Landlady' as musical performances with ballet dancers (*Daily Advertiser*, 16 July 1744).

⁸³ Smollett, T. (1771), p. 51.

⁸⁴ *Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser*, 17 September 1765, Issue 11393.

emporium of desire and pleasure, Vauxhall Gardens'.⁸⁵ *The Wapping Landlady* marks an early stage in what became a complex cross-pollination of visual imagery, supplied for an ostensibly 'polite' audience but containing a secondary layer of voyeurism and titillation through allusions to the insalubrious haunts and activities of the downriver maritime Thames. Morland would later achieve the same effect with his two opposing images of the Thames: the upriver safety and contentedness represented by the cosy cottage home and sentimentality of *The Contented Waterman* contrasted with the violence and danger which emanated from the downriver location where *The Press Gang* lurk and pounce on their victim [Figs 35 and 36]. Hayman selected an image of downriver Wapping that the smart, upriver set would notionally recognise and accept in their ostentatious supper box because of its superior moralising subject, while at the same time feasting their eyes on the image of sex-starved sailors cavorting with lascivious prostitutes. As David Solkin has commented, 'the humorous effect of [such] pictures [...] would have been enhanced by the incongruity of their situation, in a place so unlike yet in many superficial respects so similar to the low realms they conjured up'. Solkin identifies the similarities between the entertainments on display in Hayman's depraved Thames-side alehouse and Vauxhall's own main attractions, namely music, drink, amorous intrigue and relaxation.⁸⁶ The symbolic aspect of Hayman's choice of location is further compounded by the contemporary meaning of the verb 'to wap' which meant 'to copulate, to beat', a sexual *double entendre* which in all likelihood would have been appreciated by those taking their supper at Vauxhall Gardens.⁸⁷ Hayman's insertion of a scene from a notionally vulgar and debased location on the banks of the working river into the supposedly 'polite' environment of Vauxhall Gardens, both reinforces the differences between the 'high' supper box diners and the 'low' Wapping degenerates, whilst simultaneously offering a titillating suggestion of an intersection between these two worlds.⁸⁸

What d'ye think of my Meg of Wapping

In 1783, Dr. Johnson talked of the wonderful extent and variety of London observing that men of curious inquiry might see in it such modes of life as very few could ever imagine. Johnson particularly recommended that his friends, William Windham and James Boswell, should explore Wapping.⁸⁹ Wapping and its environs, populated by a heterogeneous community of sailors and migrants, received very little if any direct attention from artists until the later decades of the eighteenth century when, evidence suggests, it became ripe for satirical representation. Hayman's reference to this notorious maritime neighbourhood in his depiction of *The Wapping Landlady* (1741-42) [Fig. 43] provides one of the earliest of such artistic references. Certainly during the second half of the century evidence suggests the imagery associated with Wapping tended to be synonymous with the seamier side of the river community. References to Wapping in visual art became shorthand for an environment which accommodated a maritime community of carousing sailors, belligerent watermen, scheming

⁸⁵ Quilley, G. (2011a).

⁸⁶ Solkin, D. (1992), pp. 143-4.

⁸⁷ Grose, F. (2008), p. 220.

⁸⁸ See Solkin, D. (1992), p. 144.

⁸⁹ Boswell, J. (1791), p. 393.

'landladies' and unchecked prostitution. In the visual arts these connotations remained, on the whole, within the provinces of the caricature and satirical print market. The limited number of high art representations of this overpopulated maritime neighbourhood concentrated on portraying the industrious river landscape or the western landmark of the Tower, generally avoiding a closer examination of the more colourful inhabitants and the entertainments of Wapping. For example, an untitled watercolour by Robert Cleveley dated 1791 presents a view of Wapping from the river, looking towards docked boats whose tall masts stretch into the distance on the left.⁹⁰ On the right are buildings which line the riverbank; two men at the oars of a row boat in the foreground provide the only representation of human activity in what is represented as a calm and harmonious river scene.

The version of Wapping represented in satirical prints, especially the notion of a symbiotic relationship between prostitutes and sailors, correlates with contemporary textual commentaries on the area.⁹¹ For example, in the 1788 edition of *Harris's List* there is a description of a Mrs Griffin who can be found near Union Stairs, Wapping. Harris's entry reads:

...she has acquired great experience, in the course of twenty years study in natural philosophy at the university of Portsmouth [...] Her chief and best customers are sea officers, whom she particularly likes, as they do not stay long at home, and always return fraught with love and presents.⁹²

Harris' entry for the experienced Mrs Griffin is a reflection of how the Thames and the seafaring neighbourhoods along its banks had a history of association with the London's sex trade. The maritime areas of Wapping and Rotherhithe especially were notorious for their cheap prostitutes who provided a service for sailors. Contemporary indictments against the proprietors of disorderly houses in Westminster and Middlesex reveal that after Covent Garden and the area around the periphery of the City, a significant percentage of prosecutions referred to houses in the vicinity of Whitechapel and Wapping.⁹³ The Ratcliffe Highway, which ran parallel with the Thames and East from the Tower towards Shadwell and Limehouse, was well stocked with taverns and bawdy-houses, and it was this that provided the East End's equivalent to Covent Garden and the Strand.⁹⁴ Sailors from ships moored in the Pool of London flocked to this district. They were looking for drink and women, and the brothels and taverns along the Ratcliffe Highway provided for their every need.

The quality of this maritime prostitution was well documented by Francis Place (1771-1854).⁹⁵ Place admits that in the late 1780s, as a young man in the company of 'other lads', he frequented cock and hen clubs and 'spent many evenings at the dirty public houses' where he and his friends became acquainted with the poor prostitutes who worked in and around St Catherine's Lane, just east of the Tower. Place noted that 'drunkenness was common to them

⁹⁰ BM: 1880,113.1606.4.

⁹¹ See Ch. 1, p. 28.

⁹² See Rubenhold, H. (ed.) (2005), pp. 149-50.

⁹³ Trumbach, R. (1998), p. 121.

⁹⁴ Cruickshank, D. (2010), p. 178.

⁹⁵ Place was a political radical whose autobiography, pamphlets, letters, magazine and newspaper articles provide an insight into the social and economic history of his lifetime.

all and at all times' as well as fighting 'among themselves as well as with the men', so that 'black eyes might be seen on a great many.' Place, who clearly knew London well, was so astonished by what he saw here he described the women as if they came not from his own city but from another and alien world: 'the breasts of many hung down in a most disgusting manner, their hair among the generality was straight and 'hung in rat tails' over their eyes and was filled with lice.'⁹⁶ The notion of Wapping as 'alien' was almost proverbial. In 1776 John Fielding described it as a place 'chiefly inhabited by sailors, [where] a man would be apt to suspect himself in another country' because 'their manner of living, speaking, acting, dressing and behaving, are so very peculiar to themselves'.⁹⁷ Even earlier, Smollett's novels feature Wapping's community of seafaring men and tradesmen. In *Launcelot Greaves* (1760-1), for example, the locality was Captain Crowe's favourite district, and in *Roderick Random* the seamen use maritime terminology to make euphemistic reference to prostitutes.⁹⁸ For example, a sea lieutenant who comes to the rescue of Nancy Williams describes the unfortunate woman as 'a poor galley in distress that has been boarded by a fire-ship'.⁹⁹ The sea lieutenant pays off her debts and assures her 'you shan't go to the bilboes this bout' telling her she 'had got into the wrong port' and advising her 'to seek a more convenient harbour' where she 'could be safely hove down'.¹⁰⁰ Robert Dighton used similar metaphorical language in his caricatures of prostitutes and their clients produced in 1781: *A English Man of War taking a French Privateer on London Bridge* and *An English Sloop Engaging a Dutch Man of War in the Piazza, Covent Garden*.¹⁰¹ In another example, *A Rich Privateer brought safe into Port by Two First Rates* (1782), a mezzotint after Dighton published by Carington Bowles, the viewer is presented with a brothel scene where a woman dips her hand into the sailor's hatful of guineas; another has grabbed his watch and seals while an archetypal Wapping landlady brings up a bowl of punch.¹⁰² This adopted sea-lingo also appears in a version of the traditional sailor's song, *Ratcliffe Highway*, thought to date from the turn of the nineteenth century:

There's funny craft in Wapping,
In streaming colours gay,
And Pirate ships, and Fireships,
In Ratcliffe Highway.¹⁰³

Cindy McCreery observes that 'images of sailors and their women frequently reflected issues at the centre of national consciousness'. Because, as McCreery identifies, 'prostitution and the role of the sea in aiding commerce and defence were two of the most visible contemporary preoccupations' they were regularly linked in caricatures.¹⁰⁴ Like Smollett's sea lieutenant, caricaturists further emphasised this link by describing the prostitutes operating near ports through a euphemistic vocabulary based around maritime terms, often with explicitly sexual

⁹⁶ Thale, M. (ed.) (1972), pp. 77-8; See Cruikshank, D. (2010), pp. 178-9.

⁹⁷ Fielding, J. (1776), p. xiii.

⁹⁸ Smollett, T. (1760), pp. 62, 161-2; see also Maitland, W. (1756), Vol. 2, p. 1366.

⁹⁹ Apart from the obvious nautical connotation, the slang meaning of fire-ship was a diseased whore.

¹⁰⁰ Smollett, T. (1748), p. 134; a ship was 'hove down' on one side, or 'careened' in order to remove matter that had adhered itself to the bottom of the vessel.

¹⁰¹ LWL: 781.06.00.01 and 781.06.00.02.

¹⁰² BM: 1935,0522.1.182.

¹⁰³ Repd in Vaughan Williams, R. (2009), p. 83.

¹⁰⁴ See McCreery, C. (2000), pp. 135-52.

allusions. For example, Isaac Cruikshank's 1802 caricature, *British Vessels, Described for the use of a Country Gentleman* depicts an assortment of seven women each described as a type of ship or boat, including a Billingsgate Smack, a Dutch Dogger, a Fire Ship and a Bum-Boat.¹⁰⁵ The title of the print, which refers to potentially naïve country gentlemen, highlights the popular concept of the port in popular prints as a place of entrapment together with the wily prostitutes which echo Hayman's devious Wapping Landlady. McCreery notes that the representation of the port as a place for entrapment of gullible males has naval as well as sexual connotations, with the danger of the Royal Navy's press gangs. Caricatures of press gangs and prostitutes operating in maritime neighbourhoods such as Wapping suggest a contemporary awareness of the lure of the pleasure and the subsequent pain that could ensnare the unsuspecting and gullible recruits.¹⁰⁶

The eighteenth-century sailor ashore at Wapping or in any of the maritime neighbourhoods of the Thames was portrayed as 'Jolly Jack Tar', a generic character often shown in the company of prostitutes. The image of Jack Tar appeared mainly in moderately priced single-sheet engraved caricatures, and the wide circulation of these prints suggests Jack Tar became a potent symbol of national courage, his omnipresence a reflection on the sailors' role in aiding commerce and defence at sea. On shore the sailor and the prostitute are implied to be suited to each other in their mutual and equally immoral pursuit of money and sex. Whilst this complicates the notion and discourse of patriotism, let alone femininity and politeness, the larger-than-life image of prostitutes suggests another role in boosting sailors' morale and encouraging them to do their duty. Certainly sailors who had endured months of deprivation at sea would relish their time spent in port and once they received their pay were free to enjoy their time as they chose and that meant alcohol and women. The pubs and brothels of Wapping offered all sorts of services to the visiting seaman, but at a price. At best, seamen could simply blow their hard-earned wages in a drunken binge. At worst, they would be cheated, robbed or even murdered. But the representation of the sailor as Jolly Jack Tar and the prostitute as obliging goodtime girls is thoroughly distinct from Hayman's preyed upon sailor and calculatingly ruthless landlady [Fig. 43]. These caricatures present an acceptable (albeit humorous), symbiotic relationship between stereotypes who are presented under such comic names as 'Jack Jolly' and 'Meg of Wapping'.

There were several hundred satirical and comic engravings of sailors and prostitutes published in London in the decades before and after the turn of the eighteenth century. The majority of these images depicted scenes located in port environments with many specifically ascribed to Wapping either by direct reference in the title or through the appearance of local landmarks, or other related imagery. For example, take a satirical print from the series of six plates entitled *The Modern Harlot's Progress* [Fig. 44]. The series follows the adventures of Harriet Heedless in a modernised imitation of Hogarth's *Harlot's Progress* (1732). As in Hogarth's series which traces Moll Hackabout's downfall, *The Modern Harlot's Progress* charts the arrival of a country girl in London and her subsequent downfall at the hands of unscrupulous 'types' to her final incarceration in the workhouse and riddled with disease.¹⁰⁷ By the second plate of the series Harriet Heedless, echoing the misadventures of her

¹⁰⁵ Library of Congress, Washington D.C.: LC-USZC4-2902.

¹⁰⁶ See McCreery, C. (2000), pp, 135-52.

¹⁰⁷ In Smollett's *Roderick Random* the character Nancy Williams relates a similar story, although her downfall is mitigated by the intervention of a sea lieutenant; see Smollett, T. (1748), chapter XXII.

predecessor, is 'discarded for her infidelity' and so she 'takes lodgings, turns common, is attended by rakes and gamesters, and furnished by the millener [*sic*], with dresses to continue her prostitution'. The significant difference between this and Hogarth's original version is that Moll Hackabout was demoted to a dingy garret in the vicinity of Drury Lane near Covent Garden, an area renowned for its brothels, whereas Harriet Heedless has downsized to the Thames-side neighbourhood of Wapping, a location which in 1780 evidently held equally dubious connotations.¹⁰⁸ The location is suggested by the window through which the masts of a ship are clearly visible and additional maritime paraphernalia litters the scene, for example a design for a ship is pinned to the wall and a framed picture of a naval battle hangs above the door. The tradition of depicting prostitutes ensconced in their Wapping quarters can be traced in another satirical print which illustrated a ballad attributed to Charles Dibdin and published by Laurie and Whittle in 1797 under the title *Meg of Wapping* [Fig. 45]. In this social satire based on a popular song, a woman is shown three times with three different men within the same image. On the wall hangs a picture of shipping at sea. According to the verse, Meg lived 'at the sign of the ship where tars meet in such jolly parties'. The lyrics to the song appear below the image and the words explain that Meg, a landlady from Wapping, married six sailors each of whom subsequently died in various mysterious manners, including one who was eaten by a crocodile and another who was consumed by cannibals. The seventh outlived her and married his sweetheart and lived off the fortune Meg had amassed through her matrimonial conquests with the sailors of Wapping. Here then again is a representation of the archetypal Wapping landlady who has lined her own pockets by emptying the purses of vulnerable sailors with short life-expectancies whom she charms out of their money and into marriage, tempting them while they are under the influence of her famous 'flip' which she is shown serving from a punchbowl in the printed illustration.¹⁰⁹ Meg becomes a siren or a temptress, literally drawing sailors to their doom. What is significant in this representation of sailors and prostitutes is the shift in power that occurs. Ultimately Meg has given her sailor husbands what they wanted and she, through her 'service' has made a reasonable living. But it is the sailor community who have the upper hand at the end of the tale when Meg, unable to stop herself from chasing young sailors when she is in her dotage, 'popp'd off' leaving her amassed fortune which falls into the hands of a sailor, Honest Tom Trip, and the 'natural' social order is ultimately re-established.

Wapping's reputation as a notorious locale within which characters such as Meg, Harriet Heedless and the unscrupulous Wapping landladies operated also received regular references in popular sailor songs. These traditional verses date from the very early years of the nineteenth century, corresponding with the period during which prints of sailors and the women with whom they cavorted were at their most popular as evidenced by their proliferation. For example, in the song *Ratcliffe Highway* the lyrics contain a warning to sailors:

So mind these buxom lasses
In their flying colours gay
Or soon they'll clear your lockers out

¹⁰⁸ See Hallett, M. and Riding, C. (2006), pp. 81-2.

¹⁰⁹ A sailor's drink made of ale, brandy and sugar.

In Ratcliffe Highway!¹¹⁰

In another song titled *Rolling Down Wapping* comes an even the starker caution:

...the wines and the songs will divert you,
You'll think that your mind was deranged
And if that you give them a guinea,
You may go to the d---l for change.

The same song identifies the familiar character of the Wapping landlady when a sailor pays for a bottle of wine with a guinea and asks for his change:

The old baud she flew into a passion,
And plac'd her two hands on her hips,
Saying, young man, you don't know the fashion,
You think you're on board of a ship.¹¹¹

In the song the sailor exacts his revenge by attacking the landlady ('O Murder, I'm killed she cried') and stealing a gold watch, returning to the relative safety of his ship at Deptford with obvious relief. The production of caricatures of sailors and prostitutes in and around Wapping appears to have reached its peak during the first two decades of the nineteenth century, coinciding with Britain's naval campaigns against France. The proliferation of the image of the jolly sailor as he energetically enjoys the pleasures of Wapping during short bursts of shore leave is indicative of his potency as a symbol of national courage in line with the association with the image of the river Thames itself. The close links between images and songs of sailors and prostitutes, and comic prints of sailors generally were borne out as recurrent subjects in the inexpensive *Caricature Magazine* sold from 1807 by the publisher Thomas Tegg.¹¹² Amongst the artists who contributed to this publication was Thomas Rowlandson who made a print after Henry William Bunbury for a ballad entitled *Black, Brown and Fair* (1807) [Fig. 46]. The title recalls a line sung by Macheath, the highwayman with a fondness for prostitutes in John Gay's play *The Beggar's Opera* (1728) :

Thus I stand, like the Turk, with his doxies around;
From all sides their glances his passion confound!
For black, brown, and fair his inconstancy burns,
And the different beauties subdue him by turns...¹¹³

Rowlandson takes the exterior of a corner-house inscribed 'Dock Head' on the Thames in Wapping as the setting for an alternative verse describing the conquests of a promiscuous male who reassures his lover of his faithfulness despite innumerable amorous conquests: '...With Black, Brown, and Fair, I have frolick'd 'tis true But never lov'd any, dear Mary, but you'. A group of prostitutes, including a black woman, pose in the open window of the Wapping Bagnio attracting the admiring attention of three men identifiable as Chinese, Dutch

¹¹⁰ Repd in Vaughan Williams, R. (2009), p. 83.

¹¹¹ Anon. (c. 1813-1838).

¹¹² Donald, D. (1996), p. 5. Approximately 30 caricatures of sailors, many with prostitutes, appeared in the five volumes of the *Caricature Magazine* – see LWL collection.

¹¹³ Gay, J. (1997), p. 206.

and French by their individual costumes and attitudes. A black sailor enters the door with his arm around another prostitute and a brown-skinned child, presumably the illegitimate product of such a union, lies on the pavement in a pose reminiscent of a sleeping cupid. Meanwhile on the right hand side of the image, a ship lies against the quay where a sailor and a woman stand, the latter smoking a pipe. On the surface, the caricature treats the mix of races in a bawdy manner in a tradition which appears to have appealed to the crude nature of much contemporary humour reflected in satirical prints.¹¹⁴ However, beneath this veneer of humour lies a more problematic, sinister aspect to the print, centring on the idea of miscegenation associated with the sailor. In another print by William Elmes and published by Thomas Tegg a jovial sailor bestrides a misshapen horse with panniers, a foot in each basket: *Jack Jolly steering down Wapping in Ballast trim* (1813) [Fig. 47]. In each basket sits a gaudily attired prostitute, each holding one of his arms. Jack grins amorously towards one who is immensely fat and ugly, while the other swigs from a bottle. They are in a wide cobbled street leading to the Thames where the stern of a ship flying an ensign can be glimpsed. In another print, Elmes' *Jack in a white squall, amongst the breakers – on the lee shore of St Catherines* (1811) [Fig. 48] a sailor, unable to pay for services rendered, is attacked by prostitutes. Here the sailor's predicament is represented as a humorous and farcical caper free from any sense of danger or maliciousness. The mutually beneficial relationship between sailors and prostitutes in these and other images is non-threatening and suggests a sporadic existence of tolerance towards their licentious behaviour within the geographical context of the port of London. The problematic concerns with race, promiscuity, transgression and immorality are, to an extent, counteracted by the contribution to the common good represented throughout by a proximity to the Thames in London, the national centre of commerce and naval power. Such prints offer commercial entertainment through humour, but they also operate as an ideologically charged material reflective of contemporary events, for example when sailors mutinied in 1797 their behaviour undermined conventional notions of the Jolly Jack Tar.¹¹⁵ In the same way as visual images of the waterman tended to idealise his character, the stereotype of Jolly Jack Tar, marauding on shore with prostitutes within the maritime neighbourhoods of the Thames, was an ideologically constructed fiction communicated through inexpensive caricatures.

Rowlandson commented on the charms of Wapping in a print published by Rudolph Ackermann in 1807 [Fig. 49]. With its unambiguous title: *Wapping*, this print depicts the interior of a sailor's tavern in the 1790s with characteristics that are reminiscent of Hayman's *The Wapping Landlady* [Fig. 43] but also reflective of the spirit of the contemporary sailor songs of which *Ratcliffe Highway* and *Rolling Down Wapping* are examples. A lively and apparently carefree party of sailors are depicted as they enjoy the company of various gaily attired floozies, one of whom dances with a sailor, her breasts exposed and one hand suggestively pressed to her crotch. A fiddler provides the music and in the background the bonneted figure of the landlady is busily occupied in preparing the sailors' punch or flip by which means she will extort their hard-earned cash. The visual momentum of the image is achieved through the twirling movement of the dancers and the clumsy fumbling of sailors and their women on benches. Both the seated sailor with his raised pipe and the dancing sailor with his beribboned hat gesticulate towards the open doorway and the unobstructed view out towards the Thames and a ship that is laid up nearby. The presence of the waiting vessel in

¹¹⁴ See McCreery, C. (2000), pp. 140-2.

¹¹⁵ For an account of Nore mutiny see Schneer, J. (2008), pp. 88-114.

such close proximity to the scene of revelry alludes to the brevity of the time available to the sailors before they are required to return to sea once more. Rowlandson's tableau contains overtones of the sixteenth-century Flemish tradition of dancing and drinking scenes laced with gloomy portents for the participants, for example Pieter Brueghel the Elder's *The Peasant Dance* (1568) in which the viewer is presented with a similar scene of dancing couples who twirl amidst tables filled with drinkers while a musician provides music.¹¹⁶ Here there is a general sense of foreboding suggesting that no good will come from this bawdy behaviour. This recalls the image of death in Medieval and Renaissance grotesque as in Holbein's or Dürer's 'dance of death'.¹¹⁷ Similarly, in the light of the substantial evidence discussed in this chapter which suggests the existence of a general awareness of the character of ports of the period, together with the abundance of specific colloquial references to the dangers of Wapping, Rowlandson's scene of apparently carefree enjoyment can be seen to be underscored with a cynicism which contradicts the superficially innocent transactions. With this in mind, the image can be read as it might have been understood by a broad contemporary spectatorship as carnivalesque or politically subversive; it is a satire which highlights the nature of the transient maritime community that relied on the river Thames for its existence. The one word title, *Wapping*, draws on a rich tapestry of connotations and associations which would have already existed in all except the most sheltered minds of a contemporary London and maritime audience.¹¹⁸

Billingsgate Eloquence

Throughout the long eighteenth century the Thames was closely associated with foul language or river wit, but this vulgarity did not emanate from the tongues of the watermen alone. The traders who worked at a landmark market on the banks of the river were of such notoriety that its name was a colloquial euphemism indicating particularly offensive language: Billingsgate.¹¹⁹ Like the Thames waterman, the Wapping landlady and Jack Tar, the Billingsgate fish-wife became an infamous player in the motley theatrical cast of eccentric Thames characters who made regular appearances in satirical prints. The fish-wives were regularly featured in satires as fearsome scourges of fops, foreigners and polite Londoners in situations that suggested patriotic or counter-cultural associations.¹²⁰ Their vigorous and brazen demeanour was notorious which meant images of the Billingsgate fish-wife 'type' could be employed by satirists to contrast with politicians who appeared weak or wavering in comparison. Billingsgate represented the most ancient of all London's markets with its foundation predating the Christian era by several hundred years. According to John Stow it was named either after the Celtic king Belinus or Belin, or after a Mr Beling who once owned the land. Records dating from 1016 suggest the original Billingsgate market traded corn, coal, iron, wine, salt, pottery and fish and as early as 1559, when it was declared 'an open space for the landing and bringing in of fish, corn, salt stores, victuals and fruit (grocery was excepted)',

¹¹⁶ Kunsthistorisches Muesum, Vienna: GG_1059.

¹¹⁷ See Bakhtin, M. (1968), pp. 50-51.

¹¹⁸ See Gatrell, V. (2005).

¹¹⁹ See *Billingsgate Eloquence* (1795) by James Gillray, BM: 1868,0808.6396.

¹²⁰ See Gatrell, V. (2005).

it was the chief City wharf for fishing vessels.¹²¹ It was eventually confirmed as the free market for fish by an Act of Parliament in 1698.¹²² Anthonis van den Wyngaerde gave an early indication of the fame of this Thames location in his pen and ink sketches of the Thames which date from this period.¹²³ In the section of his panorama that depicts the busy commercial stretch of the river east of London Bridge with its bustling waterfront can be found Billingsgate (marked *bullens gate*) where the sterns of two ships protrude from the wharf.

For many centuries the wharf side at Billingsgate remained as a simple open space by the river, dotted with booths and sheds as well as a row of wooden houses with a piazza on their western end. In what would have most likely been a heady environment characterised by the stench of fish and the slipperiness of discarded fish-scales and guts underfoot, specific generic 'types' together with traditions that were associated with them and their behaviour had evolved. Most prolific were the indigenous 'wives' of Billingsgate who were already notorious by the sixteenth century and in the seventeenth century there are ballads with such brutish titles as *The Blood Battle at Billingsgate, Beginning with a scolding bout between two young Fish-women, Doll and Kate*.¹²⁴ Conspicuous by their appearance which marked them as different, they typically dressed in strong 'stuff' gowns and quilted petticoats with their hair, caps and bonnets flattened into one indistinguishable mass resulting from the practice of carrying straw baskets laden with fish and balanced on their heads. Also nicknamed 'fish fags', the stereotypical Billingsgate fish-wife smoked a clay pipe, took snuff, drank gin and, like the Thames watermen, could be relied upon for her colourful, expletive-strewn language from which the phrase 'to shriek like a fish-wife' was derived. Their notoriety was such that one of the terms for violence and obscenity in speech became known simply as 'Billingsgate', after the example of the fish-wives and porters who worked in this riverside vicinity. Nathaniel Bailey defined 'A Billingsgate' in his Dictionary of 1675 as 'a scolding impudent Slut'.¹²⁵ The name of Billingsgate became especially associated with the coarse and scolding language of the fishwives as far back as 1653 when Nicholas Culpeper alluded ironically to 'down-right Billingsgate Rhetoric' and a century later John Wesley used the traditional sense in the phrase 'low Billingsgate invectives'.¹²⁶ In Smollett's *Roderick Random* the term is employed on more than one occasion, for example in reference to a woman who reveals her true nature when she is exposed as a common prostitute: 'Who would have thought that so much devilish malice and Billingsgate, could lurk under such sweetness of countenance and modesty of behaviour?'.¹²⁷ This definite tradition of dress and of language, instantly recognisable as a 'type' in both written and visual imagery, emerged specifically from this small riverside area which was integral to the Thames-side community as well as playing a vital role in the supply of fresh fish to Londoners. By the eighteenth century, the 'Billingsgate fish-wife' had become a highly distinctive and recognised proverbial figure of gross abusiveness and as such, part of the visual repertoire of Thames iconography.

The fish-wives were peripatetic characters who roamed the streets of London in order to sell their wares, but wherever they appear in visual imagery, they convey connotations of

¹²¹ Quoted in Barker, F. and Jackson, P. (1983), p. 52.

¹²² Fox, C. (1987), p. 146.

¹²³ See Benham, W. and Welsh, C. (1901).

¹²⁴ See Gray, D. (1984), Vol. 14, p. 29.

¹²⁵ Bailey, N. (1675).

¹²⁶ Culpeper, N. (1653), p. 31; Wesley, J. (1812), Vol. 13, p. 167.

¹²⁷ Smollett, T. (1748), p. 260.

the Billingsgate marketplace. An indication of what this construed can be gleaned from *The View and Humours of Billingsgate* (1736) by Arnold Vanhaecken (d. 1735/36). This image forms the first plate in a series of prints, the remainder of which are based around still life depictions of fish [Fig. 50]. The view, which is taken from an elevated position, presents a lively impression of the comic shows of the marketplace, set within an area encompassing both Billingsgate harbour with its related Thames shipping, the crowded fish market, the cobbled thoroughfare of Lower Thames Street which appears in the foreground and the fishmongers' buildings known as the fish merchants' quarter to the right. Vanhaeken has populated his draughtsman-like reproduction of the architectural topography with a raft of local characters, each carefully placed to maximise their comic potential and emphasise the chaotic nature of life in this Thames-side marketplace. In the centre is a man with a basket which he carries on his shoulders; he gazes straight out of the picture and engages directly with the viewer who is thereby invited to survey the mayhem of the market as it appears all around him. Behind the centrally positioned fish porter, a man who has tripped over two chasing greyhounds tumbles to the ground and upsets a basket of cod. To the left a quack medicine man on horseback is drumming up custom for 'cure-all' pills from a casket on his lap. To the right a *beau*, perhaps from St James's, is tasting an oyster at the street stall, unaware that a sailor is about to steal the tricorne hat which is tucked under his arm.¹²⁸ The inscription beneath the title alludes to the overall tone of Billingsgate: 'Where Great Belinus held his Court of Old, Oysters are now obstreperously sold'. Within the genre of satire the unruly tone of Billingsgate was represented above all through the character of the formidable fish-wife. Hogarth's painting of *The Shrimp Girl* (c. 1740-5) conveys a vivid impression of the charms of some of the sellers in the marketplace, but the more established image is of coarse, matronly figures, built on a generous scale.¹²⁹ For example, Rowlandson's satirical print *Billingsgate* [sic] (1784), reproduces a sketch of some hefty fish-wives with their baskets ranged on the pavement and the masts and sails of vessels in Billingsgate dock behind them [Fig. 51]. Facing these formidable women is an irate customer with a gouty leg. One fish-wife is shown fastening a flat fish to his wig, while a small urchin tugs at his coat-tails. He clenches his fist and waves his stick, shouting ineffectually in indignation. Of the women opposite, one holds a fish towards him, shouting, another laughs openly, her hands on her hips, while a third lies on the ground drunkenly vomiting, an action echoed by the image of the contents of her basket which have spewed forth onto the ground. Behind them stands a woman drinking from a bottle. All the women are gross, overweight, bare-breasted and terrifying. Rowlandson repeated these motifs in the print *Billingsgate Market* made with John Bluck and Augustus Charles Pugin and published by Ackermann as an illustration from the *Microcosm of London* (1808) [Fig. 52]. The view of the harbour is similar in aspect to that depicted by Vanhaeken over seventy years earlier and the human scenery remains equally shambolic. Immediately beyond the central foreground a vast fish-wife, who appears to be in the process of fighting another woman, has tripped backwards over a small bench and fallen on her back causing those around her to tumble also. Nearby another woman catches a man by the end of his wig and is about to strike him with a flounder. Complementing their reputation for being tough and feisty, the fish-wives of Billingsgate were closely associated with female fist-fighting and can be found engaged as such in either contests or brawls in printed caricatures dating

¹²⁸ See Phillips, H. (1951), p. 44.

¹²⁹ NG: NG1162.

from the 1770s. Like the Wapping landlady, these are unnatural women, both de-feminised and un-sexed, implicitly threatening in assuming the character and attitudes of men. Take for example *An Engagement in Billingsgate Channel, between the Terrible and the Tiger, two First Rates* (1781) published by Carington Bowles which depicts two Billingsgate fish-women facing each other over clenched fists, their baskets of fish placed on the ground outside a public house.¹³⁰ Two small boys make attempts to intervene and stop this altercation, one clasping at a fighting woman's leg, the other tugging at the hem of her opponent's cloak, while two men watch the fray. The side of a ship looms to the right of the image, confirming the Thames-side location. In *Billingsgate Triumphant, or – Poll Dab a Match for the Frenchman* (1775) also published by Carington Bowles and set before an inn (the 'Old Noted Gin and Purl House'), the concept of the Billingsgate fish-wife as a British mascot is used as this invulnerable woman squares up to a Frenchman, his nose already bloodied by her clenched fist, while the innkeeper and an assortment of market characters watch the contest with both undisguised amusement and patriotic pride.¹³¹ Each depiction of Billingsgate market, with its focus on the masculine, sparring fish-wives, is packed with incident and action. This compounds the reputation of the riverside location for raucous behaviour and promotes the resultant comedy, but it also highlights a disregard for social order. Once again, like the depictions of sailors' prostitutes in Wapping, this is communicated through depictions of women behaving unnaturally within the subverted culture of maritime communities. As such, the satirical visual imagery of Billingsgate Market functions to inoculate the transgressive, threatening and riotous character of the port.

The reputation of the Billingsgate fish-wife appears to have reached such an idiosyncratic status in the popular imagination that she could be lifted out of the marketplace and placed into a variety of alternative scenarios where her presence acts as a cipher, or at least she can be recognised as a specific 'type' with all the associations which have already been discussed. The image of the Billingsgate fish-wife embodied a vulgar yet feisty, indomitable form of British gumption which was ideally suited to the purposes of late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century caricatures which frequently accentuated a patriotic spirit, not dissimilar in its attributes to the British Bulldog, a much later embodiment of national spirit. An example of this fighting spirit which became popularly attached to the image of the Billingsgate fish-wife can be found in Isaac Cruikshank's etching after a design by George Moutard Woodward (1760-1809): *Who's Afraid or the Effects of an Invasion!!* (1796) [Fig. 53]. In this print, which is composed of twelve standing figures arranged in two horizontal rows, the artist has presented each character together with a short speech (appearing overhead) which consists of a boast of the individual's talents suggesting a rallying cry or fighting talk against the threat of foreign invasion. Amongst such recognisable generic types, appearing in the forms of a tailor, a cobbler, an injured officer and a doctor, is a Billingsgate virago who makes the following pronouncement from behind her muscular raised fists:

Let them come to Billingsgate if
they dare, we'll shew them the
spirit of British Fish women
who's afraid of sans Culottes.

¹³⁰ BM: 1935,0522.1.73.

¹³¹ BM: 1935,0522.1.72.

This caricature represents the fish-wife as a tough, courageous and patriotic fighter, her eye already blackened from a previous brawl.

Within the genre of satirical prints, the fish-wives did not remain rigidly contained within the Thames-side quarters of Billingsgate market. As a peripatetic street seller with her trademark basket of fish balanced on her head, she also makes regular appearances as a distinctive 'type' in popular prints which date from the middle of the eighteenth century onwards, contributing to the iconography contained within images of London street scenes as well as fitting within the same cultural convention as the 'Cries of London'. For example, in Hogarth's *Beer Street* (1751), at a location close to St Giles which is within walking distance of Billingsgate, two uncharacteristically wholesome and well-presented fish-sellers are shown singing the *New Ballad on the Herring Fishery*.¹³² As John Bonehill has commented, these fish-wives are treated by Hogarth 'as a veritable symbol of the attractive good health of London's street people', which is in keeping with the artist's campaign in support of the Gin Act of 1751.¹³³ Hogarth manipulates the stereotypical image of the formidable and foul-mouthed fish-wife and transforms her into these more socially acceptable characters who, with an apparently healthy work ethic and overflowing baskets of fresh fish, bear witness to the success of the revived industry, thereby emphasising the blatantly patriotic agenda of Hogarth's print. More common still is the appearance of the fish-sellers from Billingsgate as frightening and ugly specimens who patrol London's streets, their intimidating demeanour suggesting they will be easily provoked into fist-fighting: they frequently sport at least one black eye indicating their ruthless and violent attitude towards each other and their customers. In *Billingsgate Brutes* (1795) for example, Rowlandson presents the itinerant fish-wives as they terrorise some potential customers who are being verbally assaulted on the threshold of their own residence [Fig. 54]. An attractive young woman leans out through an open street-door towards a stout fish-wife who has planted a basket of fish on the step. A second fish-wife stands beside her with a basket on her head and her hands on her hips. Beneath the title is the inscription:

That Fish Madam's sweet! the girl made no reply,
 Afraid of her life (and to bid was to buy)
 The Fagg gave a volley her sister squard Trim
 Smell the fish! what it stinks Eh? you saucy young Brim.

In 1760 Paul Sandby produced a set of twelve prints in which he reworked the traditional genre of street *Cries*. Such sets of figures, depicting itinerant performers, hawkers and traders, had been commonplace in European art since the sixteenth century, the most popular being Marcellus Laroon's (1653-1702) *Cryes of the City of London*, first issued in 1688. Within Laroon's set was a print titled *Four for Six Pence Mackerell* depicting an exhausted one-eyed old woman waiting for a customer, her clothes little more than patches and with just one fish dangling at her side despite the advertised offer of four.¹³⁴ Laroon's fish-wife is a tame character when compared to Sandby's mackerel woman from his *Twelve Cries of London* (1760) who could not be more repellent as she barks out her cry of 'Rare Mackerel, Three a Groat or Four for Sixpence' [Fig. 55]. Two terrified tavern-keepers peer out from behind a

¹³² BM: 1868,0822.1593.

¹³³ Bonehill, J. (2009), p. 133.

¹³⁴ BM, 1972,U.370.41. See Shesgreen, S. (2002), p. 146.

barely open front door, their fearful reaction in confronting the alarming apparition on their doorstep mirrored by a cat with its hackles raised and its back arched as it hisses at the fish-wife's barking dog. Sean Shesgreen has described the fishwife's snarl as 'rapacious' and 'bristling with teeth that evoke cannibalism', her overall demeanour being 'hostile, menacing and loud'.¹³⁵

The Billingsgate fish-wives had a significant role through their representation in caricatures and satirical prints, especially those that were produced towards the latter years of the eighteenth century. Inextricably connected with the Thames, she is represented as a kindred spirit to the sailors, prostitutes and watermen with whom she shared London's riverside locations. Hers was an itinerant character on the London scene found selling her wares in the marketplace or on residential streets amongst genteel residents. With an instantly recognisable outward appearance readily exaggerated for comedic effect, the fish-wives were equally loathed for their frightening appearance, uncouth habits and vicious tongue, and admired for their passion and fortitude. Billingsgate fish-wives, alongside the other types discussed here, also point to the 'otherness' of the Thames and the alien, unknowable nature of maritime neighbourhoods. The fish-wives and the Wapping prostitutes, as portrayed in satirical prints, embody the foreign, threatening and transgressive aspects of the port. But in times of uncertainty, especially when Britain was embattled against its enemies, the image of the Billingsgate fish-wife and her maritime compatriots was also an embodiment of the same attributes of national strength for which the image of the river Thames was already known and understood, but with the additional qualities of resilience and grit.

Conclusion

During the early decades of the eighteenth century writers and poets, such as Samuel Johnson and Alexander Pope, made pointed references to the squalor of London's poor, particularly the abject poverty to be found within the riverside communities along the eastern reaches of the Thames. Elsewhere, literary works emphasised the disparity between the filthy living conditions in these downriver maritime locations and the pastoral qualities of the upriver Thames. The impoverished state of the downriver neighbourhoods and the associations with immorality and criminality that were suggested in literary forms provided a stereotype of the maritime and a reassuring *concordia discors* with polite, upriver locations. Furthermore, the physical river represented a unifying link between the genteel upriver locations such as Twickenham (where Pope resided) and the downriver mercantile environments such as Billingsgate and Wapping. As such, the maritime communities in these low neighbourhoods were effectively distanced by association with the unpleasant nature of overcrowded urban living such as bad smells and offensive language. However, despite these textual references, the population that was the backbone of the largest commercial port in the world remained noticeably unrepresented in painted and printed views of the Thames.

In this chapter it is argued that during the second half of the eighteenth century the human face of maritime London did eventually emerge and proliferate as an alternative image

¹³⁵ Shesgreen, S. (2002), p. 129.

of the Thames through a counterculture of printed graphic satires and caricatures. A close reading of works by artists such as James Gillray, Thomas Rowlandson and George Morland reveals that this late eighteenth-century visualisation of a carnivalesque cast of Thames 'types' is a convention that represents an alternative discourse on the subject of London's river. Here, each Thames 'type', such as the waterman, the Wapping landlady and the Billingsgate fishwife, is ascribed a complex series of apparently accepted and understood characteristics. The resultant stereotypes, recognisable across numerous works through a series of recurring traits and manners, provide a direct link with an alternative image of the Thames formed via the 'otherness' of its maritime communities. Far from being straightforward figures of fun, they represent the 'otherness' of the Thames' labouring communities and their attitudes and behaviour exposes the subversion of hierarchic distinctions in the environments they inhabit or frequent. Above all, they are bastions of the port city and the nation with their feisty spirit of survival portrayed in terms of contemporary ideologies that relate to patriotism, nationalism and liberty.

Thames imagery that evoked a positive and patriotic national identity also became a core theme of exhibited paintings and successful prints. In Chapter 3, I propose that artists who painted the river Thames during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, especially during the times of war, were increasingly drawn to promoting the symbolic significance of the surge in architectural projects along the banks of the river as well as idealising the ambitious physical reorganisation of the port and the colossal dock-building schemes. Using a broad range of representative examples I will argue that these artists were reimagining the river and further broadening the image of the Thames in the long eighteenth century.

CHAPTER 3

**Reimagining the River:
‘Support[ing] the dignity of the Nation,
and the important interests of its Commerce’**

This great public work is conceived on the scale calculated to support the dignity of the Nation, and the important interests of its Commerce, and will, when compleated [*sic*], in conjunction with other magnificent works, either in progress or contemplation, render this Metropolis ultimately the first Port as it is already the first City in the World.¹

The purpose of this third chapter is to consider the revision of the Thames image in terms of the rapid shifts in artistic engagement with the river that occurred during the second half of the eighteenth century. The significance of this ‘reimagined river’ is suggested by John Elgin who states that developments along the Thames ‘are presented [in visual art] as timely improvements in changing urban landscape’ when ‘London could stand for Great Britain’ because it was the centre of the nation both culturally and commercially and the centre of population and power.² As such, depictions of improvements to the capital and specifically its most famous commercial artery, the Thames, became impressions of a desirable future.³ I will argue that the changes in artistic approaches occurred in tandem with the unprecedented and expeditious improvements to London’s main commercial artery, when the construction of Westminster Bridge first stimulated an artistic awareness of the Thames’ potential for the representation of London as a developing metropolitan space, ever more suited for its role at the heart of a commercial empire and as ‘the first Port’ and ‘the first City in the World’.

According to T. Baker, the eighteenth-century Thames riverfront was ‘the City of London’s façade to the world.’⁴ In the words of John Summerson: ‘halfway through the eighteenth century the tide of commerce – the life-stream of the capital – began to leave [...] an architectural deposit in its course’.⁵ This chapter tracks the development of the ‘façade to the world’ and explores the visual account of the ‘architectural deposit’ manifested in the physical rationalisation of the river through its reinterpretation by artists working in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. This survey will encompass the renovation and eventual demolition and replacement of old London Bridge and the depictions of the first new bridge at Westminster from the earliest signs of its construction through to its completion. Alongside this is a consideration of the designs for magnificent and triumphal bridges and the remarkable dock-building schemes further downriver which came to fruition at the turn on the nineteenth century. It will be argued that because London represented the nation synecdochically and gave it visible form through its exterior symbols and functions, these

¹ Extract from inscription printed beneath *An Elevated View of the New Dock in Wapping* (1 Jan 1803) by William Daniell, BM: G,13.19.

² Elgin, J. (1999), p. 105. See also Colley, L. (2009), p. 64.

³ For ‘the artist as augur’ see Haskell, F. (1993), p. 400.

⁴ Baker, T. (2000), p. 25.

⁵ Summerson, J. (2003), p. 302.

schemes, renovations and improvements not only physically reformed London, but the subsequent artistic reimagining of the changing topography of the Thames, at a time of intense patriotism among British subjects, was an important component in the very redefinition of Britain.⁶ As Linda Colley has observed, the two decades following the defeat of the Jacobite rising at the Battle of Culloden in 1746 became 'an infinitely creative period in terms of patriotic initiative and discussion of national identities', qualities which are to be found in artistic renditions of Westminster, London and Blackfriars bridges, the riverside developments of the Adelphi, Somerset House and the great docks built to the east of the City.⁷ Such developments provided the source material for sweeping riverscape-panoramas which would captivate paying audiences by the end of the eighteenth century.⁸ They also prompted the sanitised, cartographic aesthetic of Nicholas Pocock and Joseph Farington in views of the Royal Dockyards, and underscored William Daniell's bird-eye views of dockyards, docks and the reorganised port garlanded with new bridges. The collective effect of these works was to present the capital as the epitome of both commercial and naval efficiency. Through an investigation of examples taken from a diverse range of artworks which draw on this prodigious burst of engineering and architectural accomplishment, it will be argued that while the new developments transfigured London's river in a physical sense, the work of artists reimagined the river in the form of a new image epitomising the capital as the heart of the modern imperial nation.

The tides of change

On 7 March 1757, John Bowles and Son published a sixpenny print by the French-born book illustrator and draughtsman of contemporary life, Louis Philippe Boitard (*fl* 1734-1760) [Fig. 56]. Titled *The Imports of Great Britain from France*, the action in Boitard's etching takes place on Custom House Quay, a site located a short distance east of old London Bridge and Billingsgate, where a ship disgorges both people and goods from France. In this work Boitard focuses on the crowded topography of the riverside: in the background identifiable landmarks include the Custom House and the Tower adjacent to the teeming forest of ships' masts which dominates the upper right section of the print and serves to emphasise the congestion of river traffic in a hyperbolic depiction of the commerce of the Thames. In his image Boitard has delineated the intricacies of mercantile equipment, including treadmill cranes and beamscales, as well as the workaday dockside practices in terms of Customs' Officers gauging barrels and porters handling cargo. But the purpose of Boitard's illustration lay in the satirical swipe it aimed at the then fashionable British taste for all things French: amongst the disembarking immigrants is a cast of ridiculous Gallic stereotypes shown together with crates of imported goods such as perfumes and millinery, wine barrels and malodorous Normandy cheeses. Boitard's work, published less than a year after the formal outbreak of the Seven Years War

⁶ The beginning of the Hanoverian succession in 1714, amongst other factors including rivalry with France, helped to produce a culture that was 'national' in character fuelling a patriotic demand for pictures that embodied English, but also British, qualities. See Taylor, B. (1999), pp. 40-46 and Colley, L. (2009), pp. 1-54.

⁷ Colley, L. (2009), p. 85.

⁸ For example Robert Barker's *London Panorama* of 1792 from the top of Albion Mills and Thomas Girtin's *Eidometropolis* exhibited in 1802. See Hyde, R. (1988).

and when Britain and France were in competition for worldwide hegemony, was addressed to the Association of Anti-Gallicans and the promoters of British arts and manufactures, reinforcing the concept of trade as a patriotic duty.⁹ Sheila O'Connell has noted that whilst the purpose of Boitard's print was satirical, and although the artist has deliberately exaggerated the number of both people and shipping, the print does provide a picture of the Legal Quays at work and it functions as a rare illustrative description of Custom House Quay and its operation in the mid-eighteenth century.¹⁰ Within a decade of the publication of Boitard's print, the draughtsman John Gwynn was decrying the same location and its facilities as 'the worst contrived heap of absurdity and inconvenience that could possibly be put together'.¹¹ In his 1766 book, *London and Westminster Improved*, which served to expound his proposals for a newly designed London, Gwynn expressed his astonishment that 'so much business can possibly be carried on in a place [Custom House Quay] which is so extremely crowded [*sic*], and consequently perpetually confused' as well as being 'extremely troublesome' and 'dangerous'. He added that 'this scene of hurry and confusion' would have been unimaginable except to those who had witnessed it at firsthand.¹² Later, in 1786, the visiting German novelist Sophie von la Roche recorded her personal experience of the Custom House, writing 'It is impossible to describe the confusion of workmen and ships' hands there, and the quantities of cases, casks and bales'.¹³ Unlike contemporary prints aimed at the French market which presented this location as an example of British efficacy, for example *The South Prospect of the Custom House at London* (c. 1750) by Benjamin Cole or *A View of Custom house, with part of the Tower, taken from the River Thames, London* (1753) by J. Maurer, engraved and published by John Bowles [Fig. 57], Boitard's image records, in finely etched detail, the type of chaotic and overcrowded commercial Thames-side environment that so offended Gwynn's sense of order and efficiency.¹⁴ Although satirical with its subject exaggerated for comic effect within a specific London port locale, Boitard's print nonetheless provides an alternative pictorial vision of the woefully cramped quarters upon which 'the greatest trading port in the world' relied exclusively for its enormous trade in imported goods, and a Custom House Quay which, in the opinion of Gwynn for one, was unfit for purpose in terms of its capacity and working practices.¹⁵ In addition to the inadequate and cramped facilities the unregulated Thames had itself evolved into a crime-infested thoroughfare where illegal activity had increased in tandem with the expansion of London's port trade. River crime including smuggling, theft and pilferage of cargoes reached such a scale that in 1798 the Marine Police Force was formed and charged specifically with policing the Thames. Furthermore, in 1799 an Act of Parliament gave the green light to a raft of massive enclosed dock-building projects specifically designed to curtail criminal activity, relieve river congestion and augment the pitifully inadequate quayside facilities at the Pool. In 1802, forty-five years on from the publication of Boitard's depiction of cramped chaos at Custom House, William Daniell (1769-1837) successfully 'cleared 200

⁹ See McLynn, F. (2005).

¹⁰ O'Connell, S. (2003), p. 116. The Custom House depicted by Boitard had been rebuilt by Thomas Ripley only thirty years earlier (1715-1727) after Wren's original building was destroyed in a nearby explosion in 1714.

¹¹ A description of Custom House Quay in Gwynn, J. (1766), p. 8.

¹² Gwynn, J. (1766), pp. 8 and 106.

¹³ Williams, C. (ed.) (1933), p. 165.

¹⁴ For the version by B. Cole see LMA: Pr.191/CUS.

¹⁵ Gwynn, J. (1766), p. 106.

guineas' for his *An Elevated View of The New Docks & Warehouses now constructing on the Isle of Dogs...* [Fig. 88].¹⁶ Daniell's image commemorated the inauguration of the downriver docks at the turn of the nineteenth century, but it was also a reimagining of the Thames which identified London as the epitome of maritime efficiency, the port finally free of the congestion and crime that threatened to choke it. In contrast to Boitard's disordered quayside scene, Daniell's bird's-eye views of the new docks present a busy yet regimented forest of masts set out in vast new docks. Here, the representation of organised and burgeoning international trade reflects and enhances a patriotic and imperial confidence at the beginning of a new century.

In the year that William Daniell produced his views of London's brand new docks to the east of the City, William Wordsworth published a sonnet in which he eulogised the vision of the 'mighty heart' of London a few miles upriver: the Thames as seen from Westminster Bridge in the morning.¹⁷ The bridge upon which the English Romantic poet stood when he encountered this 'sight so touching in its majesty' had been opened with a great ceremony on 17 November 1750, and it was the first stone structure to traverse the Thames in London since the Roman wooden bridge was replaced in 1176 with the original London Bridge.¹⁸ The initial stage in the construction of Westminster Bridge in 1739 marked the beginning of what became a phenomenal expansion in man-made modifications to the river Thames. These works spanned the second half of the eighteenth century and included the transformation of old London Bridge (1758-62), the building of Blackfriars Bridge (1761-69), the construction of the Adelphi Buildings (1768-72) and new Somerset House (1776-96). The peak of these redevelopments came at the turn of the nineteenth century with the creation of the massive downriver docks (from 1799), the building of a new London Bridge (1824-31) and finally the demolition of the old bridge at the close of the Georgian era (1831).¹⁹ These pioneering improvements were imposed onto an unsophisticated and underdeveloped river frontage and precipitated the topographic transformation of the Thames from Westminster to Woolwich and a surge in riverside enhancement which continued to proliferate through the following century.²⁰ These major alterations in the heart of the capital revolutionised how the Thames functioned on a practical level, and it was this newly adapted river that lent itself to a positive 'reimagining' in visual art. Instead of producing pictures steeped in nostalgic sentiment for a disappearing past, images of the river embraced the upheavals and exploited the underlying symbolism to promote both the capital and the nation. The proliferation of mid-century pictures of these riverside refurbishments is in itself an indication how the changes and improvements might have been understood synecdochically, in that they refracted imperial aspiration through their propinquity to the maritime themes of naval power and commercial wealth. Images depicted the emerging constructions not only upon completion but also as they happened, with the very stages and processes of building frequently forming the focal point. On occasion, in their haste for the completion of their work to coincide with the height of market interest, the artist second-guessed the architect by producing depictions of a

¹⁶ Sutton, T. (1954), p. 112.

¹⁷ Wordsworth, W. (1807). See Ch. 4.

¹⁸ Picard, L. (2000), p. 18. The original bridge will be referred to as old London Bridge.

¹⁹ See Rudé, G. (1971), p. 136.

²⁰ For example Vauxhall Bridge (1816), Waterloo Bridge (1817), Southwark Bridge (1819), the Thames Tunnel (1843) and the Thames embankments (1854-69).

finished development before the scaffolding was dismantled, or even before the plans for a new erection had been approved by a commissioning body.²¹ Through their work, artists were processing and reassessing the identity of London's river and rebranding it. The changes engendered by the great architectural and engineering achievements of the final decades of the eighteenth century provided the subject material for idealised artistic depictions of the river which not only promoted the idea of the remarkable new functionality and efficiency of the Thames but also represented more ideological subtexts relating to concepts of national identity. The Thames itself would continue to be a chaotic, uncontrolled and polluted space well into the mid nineteenth century, and as such it would remain subject to artistic censure and visual economy in high art for exhibition or downgraded to association with bawdy caricatures in satirical prints. Nonetheless, it was undergoing a transformation that was both physical in terms of the ongoing architectural improvements, and cerebral through the widely available representations of unrealised schemes such as George Dance's extraordinary design for a double bridge to replace old London Bridge [Fig. 58]. The actual transfiguration of the Thames corresponded with the creation of a new image of the river in visual art through which was channelled the unostentatious promotion of the innovative efficiencies and the celebrated progressive achievements of the nation. As one writer remarked in 1827, 'experience has decidedly proved that the bridges across the Thames, in and near London, have drawn to them a mass of population, and produced a strong spirit of improvement'.²² This spirit of improvement along with the changing face of the river and the popularity of neoclassical architecture certainly provided the attributes necessary for artists to portray London as a new Rome built on the Thames, but the river also became an icon encapsulating the sophisticated improvements and engineering wonders which fuelled the heart of a mighty imperial nation and a commercial empire.

Taste and magnificence

In terms of major Thames developments, the design and construction of Westminster Bridge, considered in relation to its artistic representation within this chapter, was regarded as a significant feat of urban engineering and architecture which harked back to Roman precedents. Contemporary artistic focus on the bridge was exceptional in terms of artwork that featured the Thames, primarily because it was the first new bridge to be built in London in the eighteenth century.²³ The attention that the new Thames crossing attracted was redoubled a mile downstream during the nine-year construction of Blackfriars Bridge which opened in 1769. The success of these ambitious architectural projects suggested a potential for further enhancements to the capital and its river and stimulated commissioning bodies and architects to produce bold designs for new bridges. While some designs were purely visionary exercises designed to demonstrate architectural virtuosity on what was a topical subject, others were inspired by the controversial search for a worthy successor to the old London Bridge. The replacement of what was arguably London's best known landmark was an

²¹ See for example *Westminster Bridge with the Lord Mayor's Procession on the Thames* (1747) by Canaletto, YCBA: B1976.7.94.

²² Anon (1827), p. 22.

²³ See Fox, C. (2009), p. 412.

undertaking of enormous magnitude. A new river crossing had to be emblematic of London as a progressive urban metropolis in images reproduced at home and abroad by the buoyant print market. Even architects' plans were converted by artists into paintings, some of which were in turn published as printed images. The resultant imaginings of the monumental and extraordinary possibilities for river crossings appear to have captured the public imagination and fed into a demand for grand innovations and classical magnificence in harness with an urgent requirement for further Thames developments and improvements.

It was into this competitive arena that the architect, George Dance the Younger (1741-1825) introduced his magisterial design for a double bridge to replace the decaying old London Bridge. The proposal was a response to the demands of London's town planning and the need to upgrade the City with a design that harked back to Roman classicism as well as looking to the future by incorporating new engineering initiatives.²⁴ Dance's bridge was clearly influenced from the time he had spent in Italy and the printed and painted views William Daniell produced of the design contain elements of Italian *vedute* as developed by Canaletto, with echoes of works by Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1720-1778) [see Fig. 59].²⁵ The scheme was also intended, in part, to commemorate the Battle of the Nile and to celebrate the state of the nation in general with crescent-shaped piazzas at either end, the existing monument to the Great Fire of 1666 occupying one with a new naval monument proposed for the other.²⁶ Revealed in a Select Committee report, Dance's revolutionary proposal for a river crossing was a daring and attractive solution to bridging the Thames without impeding either river or road traffic. Such was the level of curiosity surrounding the scheme William Daniell translated it into an architectural perspective, showing the imagined scene as if viewed from the basket of a balloon.²⁷ The painted version [Fig. 58] was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1802.²⁸ Daniell's visualisation of Dance's proposal included the complete remodelling of the London Quays and Sufferance Wharves in a scheme evocative of the type of planned development advocated by Gwynn in his *London and Westminster Improved*. The scheme consisted of a pair of bridges, each with a drawbridge at the centre so that one or the other could be raised to let ships through while the land traffic was diverted to the alternative route. The panoramic and dramatic qualities of the image were not lost on its Georgian audience when in 1801, a painted simulation by R. C. Andrews of Dance's original design became a popular attraction in itself, drawing crowds as part of a dramatic panorama installed at Sadler's Wells Theatre where it was exhibited alongside 'the usual performances'.²⁹ Dance's scheme was both ambitious and elaborate, but Daniell's painted and printed versions, and the surviving key to the Sadler's Wells panorama, present a clear and uncomplicated depiction of the architect's plans. In Daniell's reimagining, the river appears straight-edged and regimented like a section of a

²⁴ See Arnold, D. (1999b), p. 551.

²⁵ See Sweetman, J. (1999), p. 26.

²⁶ For a plan of the proposed bridge see *Double London Bridge proposed by George Dance...* (1800), Anon., LMA: q6888446. Proposals for a naval monument were made from 1799 when the Duke of Clarence presided over a competition for a suitable memorial. These included John Flaxman's *Colossal Statue of Britannia* for Greenwich Hill and John Opie's design for a *Temple of Naval Virtue*; see Hoock, H. (2003), pp. 277-79 and Quilley, G. (2011), pp. 199-203.

²⁷ This relates to Daniell's series of pioneering dock paintings and prints discussed later in this chapter.

²⁸ For the printed version see BM: G,13.22.

²⁹ See Hyde, R. (1988), no. 36; Hyde, R., Hoole, J. and Sato, T. (eds) (1984), no. 12 and p. 17. The Sir John Soane's Museum has a small watercolour of the scheme, see Hyde, R. (1999), pp. 30-31.

massive canal, with the scale of the proposed bridge emphasised by the vast hemi-cycles of its housing dominated by Wren's Monument on the north bank which is balanced by the proposed obelisk to commemorate naval victories on the south, while curving flights of stairs descend to the water's edge.³⁰ Such architectural extravagances hark back to the visionary *Ponte Magnifico* (1743) by Piranesi in which classical arches are shown built across an apparently limitless expanse of water [Fig. 59].³¹ But Daniell's panoramic image of Dance's bridge encapsulates the key elements that would characterise the reimagining of the river during the second half of the eighteenth century: the nation's identification with imperial grandeur through monumental design forming part of the remodelling and improvement of the capital on a colossal scale.

Daniell's commanding depiction of Dance's visionary design for a new bridge across the Thames was produced within a period which had already generated elaborate plans motivated by the accepted need for the improvement and adornment of the river. It was as a student at the Royal Academy Schools that the future architect John Soane (1753-1837), together with Dance (his friend and colleague) produced a detailed plan for a grand 'triumphal bridge', a project for which he was awarded the Academy's Gold Medal.³² The design was repeated in atmospheric watercolours produced for Soane in the 1790s by the draughtsman Joseph Michael Gandy (1771-1843) in which the bridge is introduced in a huge primeval landscape [Fig. 60].³³ Designed to be 360 metres long, with a wide central carriageway, side footways and immense frontispieces at the ends, Gandy has shown the bridge not spanning the Thames with a backdrop consisting of the chaotic topography of contemporary London, but set diagonally across what appears to be a vast river flowing over a plain. Dana Arnold has commented that 'Soane's design synthesises the complex meanings of a river crossing in a potent image of national glory and architectural magnificence'.³⁴ Certainly this sense of an intrinsically embedded patriotism was endemic in the design of bridges and significant Thames-side buildings that were proposed, and sometimes realised, throughout this period. Such inherent connotations are further concentrated when the architect's designs were processed by artists, or in the depictions of the actual construction process as it progressed from the initial stage of building through to ostentatious opening ceremony. Soane studied under Thomas Sandby when Sandby held the position of Professor of Architecture at the Royal Academy Schools. Sandby had already produced his own design for *A Bridge of Magnificence* to be built at Somerset House, drawings of which he used to illustrate his professional lectures at the Royal Academy. His definitive architectural drawing of this elaborate bridge was exhibited there in 1781 [Fig. 61].³⁵ The Royal Academy itself was based on the Thames since the previous year, and Sandby's proposal bore a distinct relationship with a new association between the centre of visual art and the Thames, especially in terms of magnificence in civic

³⁰ See *Key to a large painted version of George Dance the Younger's proposed double London Bridge, exhibited as a panorama at Sadlers Wells Theatre (c. 1800)* engraved by R. C. Andrews, LMA: q6888794.

³¹ See Marshall, D. (2003), pp 321-352.

³² See Soane's *Design for a 'Triumphal Bridge'* (1778) attrib. Dance, JSM: SM86/2/1 a-e; Stroud, D. (1957), pp. 260-62; Darley, G. (1999), p. 12.

³³ See Summerson, J. (1963), pp. 111-34.

³⁴ Arnold, D. (ed.) (1999a), p. 86.

³⁵ An alternative version drawn by an artist in the office of Samuel Ireland can be found in Ireland, S. (1792), Vol. II.

architecture as well as in academic and imperial ideas.³⁶ Sandby considered London to be ‘the essence of pleasure and magnificence’ but he lamented that the overcrowding of buildings led to a dominance of function over form in a city where ‘business is more considered than pleasure’.³⁷ John Bonehill acknowledges that central to Sandby’s thought was ‘the design of grand civic buildings’ such as old Somerset House, especially ‘those that dominated the London skyline’ from its gardens; ‘these were the ideals that informed Sandby’s designs for a Bridge of Magnificence’.³⁸ Bonehill confirms that Sandby’s ‘drawings of the bridge were much admired by newspaper critics’ and notes the artist’s approving reference to Gwynn’s *London and Westminster Improved*. This is echoed in the text of Samuel Ireland’s *Picturesque Views on the River Thames* (1792) where the author effuses:

I have the pleasure of communicating to the public the annexed elegant design for a bridge [...] which if thrown across the Thames from the western extremity of Somerset-place, would [...] add a specimen of taste and magnificence to the public works of this great city, surpassing any thing it has yet received.³⁹

The grand imperial vision

In the early part of his career, John Gwynn (1713-1786), a civil engineer and founding architect of the Royal Academy, focussed his attention on the re-working of Sir Christopher Wren’s plan for the rebuilding of London. In 1749 he published *An Essay on Design* in which he despaired over the lack of British attainment in the art of drawing, suggesting that the money wasted on preserving the ‘Gothic Taste in the old Repository of Tombs at *Westminster*’ would ‘if properly applied, be sufficient to raise among us the Taste of *Rome* and *Athens*’ and thereby ‘preventing the Misfortune that has happened at *Westminster* Bridge’.⁴⁰ Seventeen years later Gwynn reasserted the sweeping proposals for the city that were inspired by Wren when he published *London and Westminster Improved* (1766) in which the author argued that the Great Fire of London a hundred years earlier represented a missed opportunity to improve the layout of the city. But Gwynn’s vision for London was highly controversial, not least because they appeared to promote a remodelling of London along Roman or continental lines, both of which had political and constitutional implications especially in the aftermath of the Seven Years’ War. The war, which had been fought primarily on the European continent, had brought to an end the ‘Old System’ of alliances in Europe and left the British government close to bankruptcy. Gwynn’s underlying argument was that ‘publick elegance was a publick good’. In *London and Westminster Improved*, published complete with detailed coloured plans, he proposed the remaking of the city according to a regulated scheme specifically for the ‘publick good’, that is

³⁶ See Fordham, D. (2010), p. 130 *et seq.*

³⁷ Sandby Lectures, IV, fols 158-59, RIBA. See Postle, M. (2009), pp. 28-37.

³⁸ Bonehill, J. and Daniels, S. (eds) (2009), p. 150. See *A Bridge of Magnificence* (c. 1770s) by Thomas Sandby, RIBA: SD104/1.

³⁹ Ireland, S. (1792), Vol. II, pp. 187-88.

⁴⁰ Gwynn, J. (1749), p. 74. Gwynn accused the commissioners of Westminster Bridge of wasting an opportunity to undertake ‘a general plan of improvements [...] for the execution of taste, elegance and magnificence’ in Westminster and Whitehall; see Walker, R. J. B. (1979), pp. 250-53.

to say the prosperity of the nation as a whole, as opposed to developments made according to the whims of 'capricious, ignorant' individuals and constructed by 'blundering [...] English builders' in the 'mean, interested and selfish views of private property' for short term private gain.⁴¹ It was the manifestation of precisely this unchecked private building which had blighted the Thames' riversides before the tide of new developments which began with the construction of Westminster Bridge. As Miles Ogborn has summarised in *Spaces of Modernity*, Gwynn particularly promoted the benefits of public elegance and magnificence with the moral argument that 'it tends to promote industry, to stimulate invention and to excite emulation in the polite and liberal arts'.⁴² That is to say, one of the best ways to advance the 'state of the arts' in postwar London was to link it to urban 'improvement'. Douglas Fordham suggests Gwynn's ideology of improvement 'activated a tangible and productive link between Britain's new imperial glory and the professional aims of artists' by what Gwynn describes as 'promoting the advancement of grandeur and elegance'.⁴³ This has particular resonance for the reimagining of the river, especially when considered alongside Gwynn's statement that 'The English are now what the Romans were of old, distinguished like them by power and opulence, and excelling all other nations in commerce and navigation'.⁴⁴

In terms of commerce and navigation, no other feature of London represented this more emphatically than the Thames, but Gwynn was wary of how the dilapidated and overcrowded riverfront and all other problematic locations could easily be absorbed and disguised when London was presented by artists as a far-off Elysium. Gwynn included a quotation on the title page of *London and Westminster Improved* which made direct reference to the illusionistic properties employed in artistic representations which favoured an image of London as a distant prospect. Gwynn maintained that when viewed remotely the city becomes less complicated and easily imagined as 'the residence of splendor, grandeur, and magnificence' when in fact it is 'perplexed with narrow passages, disgraced with despicable cottages, embarrassed with obstructions, and clouded with smoke'.⁴⁵ Such an argument could certainly be applied to the painted views of the river, particularly those taken from the high ground of Richmond Hill in the west or above Greenwich in the east, for example *One Tree Hill, Greenwich, with London in the Distance* (1779) by John Feary, a painting which depicts a gathering of members of polite society in a rural setting while behind them the Thames meanders towards the far-off city [Fig. 62].⁴⁶ Feary's view of the distant London connected to a pastoral environment by the Thames follows an established London landscape tradition that dates back to the early seventeenth century. An example is *Greenwich from the Park showing the Tudor Palace* (c. 1620), a painting which, in the place of Feary's refined middle-class spectators, depicts courtiers admiring the view from One Tree Hill [Fig. 63].⁴⁷ The foreground here is populated with grazing sheep and mounted hunters, while beyond the Palace of

⁴¹ Gwynn, J. (1766), pp, iii-x, 3.

⁴² Ogborn, Miles (1998), p. 99.

⁴³ See Fordham, D. (2010), p. 130; Gwynn, J. (1766), p. xv.

⁴⁴ Gwynn, J. (1766), pp, vii, xiv-xv.

⁴⁵ Gwynn, J. (1766), p. 1.

⁴⁶ For further views from Greenwich see works by Hendrik Danckerts, Johannes Vorsterman, Jan Griffier the Elder, Peter Tillemans and J. M. W. Turner.

⁴⁷ In the mid-sixteenth century Anthonis van den Wyngaerde produced detailed views of Greenwich Palace looking north and south across the river, for example *Greenwich Palace and London from Greenwich Hill* (c. 1544), AM: WA.C.LG.IV.8b. See Bold, J. (2012), p. 119.

Placentia the Thames snakes away towards the City which, except for a few architectural landmarks, is subsumed into a hazy far-off distance. As John Bold has written:

The prospect towards central London from Greenwich Park was one of the earliest views in England from a high vantage point to be exploited by painters, since it offered the possibility of so much: the pleasures of landscape and sky, the river winding its way towards the city and St Paul's, architectural detail, shipping and incidental, often picturesque characters.⁴⁸

In the early eighteenth century the German traveller, Zacharias Conrad von Uffenbach, described the same view from Flamsteed's observation platform as 'a charming prospect' which encompassed 'the great traffic on the Thames'.⁴⁹ A generation later the German novelist Sophie von la Roche, who visited Greenwich in 1786, noted the 'quantities of ships' masts' on 'this mighty river which is of such significance to the realm' and 'pondered on the twelve thousand vessels employed by English commerce, the three hundred and fifty battleships which convey the wealth and character of the nation best of all'.⁵⁰ Such sentiments are echoed by John Bonehill and Stephen Daniels who expand the concept to suggest that the conjunction of park, river and city in the painted views from this vantage point in Greenwich 'took the form of panegyrics focussed upon the park as an arena of monarchical power, as a royal estate, and the Thames as an avenue of worldly wealth and patriotic glory for city and nation'.⁵¹ Placed within this context, the Thames can be reconnected to its pastoral status, whilst maintaining its association with commercial wealth and patriotism without the need to disguise or camouflage what was a predominantly mercantile environment. Gwynn argues for this level of prestige in London's river when he makes a case for 'at least cleanliness and decorum' for 'a city of trade and commerce situated on the borders of so noble a river as the Thames'.⁵² The British architectural historian John Summerson described the port of London in the mid-eighteenth century as 'a mere succession of timber wharfs, ranged in antique disorder along both banks of the Thames'.⁵³ Gwynn condemned the same wharfs and quays as 'despicable and inconvenient beyond conception' lamenting that it was 'utterly impossible that a worse use could have been made of so beneficial as well as ornamental a part of the city'. Specifically Gwynn complained that along the length of the Thames from 'Chelsea to Blackwall on one hand, and from Battersea to Greenwich on the other [...] there is not one convenient, well-regulated spot either for business or elegance in that whole extent' and 'that one half of the buildings on the banks of the river are in ruins, and the whole utterly lost to the publick, as well as extremely inconvenient to individuals'. John Boydell had pioneered the artistic revaluation of the commercial reaches of the river below London Bridge when he published his deliberately ordered views of Limehouse, Deptford and Blackwall in 1750-51 [Figs. 21, 24 and 26], but when Gwynn turned his attention to what he described as 'those useful places to the trading part of the world, Wapping, Rotherhithe and Southwark, all

⁴⁸ Bold, J. (2012), p. 119.

⁴⁹ Quarrell, W. H. and Mare, M. (eds) (1934), pp. 20-26.

⁵⁰ Williams, C. (ed.) (1933), pp. 250-53.

⁵¹ Bonehill, J. and Daniels, S. (2012), pp. 171-94.

⁵² Gwynn, J. (1766), p. 4.

⁵³ Summerson, J. (2003), p. 302.

contiguous to the Thames' he denounced them as 'entirely destitute of that useful regularity, convenience and utility, so very desirable in commercial cities'.⁵⁴ Even the recently opened Westminster Bridge failed to escape Gwynn's critical assault when he stated that he considered it a wasted opportunity 'when [one] considers what might have been done, and how little has been done' in 'so desirable a field for the exertion of taste, elegance and magnificence'.⁵⁵ Gwynn's tirade, heaping scorn on what he saw as the sorry state of Thames-side property and facilities, provides an illuminating context against which the keen artistic interest in the new Thames developments can be better understood. London would not have become a city of commercial wealth and naval power without the Thames but its facilities were inadequate, decrepit and inefficient. As it stood, this crumbling maritime infrastructure could not be considered with any degree of pride, especially not in terms of artistic representation, unless it was significantly idealised, exemplified by Maurer's view of Custom House where the workaday quays have been sanitised for continental audiences [see Fig. 57]. However, visually the new bridge at Westminster and the subsequent Thames-side developments suggested a previously untapped ideological context for the river and its reincarnation as the embodiment of national pride, positive improvement and commercial growth. These elements could be expressed by artists without resorting to visual censorship in terms of the representation of the river and its derisory facilities. To depict the Thames in tandem with magnificent developments was to present a reimagined port city as a grand, imperial concept.

Amongst his own proposals, Gwynn put forward a plan for a new bridge from the Savoy, equidistant from Westminster and Blackfriars bridges, with quays 'formed from bridge to bridge on both sides the Thames' which would be properly managed 'to prevent rubbish and filth from being thrown into the river'.⁵⁶ Contemporaneous with Gwynn's campaign for a more considered approach to town planning in London, British society was already confronting a dramatic alteration of the landscape in the rapidly expanding and changing cities. Cynthia Roman and Carrie Roider have identified that the new developments in London 'attracted intense observation and classification as a new kind of landscape and a new kind of society'. As a leading city of the world 'London epitomised the heights and achievements of human civilisation and stood as a symbol of progress, enlightenment and wealth'.⁵⁷ Indeed, the Thames images which succeeded the early artistic interest in the construction of Westminster Bridge reflect in their idealised views the orderly town planning and 'public magnificence' promoted by Gwynn, and in certain instances appear to uphold his architectural philosophy as well as feeding this 'intense observation'. For example, the royal dockyard views of Deptford and Woolwich by Farington and Pocock [Figs. 84 and 85] and the bird's eye dock views of Daniell [Figs. 89 and 90] discussed later in this chapter, might be considered as testaments to this apparent drive towards the presentation of a more organised and efficient Thames topography.

⁵⁴ See Ch. 1, pp. 27-35.

⁵⁵ Gwynn, J. (1766), pp. 4, 7-8 and 10.

⁵⁶ Gwynn, J. (1766), pp. 95-96 and plate I.

⁵⁷ Roman, C. and Roider, C. (1998), pp. 7-8.

Bridge of controversy

In 1738, Thomas Bryan Richards published a slim volume entitled *Up the Thames* in which the author set out his motives in the following statement:

Travelling has lately become so fashionable, that a Man who has not made the Tour of *Europe*, cannot appear in the Beau Monde without Danger of being laugh'd at for his Ignorance; perhaps by such as know much less of their Native Country of *England*, than he does of the admir'd Realms of *France*.⁵⁸

Richards provides an ostensibly anecdotal tale relating how some Englishmen 'have been laughed at for finding fault with the Bridge in *Germany*, because, on being asked how many Arches the crossing of the *Thames* at *London* consisted of, they reply'd they knew not'. As a precaution against the risk of this type of social disgrace abroad he makes plans with his party of travellers to undertake some domestic travel before setting off for Rome. After a consideration of potential destinations he concludes that 'The Fame of the River Thames [had] reach'd the most distant Nations' and that 'a Voyage up its Banks' would reveal to them 'as beautiful a Part of *England* as any in it' as well as preparing them for the rigours of the sea voyage that lay ahead. Arrangements are made and on the allotted date they embark at Somerset Stairs and begin a journey upriver. Before long the party is:

...alarm'd by a Huzza from the Land, which was answered by all the Mariners we had on Board; and on asking the Occasion, we were answer'd that we had just then pass'd by *New Palace Yard*, where the Bridge was intended to have been built, but that Providence was kinder than to suffer it.⁵⁹

The author goes on to recount that 'We chose not to reply to them, being sensible of the Difficulty of convincing a Man's Reason against his Interest'. However, one of the passengers, a Mr Gloworm, remarked that 'he did not remember to have met with a more remarkable Instance of the Phrensy which actuates a Mob, than to hear them cry against a Design, which must naturally conduce to the Honour and Advantage of the whole Nation, and the Damage of few or none'. This account, albeit apocryphal or even entirely fictitious, provides some contemporary insight into the ongoing controversial quagmire from which Westminster Bridge would eventually emerge and how this diverges from the visual image of the bridge's construction which instead endorses it as a purely positive aspect of London's renewal. Indeed, the high level of dissension necessitated the 1736 Act of Parliament which gave approval for the construction of the bridge to specifically state that should anyone 'wilfully and maliciously blow up, pull down or destroy' the bridge, or endanger the lives of its passengers, they would be treated as felons and face execution.⁶⁰ Indeed, the strength of feeling from those that opposed the new river crossing suggests that motives beyond the recording and

⁵⁸ Richards, T. (1738), pp. 12-13.

⁵⁹ Richards, T. (1738), p. 29.

⁶⁰ See Walker, R. (1979), p. 63.

celebration of a grand architectural scheme were at play in the commission of ostentatious depictions of the embryonic stages of the bridge's construction through to its completion.

At the beginning of the eighteenth century the overcrowded and dilapidated old London Bridge, an antique structure which had straddled the river for over five hundred years, was the only bridge across the Thames in the capital. With its one narrow street serving as a bottle-necked connection between northern and southern London and the long queues for the tolls, it, like the Custom House Quays which frustrated Gwynn, was inadequate, but in addition it was a hazardous obstacle to travellers.⁶¹ Thomas Pennant recalled this in *Some Account of London* (1793) when he wrote: 'I well remember the street on London Bridge, narrow, darksome, and dangerous to passengers from the multitude of carriages'.⁶² This danger was compounded by the physical deterioration of the bridge. The rhyme, 'London Bridge is falling down', long chanted in play by children at the head of a procession of potential 'victims', was given added edge by the middle decades of the century by the actual decrepitude of the bridge, and it is no coincidence that the words to the song first appeared in print at this time.⁶³ Daniel Defoe, writing in his *Tour Thro the Whole Island of Great Britain* (1724), refers to an 'abundance of bridges to be repair'd and enlarg'd, and new ones built where they find occasion', and to the building of 'above three hundred new [bridges], where there were none before, or where the former were small and insufficient to carry the traveller safe over the waters'.⁶⁴ Defoe puts the 'making another bridge over the Thames' as the first of his projects for a better London.⁶⁵ The ferries had always been the alternative to bridges, but for the transportation of ever bulkier commodities to London the expanding markets and workshops they were no longer satisfactory, and even for ordinary passengers this method was erratic and expensive, not to mention uncomfortable and wet when it was windy and the river was rough, or dangerous in the vicinity of London Bridge when the tide was turning and the river water gushed through the arches creating a series of white water rapids.⁶⁶ With London's exponential expansion, there was clearly an acute need for a second bridge, but plans to construct a bridge at Westminster were not deemed to be in the interests of the City Corporation, the inn keepers of Southwark, or the Thames watermen who were vehemently opposed to river crossings in general. Watermen claimed that bridges would impact on the demand for their services and lead to a reduction in their ranks. This, they forcibly argued, would in turn seriously weaken the navy which traditionally recruited from a self-replenishing stock of newly-apprenticed watermen.⁶⁷ This hostile opposition, exemplified in *A Voyage Up the Thames* in 1738, had also been expressed as early as 1722, when a poem titled *The Westminster Bubble: A Merry Tale in a Dialogue between an Old Bridge and New* was published. In this outwardly playful poem written under the pseudonym 'A Water Poet', old London Bridge is personified as a heroic veteran of London and the Thames, a formidable old-timer whose longevity provides the gravitas with which to laud it over a Johnny-come-lately in the form of a new bridge at Westminster:

⁶¹ Betts, D. and Lawrence, I. (1962), p. 800.

⁶² Pennant, T. (1793), p. 447.

⁶³ *The Fashionable Lady or Harelequin's Opera* (1730) and *Tommy Thumb's Pretty Song Book* (c. 1744). See Opie, I. (1966), p. 272-6.

⁶⁴ Defoe, D. (1724), pp. 129-30.

⁶⁵ The redevelopment and eventual demise of old London Bridge is discussed later in this chapter.

⁶⁶ Betts, D. and Lawrence, I. (1962), p. 800.

⁶⁷ See Betts, D. and Lawrence, I. (1962), p. 802.

For these thousand long Years,
 As it plainly appears,
 I have no Competitor had;
 And why I should now:
 I don't know, I vow;
 I think all the Nation's run mad.⁶⁸

The poem is a small component in a century-long battle that was waged in resistance to any expressed demand for a new bridge by the powerful and influential Company of Watermen and Lightermen of the River Thames and the City Corporation, renowned for its jealousy of anything that went on outside its own square mile. Their dire warnings appear to have been based almost entirely on self-interest rather than any concern for the general improvement of the city. According to their claims, thousands would be ruined and new buildings would compound the problems of pollution. In addition, the London Bridge Waterworks said that they would be unable to supply the City and St Thomas's Hospital claimed a great many poor, sick and diseased people would be drowned as the river would rise three feet causing severe flooding to the premises. Finally, to compound it all the watermen argued that the new bridge would cause the Thames to silt up causing it to become non-navigable.⁶⁹ These bitter arguments against the proposals for a bridge and the resultant counterarguments were bandied about in reviews, pamphlets and alternative schemes as the City desperately defended its monopoly. It was not until 1735 that the Westminster Bridge Bill was finally introduced to the House and approved in 1736. Whilst opposition to the scheme raged in print, the first stone was sunk in the middle of the river in January 1739, a significant event which heralded the changes which would thereafter alter the physical image of the Thames between Westminster and Blackwall beyond recognition.⁷⁰

Besides understanding the power wielded by stakeholders in their efforts to hamper Thames development in the early decades of the eighteenth century, the specific controversy surrounding the construction of Westminster Bridge illuminates the extant artistic representations of it. Taken out of this context and considered in isolation, images of the bridge under construction or upon completion disguise the pessimism which engulfed and threatened to prevent the first major Thames development in London for over five and a half centuries from materialising. Conversely, when Westminster Bridge was finally opened on 17 November 1750 it was done with grand ceremony and a great celebration, and by several accounts it was greeted with a rapturous reception from Londoners in general. For example, in that day's entry in 'The Monthly Chronicler' section of *The London Magazine* it was reported, with characteristic civic pride, that:

This night, about twelve o'clock, the New Bridge, at Westminster, was open'd with a procession by several gentlemen of that city, the chief artificers belonging to the work, and a great number of spectators preceded by trumpets, kettle-drums &c, with guns during the ceremony. [...] 'Tis now allowed by the judges of architecture to be one of the grandest bridges in the world. All the next day, being Sunday

⁶⁸ Water Poet, A. (1722), p. 29.

⁶⁹ See Links, J. (1992), pp. 280-282 and Links, J. (1982), p. 162.

⁷⁰ See for example Langley, B. (1737).

Westminster was like a fair, with people going to view the bridge, and pass over it.⁷¹

Londoners' enjoyment of the new space was not confined to the opening day's celebrations, nor was it solely attributable to the practical ease the bridge offered in traversing the Thames. For example, *The Gentleman's Magazine* highlighted one unplanned attraction: 'The surprising echo in the arches brings much company with French horns to entertain themselves under it in summer'.⁷² Each pier ended in a little hooded alcove, which for James Boswell, and presumably others of a similar bent, offered a suitably commodious haven to 'engage' with a prostitute upon the new bridge which he describes as a 'noble edifice'. Boswell recalled the consummation in his diary in 1763, noting 'the whim of doing it there with the Thames rolling beneath us amused me much'.⁷³ Meanwhile thieves adopted the alcoves as convenient hiding places from which to ambush passersby. But besides the allure the completed bridge held for such illicit or criminal pursuits, the stretch of river at Westminster became a key attraction for artists, its appeal gaining momentum from the day it became the building site of a controversial and momentous construction, a project which, contrary to the views expressed by the waterman and the representatives of the city, would be continually invoked in art as a public symbol of urban prosperity and expansion.⁷⁴ During Canaletto's London residency it was the novel construction of Westminster Bridge (1739-50) that was the focus; for the view-painters and topographic artists who came afterwards, it was the controversial dismantling of houses on old London Bridge, the construction of Blackfriars Bridge, the building of the Adelphi Terrace and new Somerset House, the opening of the new docks and the eventual creation of a new London Bridge in tandem with the demolition of its ancient predecessor which provided such rich source material.⁷⁵

Possibly the earliest painted image of Westminster Bridge under construction, and therefore what might be considered as the first pictorial record of the eighteenth-century improvements made to the Thames, is by Jan Griffier the Younger (fl. 1738-1773): *The Thames During the Great Frost of 1739* (1739) [Fig. 64]. The view is taken from a position near Whitehall and shows the Fair in progress. The westernmost point is demarcated by the emerging bridge structure that would be a focal point for London for the next eleven years.⁷⁶ In the detail of this painting it is possible to see spectators queuing to pay a fee in order to gain access to the first of the piers constructed for the bridge by Charles Labelye, evidently a novel experience which was also depicted in a wash drawing attributed to Bernard Lens III [Fig. 65]. Later examples of the bridge-building project as the subject can be found in a painting by Joseph Nicholls (fl. 1730s-1740s), *View of Westminster Bridge* (1740) [Fig. 66] and also *The Building of Westminster Bridge* (1749) by Samuel Scott [Fig. 67] which depicts the bridge in a state of construction as seen from the Surrey shore in about May 1742, a subject Scott returned to repeatedly.⁷⁷ Alongside the depiction of four of the eventual fifteen arches, and

⁷¹ Vol. 19, p. 523.

⁷² Vol. 20, p. 586.

⁷³ Pottle, F. (ed.) (2006), p. 255.

⁷⁴ As Rebekah Higgitt has commented, 'the new bridge's arrival was [...] a significant event, representing the rapid growth of the city': Doran, S. (ed.) (2012), p. 193.

⁷⁵ See Sweetman, J. (1998), p. 155.

⁷⁶ See Hyde, R. (1999), p. 15.

⁷⁷ For example see MMA: AN 44.56. The date attributed to Nicholls' painting is unlikely.

the newly-invented horse-driven pile driver preparing further foundations, Scott has included several figures, at least two of which point in wonderment at the four arches under construction, a motif that suggests the artist's bias towards representing a positive interest and admiration for the undertaking as opposed to hinting at the dissension it generated.⁷⁸ This version was painted for Sir Edward Littleton (c. 1727-1812), 4th Baronet, of Pillaton Hall. A Staffordshire land owner and Member of Parliament whose patronage suggests his support for the building of the new bridge, Littleton also commissioned a pendant painting from Scott, *Old London Bridge* (1749) [Fig. 74]. The pairing of the emerging arches of Westminster Bridge with the decorative yet increasingly redundant historic monument, old London Bridge, can be read as symbolic of the contrasts which existed between the City of London and the state, certainly in terms of building the new bridge. For his part, Scott was clearly proud of these works when he wrote to his patron: 'I assure you they are thought to be the two best pictures I Ever Painted'.⁷⁹ Malcolm Warner has described Westminster Bridge as 'the most topical landmark of the new London' and cites the appearance of the bridge under construction or under repair in one of Canaletto's works as a subject which 'allows Canaletto to suggest the idea of a city in the making, which is germane to his image of London'.⁸⁰ Likewise, John Elgin takes Canaletto's earlier depictions of construction sites at Piazza di San Marco and San Vitale in Venice as evidence of how the artist understood topographical painting 'could showcase public works, which betokened the public spirit, and justified the privilege of political elites' as was the case with Westminster Bridge.⁸¹ Westminster Bridge was among Canaletto's most painted London subjects with at least eight paintings of the bridge in various stages of construction. Considered alongside the works produced by Scott, Canaletto's paintings of Westminster Bridge represent the earliest pictorial statements celebrating London and its river and the site of a new building as the conjunction of city and nation. These works also conjure up visions of Venice which played to a stereotype, promoted by the Grand Tourists, of Italy as the seat of ancient Roman civilisation and the Renaissance.⁸² As Roman and Roider have described, 'the compositions and poetic light of Canaletto's views of the Thames crowded with traffic' together with the artist's celebration of the building of Westminster Bridge 'recalls his images of the Grand Canal, setting up a comparison in which London, as the commercial heart of England, vies with Venice for distinction as a commercial capital'.⁸³

The production and subsequent exhibition of pictures by successful artists that focused on the unfinished Westminster Bridge contributed to a discourse of improvement that was particularly animated in the middle of the eighteenth century.⁸⁴ In a drawing by Canaletto [Fig. 68] the artist includes the large wooden barricades, put in place to prevent public access

⁷⁸ The pile-driver was invented by James Vauloué in 1737. Models and printed perspective views of the machine were made both for demonstration purposes and in celebration of the engineering achievement of Westminster Bridge's construction. See Doran, S. (ed.) (2012), pp. 192-93.

⁷⁹ Scott's letter to Sir Edward Littleton of June 1749, in which he asks his patron to acknowledge the safe arrival of 'the two Bridges', is in the possession of the Bank of England; the quote is reproduced in Preston, H. (1977), cat. 24.

⁸⁰ Warner, M. (1987), pp. 127-8.

⁸¹ Elgin, J. (2012), p. 105; see *La Piazza San Marco in Venice* (c. 1723-24), MTB: 75 (1956.1) and *Venice: Campo S. Vidal and Santa Maria della Carità ('The Stonemason's Yard')* (c. 1725), NG: NG127

⁸² West, S. (ed.) (1999), p. 15.

⁸³ Roman, C. and Roider, C. (1998), pp. 7-8. See also Elgin, J. (1999), pp. 101-15.

⁸⁴ For example see Fig. 67 and *The Thames, Westminster Bridge under Construction* (1745) by Richard Wilson, PMA: The John Howard McFadden Collection M1928-1-43.

to the unfinished bridge, together with a huddle of figures craning to catch a glimpse of the new structure. Scott also depicted sightseers on the riverbank in a sketch [Fig. 69], a staffage that represents the mounting excitement and gathering interest in the run-up to the bridge's official opening. This curiosity was not limited to the new construction alone when on 14 July 1747 William Watson, strung a wire across the unfinished bridge. Watson, the leading electrical researcher in London and no stranger to theatrical public display performed in the name of science, transmitted an electric spark along the wire then back through the river itself, shocking people on each bank and igniting a bowl of spirits.⁸⁵ This astonishing experiment was recorded as being attended by 'many'.⁸⁶ Indeed, Watson himself complained in his report to the Royal Society that those conducting the experiment were 'much molested in their Operations by a great Concourse of People, who many times broke the conducting Wire, and otherwise greatly incommoded them'.⁸⁷ The involvement of the yet unopened river crossing with such spectacle in the age of the Enlightenment is yet further evidence of how the new bridge was being associated with multiple aspects of improvement and utility in eighteenth-century British culture. Also significant to this survey of Westminster Bridge as a site of *artistic* construction, as well as a construction site, are the paintings Scott produced of close-up views of a section of the newly completed Westminster Bridge.⁸⁸ Through his repeated composition, *The Arch of Westminster Bridge*, the artist provides a symbolic pictorial celebration of the new metropolitan improvement.⁸⁹ Scott presents a view along the river frontage towards the City through the second arch on the Westminster side of the river, thereby provoking the viewer to consider the uncertain future of the old mercantile world which is so boldly and emphatically framed and physically overshadowed by the solidity of the modern bridge of Portland and Purbeck stone.⁹⁰ Scott's paintings exploit the frame motif as seen in Canaletto's prototype *London Seen through an Arch of Westminster Bridge* or even Piranesi's *Ponte Magnifico* (1743) [Fig. 59], both of which would have been available to him in printed form.⁹¹ In addition, Scott chose a carefully restricted frontal view which emphasised the geometry of the architecture. The elements of the painting also invoke Englishness, optimism and the signs of life through the symbolic inclusion of details such as the boatmen who represent the livelihoods the bridge put under threat, the innocent young swimmers in the Thames reminiscent of a more bucolic river found to the west of London, the curious visitors peering out from between the balustrades again indicating the public fascination with this new space of modern improvement, and the relaxed workman on the remaining piece of scaffolding in remembrance of a pre-industrial age. With this image, Scott presented his audience with a proleptic and idealised vision of a social harmony refracted through the monolithic presence of the new bridge.⁹² The beleaguered Thames watermen are also represented in a small

⁸⁵ A similar feat was performed by Benjamin Franklin in 1748 across the Schuylkill River in Philadelphia. See Bensaude-Vincent, B. and Blondel, C. (2008), p. 58.

⁸⁶ Jungnickel, C. and McCormach, R. (1998), p. 102.

⁸⁷ Watson, W. (1748), Vol. 45, p. 52.

⁸⁸ There are 5 versions of *An Arch of Westminster Bridge* (c. 1751): TB: NO1223 & T01193; NGI: NGI.677; LWL, and YCBA: B1976.7.146.

⁸⁹ Vaughan, W. (1999), p. 185.

⁹⁰ See Quilley, G. (1998).

⁹¹ *London seen through an arch of Westminster Bridge*, (c. 1747), CDN; see also Hallett, M. (1993), pp. 46-54.

⁹² Each of the 5 versions varies slightly in details of the boats, figures etc.

watercolour by Paul Sandby [Fig. 70] in which the completed bridge looms behind Westminster Pier where a well-heeled party surveys the view. Within this scene, a waterman holds out his upturned hat in a gesture of entreaty; an allusion perhaps to the loss of earnings suffered by his trade as a direct consequence of the new crossing. Such images are loaded with ideological meaning which reflect responses to these early vestiges of modernisation. In Scott's work especially, there is a sense of an anticipation of further rationalisation of the Thames in the wake of the first new bridge in London.

The gradual shift of the artistic gaze towards the Thames can also be traced, in part, to aristocratic patronage of artists such as Canaletto and Scott. Evidence suggests that those who had interests in the construction project at Westminster were also commissioning the artists who painted the new bridge for posterity.⁹³ Behind such commissions were members of the 'Society of Gentlemen' whose determination had succeeded in forcing through 'An Act for Building a Bridge across the River Thames' in May 1736.⁹⁴ The Society consisted of about one hundred and seventy-five commissioners including the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Lord Chancellor, the Lord President, and an array of dukes, marquesses, earls and barons, about one hundred Members of Parliament, and the Surveyor of the King's Works. The commissioners proposed that the works would be financed by a state lottery but for various reasons this scheme, which was behind five lotteries held between 1736 and 1741, was a failure and the bridge had to be subsidised by annual parliamentary grants.⁹⁵ But the patronage of aristocratic and political proponents of Westminster Bridge provides only one explanation for what drew so many artists and engravers to the new Thames developments, most notably Canaletto and Scott, but also many lesser known and anonymous artists. The attraction of the new construction as the subject for potentially highly marketable works targeted at the aristocratic investors is suggested in the haste in which Canaletto completed a painting of a finished and opened Westminster Bridge before the scaffolding had been removed. The painting was kept in his London studio as an example of his work which served as an advertisement for potential clients. The subsequent publication of a printed version also suggests that the artist anticipated that he could capitalise on the inauguration of the new bridge and the Lord Mayor's Day parade to trumpet his own arrival in London.⁹⁶ Ultimately, what made the view popular amongst artists such as Canaletto, Scott and Joli was that it reconciled innovation, represented by the newly opened bridge, with tradition, represented by the pageantry of the Lord Mayor's barge.⁹⁷

J. G. Links has identified that Canaletto's drawings and paintings of Westminster Bridge under construction are generally inaccurate, concluding that the artist 'imagined the course the construction would have taken' as 'he certainly was not drawing or painting what he saw, or what anyone could have seen'.⁹⁸ Scott also regularly distorted the perspective of his

⁹³ See Hyde, R. (1999), p. 16; The majority of Canaletto's early patrons, including the Dukes of Richmond and Clarence, were commissioners of Westminster Bridge; in addition Scott's depictions of Westminster Bridge under construction were commissioned by aristocratic landowners, e.g. Sir Edward Littleton; see Walker, R. J. B. (1979); Elgin, J. (1999), pp. 109-10; Allen, B. (1987b), p. 33; Cust, L. and Colvin, S. (1914), pp. 42-3.

⁹⁴ Act 9 George II, c 29 (1736).

⁹⁵ See Walker, R. (1979), pp. 63-76.

⁹⁶ See Warner, M. (1987), pp. 33-36.

⁹⁷ See Elgin, J. (1999), p. 110.

⁹⁸ Links, J. (1982), p. 165.

Thames views in order to include the new building works that frequently dominate his Thames paintings. In addition to patron-led demand for depictions of developments and improvements, these pictures provide evidence of a more general interest in the Thames as a site of change generated by the building projects. Constructed views combining the new bridges and buildings within the historical context of the river initiated a new way of seeing the Thames and its environs. In the late seventeenth century the Thames was celebrated as a 'royal river' with depictions of pageantry and aristocratic palaces. By the mid eighteenth century London and its river was instead reimagined with a new optimism and a confidence which could be expressed symbolically through positive images of the ambitious works in progress. After all, the construction of Westminster Bridge was not only the first of the major eighteenth-century building projects associated with the Thames, but also the first major bridge construction in the capital city that was witnessed by Georgian Londoners. Westminster Bridge was the first manifestation on the river of the changes enveloping a city which for centuries had maintained much of its medieval character, especially in the iconic form of old London Bridge, despite the efforts of Wren and Gwynn.

Sweetman has written that 'as a product of a changing society it [a new bridge] remained a barometer of its optimism'.⁹⁹ Along these same lines, Dana Arnold suggests that 'the public outcry over the use of a foreign architect to design the bridge [...] is indicative of how river crossings were seen to embody national identities and functioned as monuments in the metropolitan landscape'.¹⁰⁰ Certainly Canaletto's architectural idealism (apparent in his misrepresentation of the construction process, the inaccurate inclusion of domes over all the balustrade recesses and the inclusion of painted statues of Thames and Isis over the middle arch) is coupled with his romanticised version of the Lord Mayor's Day celebrations.¹⁰¹ In 1727 Cèsar de Saussure described the behaviour of the 'vulgar populace' on this public holiday as 'particularly insolent and rowdy, turning into lawless freedom the great liberty it enjoys'.¹⁰² Canaletto's Thames views of Westminster Bridge and river pageants were deliberately presenting the river and its new bridge in the highly favourable light, a bias designed to curry favour with his patrons. Certainly the opening of the new bridge in 1750 did not mark any discernible decline in the flurry of artistic interest in it. Even when construction problems necessitated major repairs to one of the arches, this too was recorded by artists; further evidence of the bridge's symbolic significance beyond its import as the major building enterprise of its time.¹⁰³ This 'warts and all' approach, which appears to have highlighted rather than disguised engineering complications and attracted attention to failings in the design of Westminster Bridge, might be better understood as a positive celebration of the heroics of the bridge's period of gestation. This, as opposed to the less charitable reactions or general cynicism coming from the bridge's dissenters, would again have ingratiated artists with a patrician patronage. The fascination with the mechanics of the bridge during the phase of its construction also suggests that Labelye's emerging river crossing also synthesised contemporary notions of modern urban improvement. In an essay that explores the identity

⁹⁹ Sweetman, J. (1998), p. 156.

¹⁰⁰ Arnold, D. (1999b), p. 548.

¹⁰¹ See Walker, R. J. B. (1979); Sweetman, J. (1999), p. 40.

¹⁰² Saussure quoted in Scott, A. (1970), p. 14.

¹⁰³ For example *Westminster Bridge under Repair, from the North* (1754) by Canaletto, Private Collection, reproduced in Beddington, C. (2006), p. 112, Fig. 28.1.

of the maritime nation in eighteenth-century British Art, Geoff Quilley has noted that from about 1740 'painters confirmed the Thames as a paradigm of modernity' and taking Samuel Scott's *The Building of Westminster Bridge* [Fig. 67] as an example, suggests that just as the physical bridge 'unite[s] the political and constitutional centre of the nation, sited on the north bank, with the commercial wharves and yards of the south' the painted image unites the labourers in the picture's foreground with the 'virtuous ideal [...] connoted by the abbey beyond'.¹⁰⁴ Through the construction of Westminster Bridge, the trinity of church, crown and commerce could be majestically presented in painted compositions with the focus on a modern subject, freed from the inclusion of a crumbling medieval river crossing of declining repute. The appeal of London's newest bridge bears some relation to a later phenomenon of artistic interest in construction and new viewpoints that occurred in Paris during a period of intense bridge building and house clearance. Taking a similar interest in the construction activity as Canaletto and Scott had in London, the transformative building works along the Seine in the 1780s were recorded in paintings by Hubert Robert (1733-1808), see for example *La Démolition des Maisons du Pont Notre-Dame, en 1786* (c. 1786) [Fig. 71], and in literature by Louis-Sébastien Mercier in his monumental *Tableau de Paris* (1782-8), echoing the symbolic role of new bridges, especially in capital cities, when presented as sites of progressive development.¹⁰⁵

Painted prospects of the new bridge at Westminster depicted against the historic backdrop of the ancient Abbey presented a novel contrast to the traditional City view of old London Bridge standing out against the relatively new St Paul's (built 1675-1710). For several decades from 1750 onwards, pendant views of these two sites bookended the generally accepted artistic geography of the Thames. Antonio Joli painted both views defining the City in the east and Westminster in the West, a pairing that was emulated by other artists including Samuel Scott [see Fig. 67].¹⁰⁶ Scott's views were particularly topical when he presented views of two controversial sites as effective foils to each other: London Bridge before it was shorn of its old houses, an unpopular clearance scheme which was debated from 1757-62, and the fiercely contested Westminster Bridge which the artist depicts prior to its completion. In his catalogue raisonné of the works of Samuel Scott, Richard Kingzett cites eleven repetitions of old London Bridge and Westminster Bridge produced by Scott between 1747 and 1761; all those of old London Bridge show its houses intact, and six of those of Westminster Bridge show it under construction.¹⁰⁷ Old London Bridge, a structure which had withstood the Great Fire, offered a nostalgic symbol reminiscent of ancient ways of life. Anachronistic views of it with houses intact were described as showing 'its more picturesque state' worthy of being recorded for posterity 'when every other memorial of it may be buried in oblivion'.¹⁰⁸ Conversely its counterpart, the new bridge at Westminster and later on Blackfriars Bridge, channelled the future. The pairing of old and new bridges in Scott's images was evidently marketable, as demonstrated by the fact that both subjects were published as engravings by P.

¹⁰⁴ Quilley, G. (1998), pp. 140-45.

¹⁰⁵ Robert is known for his landscapes of ancient ruins and major architectural changes in Paris: see Dubin, N. (2010).

¹⁰⁶ *The Thames from the Terrace of Somerset House looking towards the City* (n.d.) and *The Thames from the Terrace of Somerset House looking towards Westminster* (n.d.) by Antonio Joli, Private Collections in England and Switzerland; see Preston, H. (1977).

¹⁰⁷ Kingzett, R. (1980-2), p. 43f.

¹⁰⁸ Smollett, T. (ed.) (1758), vol. 5, pp. 265-6.

C. Canot in 1758.¹⁰⁹ They were also warmly welcomed in Smollett's *The Critical Review*, where 'for elegance in design, and merit in the execution [...] they have been deservedly and universally admired'.¹¹⁰ In addition, the plates were utilised by John Boydell and later the images were published again as book illustrations. As Sweetman has commented, Scott contrasted his handling of the two subjects in these paintings to manipulate the viewer's experience of old and new: old London Bridge appears 'luridly indestructible against dark cloud and the foam that surges about its narrow arches and starlings' while Westminster Bridge 'is all light and space' and shown against the Abbey with Nicholas Hawkmoor's work on its western towers (unfinished since medieval times) underway, representing 'the diverse entity that is modern London taking unified shape'.¹¹¹ The tradition was continued by Scott's pupil William Marlow (1740-1813). Scott had already recorded Blackfriars Bridge under construction in the early 1760s, and Marlow went on to produce numerous views of the newly built Blackfriars Bridge in front of St Paul's, some of which were paired with views of Westminster Bridge and the Abbey [see Fig. 72].¹¹² These views were reproduced as engravings, as were his views of Rome from the Tiber with St Peter's, which share a remarkable compositional similarity.¹¹³ Likewise the townscape artist Daniel Turner (fl. 1782-1805), who specialised in Thames views, produced a pair of tiny paintings of Westminster Bridge and old London Bridge at the turn of the nineteenth century [see Fig. 73]. These pictures are significant to the concept of reimagining the Thames. Not only do they reinforce the defining views of London's river but also, more importantly, they have a most unusual viewpoint which is set within a shadowy wooden warehouse open to the Thames, a compositional device enabling the familiar prospect to be framed by the materials of labour including the tools of building such as a wheelbarrow and a pile of rubble as well as buckets and spades. This presents an abrupt contrast between the enclosed utilitarian foreground and the exalted architecture in the distance.¹¹⁴ These symbols of construction introduce to the established repertoire of traditional Thames views a specific reference of the modernisation and change that was already underway along this most lauded section of the river.

Mark Hallett identifies a mid-eighteenth century 'vogue for the urban topographical 'prospect', which customarily defined the city's social spaces as thriving environments of trade and communication, framed by the sunlit, uncluttered, sweeping facades of modern architecture' and a 'broader pictorial aesthetic of urban improvement' that was 'being produced to represent and celebrate the urban reconstruction and spatial reorganisation taking place in contemporary London'.¹¹⁵ This observation has a striking significance when considered in terms of depictions of the Thames before and after the construction of the new

¹⁰⁹ See for example *Old London Bridge* (c. 1800) by Canot, P. C after Samuel Scott, LMA: Pr.361/LON(1).

¹¹⁰ Smollett, T. (ed.) (1758), vol. 5, pp. 265-6.

¹¹¹ Sweetman, J. (1999), p. 42.

¹¹² For Scott see *Blackfriars Bridge under Construction* (early 1760s), NT, Blickling Hall: 355472. For Marlow's pairings see *A View of St Paul's and Blackfriars Bridge* (c. 1777), GAC: AN 15028 and *A View of Westminster Abbey and Old Westminster Bridge from the Surrey Shore* (nd), NT, Dorneywood: AN 1507058; *Blackfriars Bridge and St Paul's London* (c. 1774) and *Westminster Bridge, London* (c. 1774), CLC: 1368 and 1369; each contrasts a mundane foreground of busy Thames labour with a spectacular architectural vista.

¹¹³ See for example *Rome from the Tiber, St Peter's and Castel Sant' Angelo* (n.d.) by William Marlow, GAC: AN 2812.

¹¹⁴ Hawes, L. (1982), p. 98.

¹¹⁵ Hallett, M. (1999), pp. 201-2.

bridge at Westminster. As discussed in chapters 1 and 2, early depictions of the Thames tended to celebrate a positively charged, idyllic river, while literary sources and social histories distinguished it as a hard environment in which hierarchies of class, language and behaviour that operated in the city were temporarily suspended.¹¹⁶ For example, the Thames watermen, as caricatured in satirical prints and literature, were generally considered to be boisterous, foul-mouthed and insubordinate, the antithesis of polite society and the embodiment of a river culture which rode roughshod over what should have been a deferential relationship between boatman and passenger. Hallett suggests that 'the bridge promised to arc over this problematic space'.¹¹⁷ John Sweetman has described the 'symbolic value' of the new bridge 'as crossing-point, viewing platform and [...] place of disorientation'.¹¹⁸ John Summerson considers Labelye's bridge to have set a standard: 'his bridge was the foundation of an English tradition in bridge building second to none in Europe'.¹¹⁹ In all aspects, the mid-eighteenth century images of Westminster Bridge represent an ideological agenda for the social and civic spaces of the city filtered via the Thames and its civic improvements. The river's spaces that were traditionally associated with the destabilised, impolite world of redoubtable watermen and lowlife maritime criminals were depicted instead as new and accessible arenas of cultural interaction encompassed within refined views from and of bridges and neoclassical riverside terraces. As Labelye had confidently forecasted in 1739, Westminster Bridge became a 'very great ornament to the capital of the British empire...and a considerable means towards the increase of Trade, Manufacture and the Useful Arts.'¹²⁰

So Impolite a Dam¹²¹

While the building of the new bridge at Westminster was divisive, old London Bridge, a dilapidated structure which was finally redeveloped between 1758 and 1762, was proving equally controversial.¹²² Some Londoners, specifically those who prospered by the old bridge's existence, saw it as an enduring symbol of London and so they raised objections to plans for its alteration, a reluctance indulged by the significant political power of watermen and the interests of riverside businesses who stood together to impede its replacement. As a consequence, all proposals to build a new bridge were enthusiastically petitioned against and eventually abandoned in favour of a plan which instead proposed 'modernising' the ancient bridge. The resultant fudge provided the crumbling behemoth with a stay of execution, during which John Gwynn complained that 'This wretched bridge ought to have been entirely demolished ages ago [and] the best repair that could possibly have been made was to have taken it entirely down'.¹²³ At the same time, Sir John Fielding scorned the sentimentalisation of the old bridge when he referred to the ancient buildings upon it as 'the hideous deformity of old ruinous houses that so long rendered it a disgrace to the city, and a horror to the eye of

¹¹⁶ Hallett, M. (1993), p. 47.

¹¹⁷ Hallett, M. (1993), p. 47. See also Ch. 2, pp. 56-60.

¹¹⁸ Sweetman, J. (1998), p. 156.

¹¹⁹ Summerson, J. (2003), p. 110.

¹²⁰ Labelye, C. (1739), p. 82.

¹²¹ A contemporary description of old London Bridge in Erskine, R. (1770), pp. 19-20.

¹²² See Walker, R. (1979), p. 28.

¹²³ Gwynn, J. (1766), p. 119.

all curious spectators'.¹²⁴ Extant contemporary depictions of old London Bridge produced through the period of its transformation - the 'before' version, pre-1758, when it was crowded with shops and houses; the 'during' version from 1762 to 1824, when it was shorn of its buildings; and the 'after' version when the old bridge was demolished immediately after the construction of its successor in 1831 – provide more than simply a straightforward representation of the changing face of the Thames at this time of renovation and replacement. As such, the construction of a new London Bridge and the demolition of its medieval predecessor in particular can be seen as a paradigm of the reimagined London and nation in the context of the Thames at the end of the long eighteenth century.

For over a century, before it was finally dismantled in 1824, the future of old London Bridge was placed under continual threat. The problems initially became apparent when a series of unusual weather conditions caused the 'curious phenomenon' of a massive drop in the river's water level which revealed the bridge's ancient substructure. According to the engraver Edward William Cooke (1811-1880), nephew of artist William Cooke who had contributed to two books of Thames views, in 1716 'the Thames was reduced so low, from the effects of a long drought, and a gale of wind at W.S.W., that many persons crossed the bed of the river on foot both above and below the Bridge'. Cooke recorded that the Thames had remained in that state for one day, during which period 'many interesting observations were made on the construction of the foundation of the Bridge', including the overextended underpinning which had been hidden from view beneath the waterline for six centuries.¹²⁵ What became evident at that time was that the starlings, which had been repeatedly strengthened over the centuries with additional stone, were acting as a partial dam and physically holding back the flow of the river. By 1750 the starlings occupied five-sixths of the riverbed, forcing the river water to roar through the remaining gaps which acted as narrow sluice gates. The *Gentleman's Magazine* reported in 1753 that 'shooting the bridge is almost universally dreaded as the risque [*sic*] of life' and the watermen complained their custom was suffering because of it.¹²⁶ The damming effect of the over-broadened starlings was further compounded by the arches at the north end of the bridge which were obstructed by waterwheels, the number of which had quadrupled since the first was installed in 1581, supplying water to meet the ever-growing demands of the expanding local population. Despite these difficulties, it was not until the opening of the commodious new river crossing at Westminster in 1750 that the inconveniences and inadequacies of old London Bridge finally came to be seen as indefensible. London's internationally famous landmark bridge had, it seems, become inadequate for the requirements of what was by then the largest city in Europe. Yet a solution was not immediately clear. The problems arising from the narrowness of the road down the middle of the bridge could be addressed by the removal of the buildings, but the broad starlings which dammed the river also created the water pressure which was harnessed and relied upon for the City's water supply, and therefore deemed sacrosanct. Any attempts to widen the gaps between the arches would, it was argued, upset the domestic life of the City. As a compromise, it was decided to remove one of the central arches and to clear the houses, thus widening the bridge, a project overseen by Sir Robert Taylor and George

¹²⁴ Quoted by Betts, D. and Lawrence, I. (1962), p. 805; Sinclair, M. (2007), p. 142.

¹²⁵ Cooke, E. W. (1833), p. 4.

¹²⁶ Quoted in Picard, L. (2000), p. 18.

Dance Snr.¹²⁷ The Tudor buildings, considered by some as a wonder, were abandoned in the cause of progress, in this case better transport. Five hundred workmen were employed on the bridge's transformation and so the resulting successor to the medieval bridge emerged, shorn of its buildings and given an elegant Italianate balustrade, a facelift which would extend the life of the structure for less than seventy years.¹²⁸

Numerous depictions of old London Bridge were made during the relatively short period of upheaval in the structure's 600 year history. Considering the bridge's historic status and symbolic significance, it appears to have been largely overlooked by artists until the eighteenth century when the imminent extensive renovations provided a reason for its old image with buildings intact to be preserved for posterity. The original London Bridge had mainly been chronicled in visual art through the seventeenth century practice of Dutch artists working for Dutch patrons, for example Claude de Jongh's multiple versions of *View of London Bridge* (c. 1632) [Fig. 75] which is taken from upstream looking east and *Frost Fair on the Thames* (c. 1685) [Fig. 76] which is dominated by the monolithic barrier which slowed the current sufficiently for the water to freeze.¹²⁹ The tradition of frost fairs and paintings of them continued for as long as old London Bridge stood, for example it appeared again when Samuel Collings exhibited his oil painting of a frost fair at the Royal Academy in 1789. In his *Frost Fair on the Thames* [Fig. 77], Collings takes a view of the river near the Tower, looking west towards old London Bridge which has by this time been shorn of its buildings. There were five great freezes when the ice formed thick enough for a frost fair to be held on the river, the first being the winter of 1683-4 as depicted in Fig. 76. It was recorded that the ice grew to eleven inches thick and the fair held upon it lasted for ten weeks and boasted a fox hunt attended by Charles II and his family.¹³⁰ Images of 'frost fairs', such as those mentioned here depict Londoners delighting in the novelty with an elaborate set up of tents, rows of market booths and even printing presses turning out personalised souvenirs of the occasion. In this respect, old London Bridge is implied to be the benefactor of such festivities, and its appearance, for example on the horizon of *Frost Fair on the Thames* [Fig. 76], might be read as a celebration of the structure as the bringer of joy and unrestricted access to the otherwise inhospitable and impolite river environment. Alternatively, the image of frost fairs on the Thames, by the association with old London Bridge, may also have been recognised as a sign of retrospection, a backward-looking tradition of viewing the capital 'frozen' in time, and hindering the progress of modernity. Like the new Westminster Bridge which arched over the chaotic river, the ice temporarily stabilised the Thames and transformed it into an egalitarian stage for the pleasure and entertainment of all Londoners, from the lowest orders to the royal family. The eventual demise of the bridge in 1823 attracted much artistic attention given the irresistible opportunity to juxtapose the fall of the ancient and the rise of the modern in one picture, being as winning a combination as the traditional compositions that united Westminster Bridge with Westminster Abbey or old London Bridge with St Paul's.¹³¹ But even when the future of old London Bridge remained uncertain, the attention of artists intent on depicting the

¹²⁷ See Thomson, R. (1827), pp. 366-67.

¹²⁸ See Picard, L. (2000), p. 20.

¹²⁹ For additional versions see *Old London Bridge* (1630), EH, Kenwood: AN 88028831; *View of Old London Bridge from the West* (1650), V&A: 7129-1860.

¹³⁰ Connor, P. (ed.) (2003), cat. 34.2.

¹³¹ See Cooke, E. W. (1833).

city appears to have been drawn instead to the proliferation of new riverside developments such as the Adelphi and Blackfriars Bridge. The fact that old London Bridge was generally overlooked by artists during the long eighteenth century suggests that later imaginings of it after its demise portray it as a reassuringly solid and iconic structure. Such depictions represent a retrospective fondness for an ancient Thames landmark that had outlived its usefulness and relevance to the modernising port city.

The imminence of the alterations which would permanently transform the appearance of old London Bridge briefly ignited an artistic interest in the structure itself, as opposed to its function as a reliable backdrop to frost fair scenes. Such depictions commemorate the passing of the thirteenth-century structure, or as Harley Preston suggests these pictures were 'produced for connoisseurs and patrons, almost *en souvenir* of something decoratively redundant'.¹³² For example, Joseph Nickolls (*fl.* 1726-1755), a topographical painter who specialised in views of London strongly influenced by Canaletto, produced his *View of the City of London from the South Bank of the Thames with Old London Bridge, Fishmongers' Hall and the Monument* [Fig. 78] in the same year that Taylor and Dance's workmen moved in to begin the overhaul. Nickolls's image is consistent with Samuel Scott's *Old London Bridge* [Fig. 74], even though the focal point of the work is the relatively new Monument and Fishmongers' Hall illuminated to the left of the more ancient bridge which stands as a shadowy testament of past glory. Once the works had been completed, the transformed bridge was generally admired but the problems had not gone away. For example, the *Gentleman's Magazine* complained in 1767:

There was so great an eddy at the great arch that craft or vessels passing through were whirled around for a long time before they could get disengaged, and in the utmost danger of being dashed to pieces against the sterlings, overset in the vortex, or staved against each other... whereby great damage might be sustained as well as lives lost.¹³³

It seems that ultimately the improvements were more cosmetic than functional, a criticism forcibly made by John Gwynn in his *London and Westminster Improved* of 1766. Gwynn lamented that the money spent on the supposed improvements had been 'thrown away' and that it would have been far better used in rebuilding the bridge 'in an elegant and commodious manner'.¹³⁴ In 1770, the renowned Scottish engineer Robert Erskine (1735-1780) who is credited with the invention of the elevating pump, a forerunner of modern day hydraulics, published a *Dissertation on rivers and tides* in which he set out a number of principles and propositions based on the physical laws of water, before applying these principles to the Thames and the impact of old London Bridge upon it. Erskine explained that an alteration to the prevailing obstacle 'would be very beneficial to the river in general, and in the end advantageous to the City; as the sums expended on keeping so impolite a dam in repair, only for the emolument of a private company [London Waterworks], are very large, and must every year increase'. In conclusion, Erskine is emphatic that on the basis of scientific evidence the future of London Bridge is a 'trial of skill between Nature and Art' as the river 'struggling hard

¹³² Preston, H. (1977), cat. 25.

¹³³ Vol. 37, p. 337.

¹³⁴ Gwynn, J. (1766), p. 120.

under its fetters' had eroded the bed beneath the bridge to such an extent as to form 'an abyss sufficient to bury twice the superstructure'. Erskine's dissertation concluded with the final prediction that the next time the Thames froze the floating icebergs 'should act the part of keen pioneers, and lend their effectual aid to shake off and intomb the unsufferable load [old London Bridge], affording a striking example, of the consequences which attend the laying impolitic restraints even upon inanimate Nature'.¹³⁵ Some years into this period of continued debate over the future of the bridge, J. M. W. Turner sketched *London Bridge, with the Monument and the church of St Magnus King and Martyr*, a view taken from mid-river, looking north along the bridge to the waterwheel of the London Waterworks Company.¹³⁶ Turner produced a watercolour made from the sketch [Fig. 79] in which the damming effect of the bridge is central. David Hill has commented that 'Londoners would have been expected to notice that the river is apparently flowing the wrong way' as two boats struggle to negotiate the hazardous white water.¹³⁷ In this way, Turner has depicted the architectural details of the original Norman construction together with its later adornments, for example the Italianate balustrade, whilst simultaneously introducing factual information into the image by highlighting the inconvenience caused by the narrow arches and the waterwheel and making this, the structure's outstayed welcome, the main point of the picture as opposed to fanciful nostalgia for an ancient bridge. It was the obstruction of the river and the dangerous fall of water that was the bridge's eventual downfall, and at the turn of the nineteenth century 'the attention of the public was directed to its [old London Bridge's] entire demolition'.¹³⁸ In the year 1800, the Third Report from the Select Committee upon the improvement of the Port of London was produced, in which it was stated 'that the great, continual, and ineffectual expenses of the Old Bridge, its irremediable insecurity, and the dangers of its navigation, had induced the Committee to collect information, and provide designs for the building of a new one.'¹³⁹

The artistic representations of massive architectural projects underway along the Thames, as pioneered by Canaletto and Scott in what are arguably era-defining views depicting the building of Westminster Bridge, were subsequently continued by artists at the site of the construction of new London Bridge and the demolition of the old bridge. But in the months before this construction work commenced in 1825, there was another surge in artistic interest in the old bridge which, shorn of its distinctive buildings, had been overshadowed by the new bridges at Westminster and Blackfriars.¹⁴⁰ Once the work had started, Rudolph Ackermann published a lithograph based on an original image by T. M. Baynes depicting a panoramic view of London Bridge under construction.¹⁴¹ Baynes took the standard oblique viewpoint from the

¹³⁵ Erskine, R. (1770), pp. 1-15, 19-20, 24.

¹³⁶ TB: D00695, TB XXVIII J.

¹³⁷ Hill, D. (1993), pp. 17-18.

¹³⁸ Cooke, E. (1833), p. 4.

¹³⁹ Cooke, E. (1833), p. 5. In 1820, a Parliamentary Select Committee was established to enquire into the state of old London Bridge. The Select Committee reported in May 1821, proposing a new bridge. In 1823 a competition was held for its design. The Corporation of the City of London obtained an Act of Parliament in 1823 empowering them to demolish old London Bridge and build a new bridge to a design submitted by John Rennie.

¹⁴⁰ See for example *Old London Bridge* (c. 1824) by Gideon Yates, BM: 1880,0710.735.

¹⁴¹ *View of London Bridge under construction looking towards Old Swan Steps, Fishmongers' Hall, Monument and St Magnus the Martyr* (1825) by T. M. Baynes, LMA: q6888914.

south bank traditionally used to depict the old bridge, but here the familiar view is obliterated by the towering pile-drivers and construction paraphernalia of the building site. The excitement surrounding the building of the bridge was heightened by an elaborate ceremony attended by hundreds of invited guests held in a cofferdam on the riverbed during which the Lord Mayor laid the foundation stone.¹⁴² George Scharf was commissioned by John Rennie junior, on behalf of the London Bridge Committee of the City Corporation, to produce three large-scale lithographs of the works for the new London Bridge, depicting the demolition of the old bridge and the construction of Rennie's replacement.¹⁴³ Scharf spent three years working on site and in the studio, and the surviving drawings, watercolours and two lithograph long views record not only the buildings that were about to be pulled down but gangs of demolition workers, masons measuring and chiselling the stone for the new bridge and the blocks being moved with winches, pulleys and by manual labour [see Fig. 80].¹⁴⁴ An oil painting in the collection of the Guildhall Art Gallery, London, *Demolition of London Bridge* (c. 1832) [Fig. 81] shows the bridge in the final stages of demolition, with spectators lining the parapet of the new bridge as they watch the proceedings.¹⁴⁵ This image echoes Canaletto and Scott's drawings of Westminster Bridge under construction and watched by inquisitive onlookers [Fig. 67 and 68]. The symbolic role of this emergent, improved Thames is made palpable by the inclusion of these clusters of sightseers eager to catch a glimpse of the transformation in progress, whether it be the imminent opening of a new bridge or the destruction and removal of the old which was itself a form of renewal through the removal of the non-functional to reinstate the functional; as John Sweetman has pointed out, these were the guiding ideas of the new Classicism.¹⁴⁶ While the presence of the spectators played a significant role in conveying the concept of a renewed and reimagined river, in the Guildhall's painting these Londoners are reduced to dots on the canvas almost lost in the sheer scale of the new developments which were changing the face of the river forever. The demolition of old London Bridge did not begin until 1830 once the new bridge was in use, and the new Thames crossing was opened by King William IV and Queen Adelaide on 1 August 1831. George Rennie reinforced the symbolic role of this latest in Thames developments when he recorded that the 'splendid ceremony was performed with a pomp and magnificence worthy of the first commercial city in the world'.¹⁴⁷ Cooke recorded how 'the metropolis seemed to have poured forth its population' with every possible viewing location from the shores to the wharfs and warehouses crowded with people.¹⁴⁸ To mark the occasion, *The Opening of London Bridge by William IV, August 1 1831* (1831) by Clarkson Stanfield was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1832 [Fig. 82]. The painting was commissioned by William IV to represent what the *Annual Register* for 1831 termed 'The most splendid spectacle that had been witness on the Thames for many years', and the subject became widely known through an engraving by T. A. Prior.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴² See *Laying the Foundation Stone of New London Bridge* (1825) by Richard Dighton, LMA: q6888848.

¹⁴³ Fox, C. (2009), p. 488.

¹⁴⁴ See Arscott, C. (2009), p. 29. The two large-scale (1.5m in length) watercolours Scharf painted for the Committee were subsequently destroyed.

¹⁴⁵ See also *The Building of London Bridge* (undated) attrib. Gideon Yates, YCBA: B1975.4.1967.

¹⁴⁶ Sweetman, J. (1999), p. 28.

¹⁴⁷ Quoted in Knight, J. and Lacey, H. (1862), p. 2.

¹⁴⁸ Cooke, E. (1833), pp. 14-15.

¹⁴⁹ Quoted in Preston, H. (1977), cat. 54.

To recap, Parliamentary approval for the building of Westminster Bridge was granted in 1736 and the construction work started in 1739. The bridge was opened in 1750 and its success prompted the City of London to push for an Act of Parliament to clear and renovate old London Bridge which was granted in 1756. Old London Bridge was remodelled between 1758 and 1762. Meanwhile, the City was also behind the construction of Blackfriars Bridge which took nine years and opened in 1769. Riverside developments continued alongside these bridge developments, with the Adelphi built between 1768 and 1772 and the new Somerset House constructed over two decades from 1776 to 1796.¹⁵⁰ A competition for a new London Bridge was held in 1799, and the works were carried out from 1824 to 1831. Set out in the form of a timeline, these dates represent an almost uninterrupted thread of Thames development which runs through the Georgian period. This corresponds with a repertoire of visual imagery that defines London as both 'the great centre of trade and commerce', and 'the most splendid and fashionable district' by focusing attention on the monumental engineering feats in association with the river.¹⁵¹ However, in terms of the Thames and the civil engineering achievements realised during this period, the most ambitious were instigated in another part of London that had received little by way of attention from the visual artists who were occupied in recording the city's rapidly changing topography. I will now consider the 'East end of the Town' with its new docks and ancient and modern dockyards, a location devoted 'to commerce, to ship-building, and to every collateral branch connected with merchandise'.¹⁵²

Schemes of national amelioration

By the 1790s it was clear that the river could no longer accommodate the huge number of vessels that were attempting to use the port. From Blackwall Reach to the Pool of London the Thames was regularly gridlocked and the Pool of London had become choked with up to 1800 vessels moored in the Upper Pool in a space that had originally been intended for less than a third of that number. The river was so congested that in certain sections it was impossible to cross by boat, and vessels at Deptford had to wait up to a week before proceeding to the Pool.¹⁵³ According to the estimates of Richard Phillips in *Modern London* published in 1804, the annual value of the exports and imports of London was 'sixty millions and a half sterling, and the annual amount of the customs at more than six millions'. Facilitating this immense commercial trade were 'about 3,500 ships' with annual cargoes totalling 'not less than 13,400'. On average, at any one time there were 1,100 ships on the river, together with nearly 6,000 barges and 3,000 wherries or small boats for passengers.¹⁵⁴ The extraordinary growth in eighteenth century river trade is presented statistically by J. G. Broodbank who has recorded that in 1705 the number of ships coming into the port from foreign parts had been 1,335, with a tonnage of 157,000; in 1751 the number of ships was 1,682, and the tonnage 235,000 and by 1794 the number of such ships entering had almost tripled to 3,663 and the tonnage

¹⁵⁰ The Adelphi and Somerset House are discussed in Ch. 4, pp. 117-18 and 122-24.

¹⁵¹ Brayley, E. (1820), p. 35.

¹⁵² Brayley, E. (1820), p. 35.

¹⁵³ Broodbank, J. (1921), p. 81.

¹⁵⁴ Phillips, R. (1804), p. 288.

quadrupled to 620,000.¹⁵⁵ More recent surveys suggest an increase from a total of 6,900 ships entering the port in 1700 to 14,800 in 1795 with the value of goods tripling from £10.3 million in 1700 to £31.4 million during the same period.¹⁵⁶ This remarkable growth accelerated in the final three decades of the eighteenth century when, in 1782, Carl Moritz observed that it was necessary and quite normal for passengers to disembark and travel by land from Dartford to London. This was 'on account of the astonishing number of ships, which are always more crowded [*sic*] together the nearer you approach the city' and 'it frequently requires many days before a ship can finish her passage', a journey likely to involve 'inconveniences such as frequent stoppages and perhaps some alarming dashings against other ships'.¹⁵⁷ The problems associated with the congested Thames below London Bridge and the prolonged delays to merchant shipping were compounded by the severe losses through theft and other criminal activity which ranged from small scale pilferage by labourers known as lumpers employed in discharging the cargoes, who hid stolen goods in their loose clothing, to the revenue officers who came on board prepared with instruments to draw off their share of the plunder and the gangs of thieves who patrolled the river at night. Such thieves included river pirates, who would cut lighters adrift allowing them to run aground on shore where they could be looted, night plunderers, scuffle hunters, light horsemen, heavy horsemen and mud larks; a rogues' gallery of Thames felony. As summarised by Andrew Saint: 'Pilfering was endemic, delay chronic and labour chaotic.'¹⁵⁸

In 1796, a Select Committee for the Improvement of the Port of London was formed to establish 'the best mode of providing sufficient accommodation for the increased trade and shipping of the Port'.¹⁵⁹ Following the example of the rebuilding of London after the Great Fire, Parliament invited architects and engineers to submit plans designed to solve the problems of the docks.¹⁶⁰ Eight schemes were put forward. Amongst them was Edward Ogle's plan for deepening the river and allocating a central channel to allow ships to move in and out of the port with new quays constructed on either side from the Tower to Greenland Dock.¹⁶¹ Another plan was put forward by London-based architect Samuel Wyatt. Wyatt proposed three parallel docks in the Isle of Dogs with a canal leading from Blackwall to Limehouse to in order to remove the notoriously slow passage round the peninsula. However, the most ambitious plan of all was submitted by Willey Reveley, a former architectural student of William Chambers. Reveley's main idea was to straighten the Thames by cutting a channel straight from Limehouse to Blackwall, leaving the long reach around the Isle of Dogs as a gated dock. In two further plans he extended the channel from Blackwall to Woolwich and then from Wapping to Woolwich with a final plan to convert the three bends between Wapping and

¹⁵⁵ Broodbank, J. (1921), p. 80.

¹⁵⁶ See White, J. (2012), p. 168.

¹⁵⁷ Quoted in Scott, A. (1970), pp. 272-3.

¹⁵⁸ Saint, A. (1992), p. 51.

¹⁵⁹ See Great Britain, Parliament (1796), *Report from the Committee appointed to enquire into the best mode of providing sufficient accommodation for the increased Trade and Shipping of the Port of London; &c..*

¹⁶⁰ Rule, F. (2009), p. 159.

¹⁶¹ See *Mr Ogle's plan, for mooring vessels, in the River Thames, from London Bridge to Deptford, on an improved system* (1796) by Edward Ogle and Fairburn, NMM: G218:9/78; the scheme required the government to compulsorily purchase all the land from the current owners which was deemed prohibitively expensive.

Woolwich into three wet docks.¹⁶² Whilst these plans were considered ‘novel, grand and captivating’ they were judged as impractical on the advice of representatives of Trinity House.¹⁶³ It was the principle of constructing docks which was the generally accepted requirement, despite further protestations about loss of business from The Watermen’s Company, the Lightermen and The Proprietors of the Legal Quays. On 12 July 1799 a scheme known as the Merchants’ Plan that proposed docks at Wapping and another scheme for two parallel docks across the Isle of Dogs and a ship canal to the south of the docks to save vessels sailing to and from the Pool via the long passage around the marshy promontory, finally received the Royal Assent. The West India Dock was the first of the major enclosed dock schemes promoted by merchants and ship owners and it enabled the ships of the West India Company to offload their valuable consignments of goods, namely sugar, rum, ginger and pimento, swiftly and efficiently.

The English landscape painter and engraver William Daniell (1769-1837), best known for the views of India made with his uncle, Thomas Daniell, captured the Roman immensity of the brand new dockyard schemes in his precisely executed *London Docks* series of eight coloured aquatints published between 1800 and 1813.¹⁶⁴ When Daniell produced this series he was already well experienced in maritime life with first-hand experience of the ships that used these ports. In 1785 he had sailed out to the East Indies with his uncle Thomas Daniell (1749-1840), a voyage which had generated an important topographical work, *Oriental Scenery*, with the first volume of coloured aquatints dedicated to the Honourable Directors of the East India Company. Amongst these directors was Charles Hampden Turner (1772-1856) who was also a partner in a rope manufactory at Limehouse and part owner of an East Indiaman. Turner had already purchased over thirty oil paintings from the Daniells and it is likely that he would have influenced William Daniell to undertake the aquatints of London’s new docks. Another inducement came from the interest in the works from the dock owners and managers themselves. In the design and context of this series of images, the dock developments might be regarded as the closing marker of a five decade long phase of structural changes to the Thames which had begun with the building of Westminster Bridge. *The Times* announced the newly opened docks with the following statement which demonstrates the trait for endorsing the practical improvements to the Thames by highlighting their contribution to the identity of the nation:

It is with peculiar satisfaction we detail to our readers the magnificent works which are continued for the increase of commercial wealth, and for the advancement of public improvement and happiness. It must be, it ought to be expected, that in the first city of the world, schemes of national amelioration are adopted, which should not only attract but justify the curiosity of the people of England.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶² See *Map of Part of the River Thames A – D* (1790) by Willy Reveley, NMM: GRB218:9/41(1) - GRB218:9/41(4).

¹⁶³ Broodbank, J. G. (1921), p. 87.

¹⁶⁴ The Daniells’ views of India, *Oriental Scenery* consisted of 144 aquatints published in six parts between 1795 and 1808, see Tillotson, G. (2000), pp. 63-66; for the *London Docks* series see BM: G,13.22 and 1880,1113.1555; YCBA: B1978.43.847-B1978.43.852.

¹⁶⁵ *The Times*, 24 August 1804, p. 3.

The scale of the docks caused one foreign visitor to describe in a letter that the West India docks and warehouses was ‘an immeasurable work; one of those at the sight of which the most cold-blooded spectator must feel astonishment, and a sort of awe at the greatness and might of England’.¹⁶⁶ This is echoed in the inscription commemorating the laying of the first stone on 12 July 1800 where the construction of West India Docks is described as ‘an undertaking which, under the favour of God, shall contribute stability, increase, and ornament to British Commerce’.¹⁶⁷ In a similar vein, Daniell’s topographical prints presented an image of the new working docks as the epitome of commercial maritime efficiency. Here, the London Docks are portrayed as the culmination of a series of developments along the river exemplifying a city in the making. Daniell’s works, aimed at the directors of the companies building the docks as well as a wider audience both domestic and abroad, reflected what Fox has described as ‘the concerted efforts [which] were made to reconcile the public through the publication of topographical prints which viewed massive incursions into a hitherto pristine landscape in the best possible light’, as well as to promote recent feats of British civil engineering abroad.¹⁶⁸ As Fox suggests, the dock developments were not uncontentious, but like an architect’s pristine model, Daniell’s series presents only the positive features of the dock developments by focusing on benefits of efficient, organised commerce on the Thames.

Daniell’s *London Docks* series had antecedents in two forms of artistic representation pertaining to the Thames, each of which illuminates a shared motivation behind the projects. The first examples date from 1753, when the first of a series of six prints devoted to the royal dockyards were published. The images were engraved by Pierre Charles Canot, after ‘correct surveys’ measured and drawn by Thomas Milton, who was also responsible for their publication. As Celina Fox has commented, ‘Milton’s designs present an orderly image of the state of the royal dockyards’, a visualisation that belied the ‘yawning gap between theoretical control and industrial practice’.¹⁶⁹ A spot-check on the dockyards by the lords of the Admiralty in 1749 revealed that bad practices had long gone unchecked leading to idleness, disorganisation, inefficiency and waste. In addition, the buildings and docks were in disrepair, the stores were in confusion and accounts were in arrears.¹⁷⁰ This was not the image that the Navy wanted to project abroad, especially when in 1753 King Louis XV had recalled Joseph Vernet (1714-1789) from Rome, where his work was popular amongst English Grand Tourists, to France and commissioned him to paint a series of large canvases celebrating the ports of France.¹⁷¹ Reproduced as a set of sixteen prints with views of ports such as Bordeaux, Cette, Dieppe, Marseilles, Toulon and La Rochelle, Vernet presented his busy harbour scenes in a glorious manner, bringing them to life with a wide array of figures engaging in a variety of activities.¹⁷² These industrious scenes with their theatrical quality, where well-dressed aristocrats are placed near labourers, acknowledge France’s commercial and naval strength

¹⁶⁶ A German Prince [pseud.], (1832), vol. 4, pp. 107-8.

¹⁶⁷ This inscription remains in situ in Hertsmer Road, London E14; see Cooke, W. and Owen, S. (1811), vol. 2, ‘The West-India Docks’, n.p.

¹⁶⁸ Fox, C. (2009), p. 483.

¹⁶⁹ Fox, C. (2009), p. 66.

¹⁷⁰ See Rodger, N. (1993), p. 64; Middleton, R. (1991), pp. 21-30.

¹⁷¹ Vernet’s seaport paintings are represented in collections at the Louvre and the Musée National de Marine, Paris.

¹⁷² See for example *Vue du Port de Dieppe* (1775), NMM: PAI7139. McCreery, C. (1999), pp. 48-50; Levey, M. (1999).

while at the same time conveying a sense of French pride in their port system. Ultimately Vernet's seaport views were commissioned to demonstrate the magnificence of Louis XV's absolutist French state, whereas Milton's works were commissioned as a prestige venture, the neatness of the plans reimagining the docks and visually imposing rational order and control on the wayward yards. In *A Geometrical Plan and North East Elevation of His Majesty's Dockyard at Deptford...* [Fig. 83] for example, the plan itself is surmounted by a prospect of the yard from the water, with a key of explanations printed in the left and right borders. Also within the Rococo borders are a series of captioned vignettes by John Cleveley the Elder depicting different stages in shipbuilding or manoeuvres at sea. As Fox concludes, 'as coded propaganda for British naval power at the start of the Seven Years War, the series could scarcely be bettered' but 'as a reflection of the state of the royal dockyards, it was far from accurate'.¹⁷³

A second forerunner to Daniell's idealised *London Docks* can be seen in a series of four large oil paintings of the royal dockyards at Chatham, Deptford, Plymouth and Woolwich dating from 1785 to 1798. David Cordingly has described these works as 'meticulously executed aerial views which show every building, dock and slipway in each of the yards'.¹⁷⁴ Most pertinent to this discussion are the depictions of the downriver Thames locations of Deptford and Woolwich [Figs 84 and 85].¹⁷⁵ Farington's *Deptford Dockyard* (c. 1794) shows the Grand Storehouse, the wet docks, ships and workshops along the banks of the Thames with nothing but fields and farmland beyond. The river, which occupies a quarter of the canvas, is shown with a straight line of equidistantly positioned ships, mostly appearing in pairs. Pocock's *Woolwich Dockyard* (1790) lacks Farington's skill at architectural drawing but shows a better understanding of Thames shipping, albeit in another overly measured arrangement which forms the foreground of this enormous view painting. The military precision and the cartographic qualities of these two vast paintings suggest they were commissioned for a specific purpose as opposed to satisfying any aesthetic demand for dockyard views. A letter from the Navy Board to the Lords of the Admiralty, dated 7 March 1804, sheds light on their origin: 'Mr White the Master Mast Maker at Deptford Yard was employed in drawing the perspective Plans of the Dockyards previous to their being painted by Messrs Farrington and Pocock'. The letter states that 'the Views were drawn and Painted by our directions, and are now hung up in our Board Room, that we may have reference to them as occasions arise'.¹⁷⁶ Whilst these paintings bear little resemblance to the *œuvres* of either Joseph Farington or Nicholas Pocock, the fact that they were commissioned for the Navy Board's boardroom, and therefore notionally required for logistical planning, provides a reason for their sparseness in terms of the nonexistent staffage and the regimented and artificially neat and unfeasibly tidy environment for a working dockyard. A more likely explanation is that these view paintings were displayed as objects of prestige. As such, Farington and Pocock's works share both a purpose and a remarkable physical resemblance to the topographic scenic models of the six royal dockyards, including Deptford and Woolwich, commissioned by Lord Sandwich in 1773-

¹⁷³ Fox, C. (2009), p. 67.

¹⁷⁴ Cordingly, D. (1986), p. 66.

¹⁷⁵ *Chatham Dockyard* (1785-94) by Joseph Farington, NMM: BHC1782; *Plymouth Dockyard* (1798) by Nicholas Pocock, NMM: BHC1914.

¹⁷⁶ Quoted in Cordingly, D. (1986), p. 67.

74 for George III's Marine Gallery [Figs 86 and 87].¹⁷⁷ The Gallery was built above the East Library of Buckingham Palace when John Montagu (Lord Sandwich) became First Lord of the Admiralty in 1771.¹⁷⁸ One of Montagu's priorities was the encouragement of King George III's interest in the Royal Navy which he initiated by organising royal visits to the Dockyards and the Fleet, as well as commissioning models to be made for the exclusive use of the King and his eldest son.¹⁷⁹ It was Montagu's belief that models would appeal to the King's enquiring mind and his enthusiasm for craftsmanship. This is evident in the architectural accuracy and meticulous detail recorded in the models which present the six Royal Dockyards as they were at the time with ships of various sizes shown in various stages of construction. They also show the houses, offices, workshops, dry docks and building slips of the yard, complementing the many plans from the period and giving a detailed view of industrial buildings in what were the greatest manufacturing enterprises of the time.¹⁸⁰ The models contain a wealth of industrial detail such as tidy racks of anchors and piles of neatly stacked wood, imagery that resonates with the painted interpretations by Farington and Pocock. Even the experience of viewing the scale models from above, but slightly distanced by the partial inclusion of an open plane representing the Thames, is mirrored in the two artists' bird's-eye account of the royal yards.

Elements of these eighteenth-century dockyard models, view paintings and printed plans and elevations are identifiable in William Daniell's *London Docks* series. Their production and popularity was also closely influenced by contemporary events, particularly as their publication coincided with the period of the Napoleonic wars. Certainly the continued success of Britain's commercial prosperity from maritime trade was a palpable characteristic of its naval supremacy and positive depictions of the vast and efficient new docks, such as those produced by Daniell, were underpinned with patriotic and nationalistic sentiment. The *London Docks* series consisted of eight large coloured aquatints published separately at £2.12s6d each documenting the construction, either in progress or newly completed, of the new Thames docks.¹⁸¹ In this respect, Daniell's *Dock Series* offers a gauge on the contemporary reaction to the extraordinary and unprecedented transformation of the Thames on one hand, and a measure of the weight of importance attached to commercial trade on the other. Daniell's printed visualisations of George Dance's proposed double bridge, the first two views in the *London Docks* series [for original painted version see Fig. 58], were swiftly followed by views of successfully realised projects beginning with *An Elevated View of the New Docks and Warehouses now Constructing on the Isle of Dogs near Limehouse for the reception and accommodation of the Shipping in the West India Trade*, published 15 October 1802 [Fig. 88], *An Elevated View of the New Dock in Wapping*, on 1 January 1803 followed by a bird-eye view of Perry's Dockyard at Blackwall (with its new dock constructed on land to the east) titled *Brunswick Dock on the Thames at Blackwall* published on 20 October 1805.¹⁸² *A View of the East India Docks* [Fig. 89] and *A View of the London Dock* were published on 1 October 1808 and finally *Commercial Dock, Rotherhithe* was published on 1 June 1813. A second series of

¹⁷⁷ Lavery, B. and Stephens, S. (1995), pp. 155-8.

¹⁷⁸ See Fox, C. (2009), p. 138.

¹⁷⁹ See Graves, J. (2012).

¹⁸⁰ Lavery, B. and Stephens, S. (1995), p. 158.

¹⁸¹ See Stewart, B. (1955), pp. 79-82.

¹⁸² The Brunswick Dock was a private venture of Mr Perry, and though he named it in honour of George III, the dock was commonly called Perry's Dock. The original oil painting from which Daniell made the print is *The Mast House and Brunswick Dock at Blackwall* (c. 1803), NMM: BHC1867.

coloured aquatints titled *Views of London*, published between 1804 and 1805, consists of six images of London which provide a definitive, if not an eighteenth-century *fin de siècle* construal of the newly facilitated and envisioned relationship between the great port city and the Thames.

Shortly after the publication of *An Elevated View of the New Dock in Wapping* in 1803 (exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1806) the Wapping Dock Committee requested Daniell to produce another print, giving more detail of the foreground buildings.¹⁸³ In addition to meeting the demands of owners and managers for portrayals of their sites for ostentatious display, Daniell's depictions of the grand dock-building projects also fulfilled an important public relations role. Fox argues that Daniell's series of aquatints of the new London docks were 'aimed at the directors of the companies that were building them and a wider audience, both at home and abroad, for whom the scale of the enterprise was the subject of astonishment and awe 'at the greatness and might of England''.¹⁸⁴ Revealingly, Daniell's print shows the mooring tiers on either side of the Middle Channel to be densely packed with shipping, clearly suggesting the river remained healthily busy but no longer choked with disorganised and corrupt commercial activity, the implication being that the opening of the new docks had improved efficiency without diluting the trade or diverting business away from the Pool.¹⁸⁵ Further evidence of the commercial patronage underpinning Daniell's prints comes from the inclusion of *Brunswick Dock on the Thames at Blackwall*.¹⁸⁶ Brunswick Dock was a private venture of John Perry who, in 1789, began the construction of a basin at Blackwall, chiefly for the accommodation and protection of the ships of the East India Company. It is likely that the original oil painting by Daniell upon which the print is based was commissioned by him. Our understanding of the impact of Daniell's commissioned depiction and the contemporary significance of Brunswick Dock is heightened by an awareness of the machinations of the East India Company through which London enjoyed monopolies on all British trade with the East, and on the building of the Company's chartered ships. In addition, all ships built or repaired at the nearby yards would then be prepared for their voyages at Perry's Dock. The outstanding feature of the dock, which is prominent in Daniell's bird's-eye view, was the one hundred and seventeen foot-high mast house which became the dominant landmark for homeward-bound sailors. Blackwall Yard was described as the largest and best equipped dock in the kingdom and after Brunswick Dock had opened in 1790, it was regarded as the most substantial private shipbuilding and repairing yard in the world.¹⁸⁷ The success of the East India Company and the shipbuilding it supported had already been commemorated in paintings by Francis Holman (1729-1790) in works such as *Blackwall Yard from the Thames* (1784) [Fig. 90] and *Launch of the 'Venerable', 74-guns, at Blackwall, 1784* (1784).¹⁸⁸ Commissioned respectively by the owner of the yard in 1784, John Perry, and the East India Company, Holman showcases the scale of the shipbuilding activity and in so doing vigorously

¹⁸³ Sutton, T. (1954), pp. 112-3. There are no known copies of a revised work.

¹⁸⁴ Fox, C. (2009), p. 483.

¹⁸⁵ Daniell's depiction of the congestion of shipping in the Upper Pool and at the Legal Quays in 1803 shows the river immediately prior to the opening of London Dock which further improved efficiency here.

¹⁸⁶ Broodbank, J. (1921), p. 70.

¹⁸⁷ See Fox, C. (1992), pp. 228-29.

¹⁸⁸ NMM: BHC1869.

promotes and propagates a post-war revival in British trade and industry.¹⁸⁹ For example, *Blackwall Yard* is designed to impress by proudly showcasing a remarkable line-up of seven vessels at various stages of production. This enormous capacity for shipbuilding distinguished Perry's site as the biggest private yard in the world since at least the mid-eighteenth century. The wealth of production taking place in and around the yard in 1784 and the gigantic scale of the ships, accentuated in Holman's painting through a dramatic use of perspective, demonstrates a concerted effort to broadcast the thriving business taking place at this downriver location. Some years later with the onset of the Napoleonic Wars the same site was the subject of a work by the marine artist William Anderson (1757-1837): *Calvary Embarking at Blackwall, 1793* [Fig. 27].¹⁹⁰ Anderson's patriotic image emphasises the strength of the British military by flooding Perry's Brunswick Dock with uniformed troops and awaiting ships. Holman's peacetime image displays Blackwall Reach primarily as a site of booming construction that represents the health of the East India Company specifically and British maritime trade generally. This assurance of continued and burgeoning commercial success symbolised through the sheer scale of shipbuilding, chimes with those depictions of the improvements made to the Thames, such as the West India Docks, designed to accommodate the continual growth in commercial shipping.

The first Thames dock view to be published by the William Daniell, *An Elevated View of the New Docks & Warehouses now constructing on the Isle of Dogs* [Fig. 88], depicted the vast expanse of the West India Docks constructed, as the letters proudly state, in 'little more than two years' between 1800 and 1802 and covering an area of thirty acres, 'a scene so highly interesting to every well-wisher to the prosperity and glory of this Country'. *The Times* described the West India Docks with enthusiasm: 'Scarcely any contrivance of architecture could present to the eye a more magnificent scene...[which] appears like a magnificent city, surrounded by artificial fortifications'.¹⁹¹ Dedicated by Daniell to the Chairman and Directors of the West India Dock Company, the aquatint was a commercial success which encouraged the artist to continue with the Dock series.¹⁹² Daniell's view looks west across the Isle of Dogs toward central London. No attempt is made to disguise the functional and necessary existence of the security wall and the water-filled 'fosse' which surrounded the docks specifically to keep out thieves. The larger dock on the right, with its enormous warehouses for the storage of sugar, wine and rum, was used for imports, the dock on the left for exports. A German visitor estimated that in 'these boundless depositories there was sugar enough to sweeten the whole adjoining basin, and rum enough to make half of England drunk'.¹⁹³ The description printed beneath the image also explains that the view depicts 'the general appearance, when finished, of that magnificent and truly national work', adding that when the first vessels were admitted they 'were received amidst the shouts of an immense concourse of spectators assembled to behold a scene so highly interesting to every well-wisher to the prosperity and glory of this Country'.

Daniell's *A View of the East India Docks* [Fig. 89] was published by the artist on 1 October 1808, two years after the dock opened, and it is perhaps the most ambitious of all the

¹⁸⁹ See Fox, C. (1987), p. 119.

¹⁹⁰ See also *Hussars Embarking at Deptford* (1793) by William Anderson, YCBA: B2001.2.181.

¹⁹¹ 24 August 1804, p. 3.

¹⁹² See Fox, C. (1992), p. 229.

¹⁹³ A German Prince [pseud.] (1832), vol. 4, p. 108.

views. The scope is vast, encompassing the double meander of the Thames between Woolwich in the east to Deptford in the west via Blackwall and Greenwich, with the new East India Docks engulfing the foreground. The East India Dock Company had been formed in 1803, raising sufficient funds to acquire Perry's Dock which was transformed into the Export Dock, with a new dock being cut to the north, the Import Dock, both being linked to an entrance basin and a new dock entrance. The lock entrance was the largest in the world, and when the dock opened it had a twenty-one year monopoly on the handling of all East India produce. The directors of the East India Company bought twenty copies of Daniell's print for their own use. Daniell's dock images are particularly significant because, as Fox suggests, they were the only contemporary representations which successfully managed to convey the colossal extent of London's dock undertakings.¹⁹⁴ In the only book published on the work of William Daniell (and his father), the author Thomas Sutton describes the series of dock views as 'almost unique in the history of aquatint'.¹⁹⁵ In terms of the reimagining of the Thames by artists, Sutton comments that:

the stiff, square buildings, with their compromising lines, might well be considered unrewarding to any artist, but William appears to have given of his best, and has managed in a miraculous way to combine the angularities of the buildings and the perpendicular forests of masts with the austere beauty of low-lying mudbanks, swept by shadows and given character by subtle lighting.¹⁹⁶

Daniell's views, produced virtually in tandem with the dock developments, are constitutive of an ideology of efficiency, security and modernity with which the developers wanted to be associated.¹⁹⁷ The efficiencies were made through the reduction in the amount of time previously wasted as ships waited to enter the legal quays, and the security was measured in the amount of cargo previously lost to the prolific river piracy. The West India Docks provided suitable moorings, dock facilities and proper warehousing for ships involved in trade with the West Indian plantations. Daniell illustrates these efficiencies via unfussy linear constructions and straight, uncluttered thoroughfares. All is well-ordered, neat and in its place, a vision which echoes the representations of Limehouse and Blackwall by John Boydell, the immaculate dockyards views by Pocock and Farington, the tidy topographic models made for George III, and Thomas Milton's geometrical plans and elevations of the royal dockyards specifically designed as a constructed public relations image to promote the idea of efficiency within dockyards.¹⁹⁸ This resonates with John Gwynn's argument, presented at the outset of this chapter, in which he championed 'that useful regularity, convenience and utility, so very desirable in commercial cities'.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁴ See Fox, C. (1992), p. 228.

¹⁹⁵ Sutton, T. (1954), pp. 112-3.

¹⁹⁶ Sutton, T. (1954), pp. 112-3.

¹⁹⁷ This bears a similarity to the London Docklands Development Committee's attempts to attract investment when faced with opposition to the regeneration of the same area (1981-1994) following the closure of the docks in the 1960s; see Rule, F. (2009), pp. 271-80.

¹⁹⁸ See also *Plan of the West India Docks* (1 Jan 1802) by B. Baker after R. Walker, YCBA: B1977.14.14827.

¹⁹⁹ Gwynn, J. (1766), p. 8.

On 1 August 1804, William Daniell published the first of a series of coloured aquatints dedicated to 'George Dance Esquire R. A. Architect to the City of London &c.' known as *Six Views of London*. The title sheet, published alongside Plates I, V and VI on 1 January 1805, includes the dedication to Dance as if carved onto a stone tablet set on a plinth which is framed by foliage in a leafy copse on the south bank of the Thames [Fig. 91]. A broken column base with a toppled Corinthian capital appear in the foreground and behind the scene the sweep of the river stretches from St Paul's to the Tower, with the renovated version of old London Bridge straddling the river. To the east of the bridge, Daniell depicts the forest of ship masts which demarcates the highest upriver reach of merchant shipping on the Thames. The six plates in the *Views of London* series are not accompanied with text nor do they have captions except for the repeated title *London*.²⁰⁰ In Plate II [Fig. 92], Daniell's balanced composition presents the city and its river in harmony as seen from the artist's trademark bird's-eye viewpoint. The vast panorama encompasses the refashioned old London Bridge and the newest addition, Blackfriars Bridge, together with a rare depiction of the shipping in the Pool in a print that was part of a series which blatantly promoted the ideology of London as the 'Metropolis of the British Empire'. Another highly-detailed panorama, *The Rhinebeck Panorama* (c. 1806-07), takes in the view to the west from a similar position and height [Fig. 93].²⁰¹ Both these images feature the shipping on the river. However, unlike the presence of a crowded forest of masts in Boitard's *The Imports of Great Britain from France* [Fig. 56] discussed at the beginning of this chapter, Daniell's view and *The Rhinebeck Panorama* presents a progressive new order on the river. The shipping in the previously congested and chaotic port is apparently no longer in disarray. Instead, the high-masted vessels are strategically organised as if cooperating in a system which implies improved efficiencies in the port. In the same way that Boydell, Canot, Farington and Pocock contrived to produce enhanced visual accounts of the royal docks for domestic reassurance and foreign propaganda, Daniell's vision and *The Rhinebeck Panorama* presents a stylised portrayal of the physical improvements to the river, changes that purportedly reduced waste, reduced the effects of corruption and crime and enhanced the previously neglected commercial river.

Conclusion

In his overview of the life and work of William Daniell, Thomas Sutton suggests that *Six Views of London* is superior to the *London Dock Series* 'by virtue only of their subject-matter, which offers much greater scope to the artist' and considered the two series to 'form a worthy

²⁰⁰ Plate I, originally exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1803, depicts the traditional view of the distant city from Greenwich Park. Plate II shows the view westwards along the Thames with the Tower on the north bank [Fig. 92] and was shown at the Royal Academy in 1804. Plate III is a view northwards with London Bridge in the foreground and St Paul's in the background (for a watercolour version see YCBA: B1975.4.1990) and Plate IV is a view westwards from the south bank along the Thames also with St Paul's. Plate V is the view northwards across the Thames to Somerset House and Plate VI is the view westwards along the Thames towards Westminster Bridge with the terrace of Somerset House in the foreground and Westminster Abbey in the distance. For Plates I and III-VI see BM: G,13.11 and G,13.13 – G,13.16.

²⁰¹ See Hardy, P. (2012), pp. 57-60.

tribute to the metropolis'.²⁰² But Daniell's series of bird's-eye views of the transformed port city, encompassing the capital from Westminster Bridge to the docks in the east, offer more than a tribute to London; they provide, in terms of the images discussed in this chapter, the definitive reimagining of the city through uncluttered visual compositions that emphasise and accentuate the new relationship connecting London, and thereby the nation, to the Thames. This is a homage achieved through the unapologetic promotion of the magnificence and idealised efficiencies of contemporary feats of civil engineering that are physically linked to the river. In this chapter I have argued that the wealth of extant images charting the many improvements to the Thames that began with the building of Westminster Bridge, form a category of works that, in a variety of ways, commemorate and celebrate each new step towards a modernised river. As such, these images were designed to appeal to a contemporary demand for nationalistic imagery, especially during extended periods of war with France. This patriotic craving could be effectively satisfied by embedding notions of commercial dominance and imperial supremacy in topographic views of the developing capital. Daniell's final London series was produced in the wake of a five decade-long period that saw the Thames building schemes and developments meet with fierce protectionism, bitter controversy and a general opposition to change. The dissension was tempered with excited public curiosity in the new schemes, both realised and unrealised. Daniell's idealised visions of London and the Thames encapsulated the rapid changes that had already taken place in the capital at a time when, in visual art at least, the national identity had become welded to the image of a transformed Thames. The portrayal of London's river, newly adorned with monumental improvements, was an endorsement of the ideology that the Thames 'support[ed] the dignity of the Nation, and the important interests of commerce'. Daniell's idealised Thames imagery presents an efficient and ordered port city at the end of the eighteenth century in representations that flattered a national pride and promoted an imperial grandeur by positioning London and the Thames at the epicentre of a commercial empire.

William Daniell's printed views of London showcase the port city through its improvements. These images served to reinforce confidence in British commerce and efficiency in the face of threats represented by the Napoleonic Wars. In these depictions of London as a glorious and powerful maritime city the Thames functions as a symbol of maritime strength brandished in the face of adversity. Throughout the long eighteenth century London's river has been developed as a symbol, from its personification as an indomitable river god to generic representations of the urban river that were pictorial shorthand encapsulating a complex discourse of commerce. In the next chapter the symbolic Thames will be considered alongside an exploration of the contemporary ideologies that shaped it.

²⁰² Sutton, T. (1954), pp. 112-3.

CHAPTER 4

The Thames as Allegory of Commerce and Empire: 'His fair bosom is the world's exchange'¹

*Then Commerce brought into the public walk
The busy Merchant; the big ware-house built;
Rais'd the strong crane; choak'd up the loaded street
With foreign plenty; and on thee, thou Thames,
Large, gentle, deep, majestic, king of floods!
Than whom no river heaves a fuller tide,
Seiz'd for his grand resort. On either hand,
Like a long wintry forest, groves of masts
Shot up their spires...*²

In the seventeenth century the Thames was seldom represented independently of depictions of royal palaces and images of pageantry. As I have argued in the preceding chapters, the image of the Thames was evolved in the eighteenth century to incorporate ideologies constructed around notions of national identity that were dominated by commerce and imperial expansion. However, alongside the painted and printed views of the river, artists developed an alternative means of representation for the Thames. In this final chapter I will trace the symbolic role of the Thames in the long eighteenth century through an exploration of artistic works on public or semi-public display or available as relatively inexpensive prints. A work which will be shown to straddle both categories is James Barry's *Commerce, or the Triumph of the Thames* (1783) [Fig. 94] produced as part of a cycle which decorates the walls of The Great Room of the Royal Society at the Adelphi Terrace. Taking Barry's work as a starting point, the historical context of the imagery will be explored through an examination of the origins of the figure of Father Thames and a survey of the variety of visual incarnations that followed. The argument that the Thames developed into a significant symbolic presence in visual art will be substantiated through examples encountered along a topographical journey across London which follows the course of the Thames eastwards from the Adams brothers' Adelphi Terrace (built 1768-72) to William Chamber's new Somerset House (built 1776-96) - itself encrusted with river imagery - focusing on John Bacon's *George III with the River Thames* (1789) [Fig. 96] installed in the courtyard. Nearby in the City, Robert Taylor's *The City of London trampling Envy and receiving the Benefits of Plenty brought to London by the River Thames* (1744-45) [Fig. 99] displayed in the pediment of George Dance the Elder's Mansion House (built 1739-52) will be considered alongside the figure of Thames in works by Michael Rysbrack and Spiridione Roma [Figs 101 and 102] made for East India House in Leadenhall Street and in another work by John Bacon [Fig. 103], this time installed in the pediment of the portico, added when the building was redeveloped by Henry Holland and Richard Jupp between 1796 and 1799. A short distance away at the Guildhall, John Boydell had commissioned Robert Smirke to produce a painting which presented a pictorial guide to moral fulfilment and economic success of the individual, the resultant image intended as the

¹ Denham, J. (1642). See Irwin, J. and Herbert, J. (1951), pp. 47-8.

² Thomson, J. (1730), p. 12.

centrepiece in the Council Chamber, a project for which Boydell took responsibility both aesthetically and financially [Figs. 104 and 105]. The painting took a view of the commercial Thames as a symbol of trade and industry, and similar views of the Legal Quays around Custom House were employed in works by William Hogarth, Henry Singleton and George Morland in moralising imagery on prevalent or ambivalent attitudes towards commerce and luxury.

The image of the Thames in its various guises will be considered through a close analysis of the material evidence of the extant objects and pictures or the archival information available in collections both in London and abroad. This reading will be substantiated with an exploration of the social context to which each object belongs, including wherever possible an examination of the conditions of production and reception. For example, in literature the Thames was often described in terms of the national characteristics of peace and liberty rather than its physical features, the commercial and military aspects of the river eclipsing its physical appearance.³ By the same token, the symbolic images of the Thames were ultimately recognised as allegories of or allusions to Britain's commercial and naval supremacy. However, behind this relatively straightforward symbolism existed a host of interconnected ideologies each of which was underpinned by a single dominant theme: commerce. The significance of commerce, the debates which it inspired and its representation via the image of the Thames will be explained in this tour of the visual symbols of London's maritime culture.

His fair bosom is the world's exchange⁴

Max Byrd has suggested that 'the Thames can be understood in a number of ways as an emblem of London'.⁵ Since the seventeenth century the river was personified as a river god called 'Thames' or 'Father Thames'; the embodiment of London's emblematic river and a convenient host through which Britain's naval might and London's commercial achievements could be synthesised. Indeed, as a description that appeared alongside a print of James Barry's allegorical painting *Commerce, or the Triumph of the Thames* [Figs 94 and 95] explains, 'the practice of personifying rivers and representing them by a genius, adapted to their peculiar circumstances, is as ancient as the arts of painting and sculpture'. The visual personification of rivers was taken up in Augustan poetry, notably in Alexander Pope's (1688-1744) *Windsor Forest* published in 1713:

In that blest moment from his oozy bed
Old Father Thames advanc'd his rev'rend head.
His tresses drop'd with dews, and o'er the stream
His shining horns diffus'd a golden gleam:
Grav'd on his urn appear'd the moon, that guides
His swelling waters, and alternate tides;
The figur'd streams in waves of silver roll'd,
And on their banks Augusta rose in gold.⁶

³ See Major, E. (2012), p. 211.

⁴ Denham, J. (1642). See Irwin, J. and Herbert, J. (1951), pp. 47-8.

⁵ Byrd, M. (1978), p. 45.

⁶ Pope, A. (1713), ll. 329-36.

In both literary texts and the visual arts the less attractive manifestations of pollution, poverty and struggle in the overpopulated port city could be concealed through the allegorisation of the river, a technique that is not dissimilar to the effect produced in picturesque views of the Thames as developed towards the end of the eighteenth century.⁷ Picturesque views presented London's river as a site of outstanding natural beauty, even in its urban tracts, in sumptuous riverscapes that fed a demand for views that had been refracted and refined as though through the lens of a Claude glass. In terms of presenting a palatable manifestation of commerce, Sarah Monks has argued that 'the symbolic form of 'Father Thames; [...] enabled reference to [the] immense surplus profit, brought into the City of London by Britain's increasing domination of international trade, to be accommodated within polite culture's prevailing rhetoric of refinement, liberty and leisure'.⁸ In a survey of early eighteenth-century verse, C. A. Moore suggests that 'in the opinion of contemporaries [...] mercantile enthusiasm had reached the high-water mark of poetical expression' in Richard Glover's *London, or, The Progress of Commerce* published in 1739.⁹ Glover (1712-85), the son of a Hamburg merchant and a founding governor of the Foundling Hospital, was the author of an epic poem in praise of liberty, *Leonidas* (1737) and two tragedies, *Boadicea* (1753) and *Medea* (1761), each of which are written in close imitation of Greek models. *London, or, The Progress of Commerce* was no different in this respect. The celebratory tone of the poem, which extols the capital city and its river in the classical terms favoured by Glover, is exemplified by the following lines:

...to this favour'd shore
The Goddess drew, where grateful she bestow'd
Th'unbounded empire of her father's floods,
And chose thee, London, for her chief abode,
Pleas'd with the silver Thames, its gentle stream,
And smiling banks, its joy-diffusing hills,
Which, clad with splendour, and with beauty grac'd,
O'erlook his lucid bosom¹⁰

It was Glover's poem, and specifically its celebration of commerce, that suggested itself as the ideal subject for a competition designed to select an artist to provide historical paintings for the decoration of the Great Room of the Royal Society of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce's Thames-side Adelphi headquarters. The ideals of commerce and underlying classical theme in Glover's work would have immediately appealed to the history painter James Barry (1741-1806), who held an emphatic view that a Greek ideal provided the only appropriate classical model.¹¹

The Adam brothers' Adelphi (built 1768-72) was London's first neo-classical building; a ground-breaking multi-purpose development situated on the north bank of the Thames just upriver from Somerset House.¹² Its design was influenced by Robert Adam's extensive knowledge of Diocletian's Palace on the Adriatic Coast in Dalmatia (Croatia), and consisted of four stories of warehouses which filled the slope between the river and the level of the Strand,

⁷ See Ch. 1, pp. 38-43.

⁸ Monks, S. (2006), p. 1.

⁹ See Moore, C. (1926), pp. 362-401.

¹⁰ Glover, R. (1739), p. 22.

¹¹ Fox, C. (2009), pp. 346-7. See also Dunne, T. (2010), pp. 1-9.

¹² See Allan, D. (2001).

above which were built four elegant residential streets running back towards the Strand.¹³ The façades of the residential buildings were decorated with the newly fashionable honeysuckle motifs in stucco and this framed the Royal Terrace facing the Thames.¹⁴ Horace Walpole, a devotee of the Gothic, disapproved of the pioneering riverside development and questioned 'What are the Adelphi Buildings?', which he went on to deride as 'warehouses laced down the seams, like a soldier's trull [trollop or prostitute] in a regimental old coat'.¹⁵ Given the Adelphi's immediate vicinity to the Thames, and the underlying cultural associations between the river and the seamier side of the port city, Walpole's vocabulary is unusual in that it draws attention to the impolite manifestations of maritime trade.¹⁶ Whether there existed a more widely held aversion to the Adelphi is not clear, although on completion of the project the houses failed to sell and the Adam brothers were forced to dispose of the properties by lottery to save themselves from bankruptcy. Despite this setback, in 1772 the Royal Society of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce, founded in a coffee shop in Covent Garden in 1754, took up residence in a house that had been specifically designed for the organisation by Robert and James Adam.¹⁷ The scheme envisioned for the Great Room of the Royal Society's new headquarters was, in its original form in 1774, a group project to consist of a series of English history paintings by ten leading artists that would include Sir Joshua Reynolds, Benjamin West, Giovanni Battista Cipriani, George Dance and James Barry. For various reasons the scheme was rejected by the artists and no further progress was made until 1777 when the Royal Society accepted an independent proposal from Barry.¹⁸ The artist suggested that he would produce the entire cycle of paintings without a fee on the condition that he was allowed the choice of his subjects and the society would cover his costs. The result was a series of six canvases, each twelve feet high, on *The Progress of Human Culture* installed as murals in the Great Room.¹⁹ Barry described the intention behind the work as the promotion of 'the interests of national education in the proper exercise of the human faculties' and following this criteria the first three works in the cycle are Barry's narrative of Greek civilisation: *Orpheus reclaiming Mankind from a Savage State*, *The Grecian Harvest-Home* and *Crowning the Victors at Olympia*.²⁰ The next two canvases, *Commerce, or the Triumph of the Thames* and *The Distribution of Premiums by the Society of Arts* are both positioned on the east wall of the Great Room and echo the interests of the Royal Society itself through the celebration of English commerce and artistic civilisation.²¹ The final canvas *Elysium and Tartarus* is James Barry's version of heaven and hell where Classical references are fused with Christian concepts of redemption and retribution.

Commerce, or the Triumph of the Thames [Fig. 94] is an example of the expediency of the personification of London's river in visual art. In this work, which has been described by

¹³ See De Bolla, P. (2003); Adam, R. (1764).

¹⁴ William Marlow painted the Adelphi both during construction and after completion. See *The London Riverfront from Westminster to the Adelphi* (1771-72), MoL: A25874; *View of the Adelphi from the River Thames* (c. 1789), GAC: 14305.

¹⁵ Quoted in Sitwell, S. (1945); Chalcraft, A. and Viscardi, J. (2007), p. 91.

¹⁶ For example, prostitution at Wapping; see Ch. 2, pp. 63-70.

¹⁷ RSA (2012). Deeds and plans of the house are held as part of the RSA Archive. The house stands intact in John Adam Street, the only surviving part of the Adelphi development.

¹⁸ See Fox, C. (2009), p. 345.

¹⁹ Dunne, T. (2010), p. 4.

²⁰ Barry, J. and Fryer, E. (ed.) (1809), Vol. 2, p. 500.

²¹ Pressly, W. (1981), pp. 101-3.

William Pressly as ‘the most peculiar painting of the entire series’, mainly because ‘it is presented in the language of classical allegory to which have been added modern figures and objects’, Barry has visualised Father Thames as a semi-recumbent giant with the musculature, flowing locks and beard of a traditional river god.²² Father Thames is shown steering his waterborne raft, grasping the strange vessel’s rudder in his right hand and being propelled along by a cast of English navigators including Sir Francis Drake, Sir Walter Raleigh and Captain Cook (together with the musical Dr Charles Burney) who are surrounded by naked nymphs.²³ In his left hand Father Thames holds a mariner’s compass, a symbol representing modern navigation which, as Celina Fox points out, ‘had arrived at a certainty, importance, and magnitude [that was] superior to anything known in the ancient world’.²⁴ Advances in accurate navigational technology achieved during the eighteenth century had made it possible to connect the most remote places of the world with London. Furthermore, since at least the War of Austrian Succession, the national identity was regarded as naturally imperial and colonial, underpinned with a prosperity that relied on navigation.²⁵ Barry represents this with the inclusion of allegories of Asia, Africa, and America, continents brought together to trade with Britain by the power of navigation. Each continent is depicted meekly presenting their numerous exports to the imperial figure of Father Thames. The rewards of global commerce for Britain, consisting here of silks and cottons from Asia, furs from America and slaves from Africa, are symbolically presented to London represented by Father Thames whose trailing nereids bear ‘several articles of our manufactures and commerce of Manchester, Birmingham &c’, which appear to include rolls of calico and mathematical instruments.²⁶ The inclusion of these ‘articles’ representing cities other than London is an interesting inclusion on Barry’s part. These references indicate the importance of products that came from other developing industrial centres in Britain. The mathematical instruments were an aid to ever more effecting maritime navigation which boosted commercial trade. The reference to calico has particular resonance given the controversial ban on the cheap prints on cotton fabric imported by the East India Company. The repercussions to this were complex and had a major effect on the Indian economy.²⁷ Barry’s reference to it here serves to reemphasise the core theme of his work: the supremacy of British maritime commerce.

In 1783, when his paintings for the Great Room were virtually finished, Barry published a pamphlet which invited subscriptions to a series of six prints, one for each painting in the cycle. He first produced these six ‘large’ prints in 1791, and they were issued in 1792.²⁸ A printed version of Barry’s painting *Commerce*, re-titled *The Thames or the Triumph of Navigation* (1 May 1791) [Fig. 95], was presented alongside two couplets from an English (as opposed to a classical) text, *Coopers Hill* by Sir John Denham (italicised below). The

²² Pressly, W. (1981), p. 103: Pressly suggests that Barry adjusted the traditional river god pose to emulate Michelangelo’s Adam in the Sistine Ceiling.

²³ Pressly, W. (1981), p. 101. The combination of historical and allegorical figures also occurs in Thornhill’s decorations for the Painted Hall at Greenwich Hospital, London (discussed later in this chapter) and *The Triumph of Britannia* (1762) by Francis Hayman painted for Vauxhall Gardens; for the engraved version see NMM: PAH7479.

²⁴ Fox, C. (2009), p. 347.

²⁵ Quilley, G. (2002), p. 183.

²⁶ Barry, J. (1783).

²⁷ See Espinasse, F. (1874), pp. 296–99. For further reading see Turnbull, J. (1951); Chaudhuri, K. (1978); Sen, S. (1998).

²⁸ Tate (2012).

unabridged lines of verse are included here to further illuminate the intended meaning of Barry's image:

*Nor are his blessings to his banks confin'd,
But free and common as the sea and wind;
When he, to boast or to disperse his stores,
Visits the world, and in his flying towers
Brings home to us, and makes both Indies ours:
Finds wealth where 'tis, bestows where it wants,
Cities in deserts, woods in cities plants.
So that to us no thing, no place is strange,
While his fair bosom is the world's exchange.*²⁹

Barry has presented Father Thames as the personification of 'the world's exchange', that is to say an embodiment of the enormous extent of commercial activity taking place within the port of London which was at its height towards the end of the eighteenth century. Barry's *Triumph of Navigation*, in Pressly's words, is a work 'celebrating the promotion of peace and plenty under the stimulus of divine commerce'.³⁰ In his letter to the Dilettanti Society dated 1797, Barry argued that it was British manufacture and commerce that counteracted the corruption of government by providing the English with a sense of the value of excellence.³¹ Furthermore, in a description published alongside Barry's printed version, the author identifies that 'Over head is Mercury, the emblem of commerce, summoning the nations together' and notes that the 'sportive appearance of some of [the] Nereids, gives variety to the picture, and is intended to show, that an extensive commerce is sometimes found subversive of the foundation of virtue'. The text also refers to the distant 'view of the chalky cliffs on the English coast, with ships sailing, highly characteristic of the commerce of this country, which the picture is intended to record'.³² All this is very positive, but by the time it was unveiled Barry's painting series was problematic and ultimately unsuccessful. Martin Myrone explains that the intervening years between the initial competition for history paintings and the completion of Barry's cycle witnessed both the birth of the modern British art world and, more importantly, a reversal of the national fortunes when the promises of the success of the Seven Years' War gave way to economic uncertainty and anxiety about the future of British culture. Against this background, Barry's grand narrative of the consistent role of high culture in public life and the supremacy of British maritime commerce appeared ironic, or as 'a defiant kind of fantasy'.³³ Nevertheless, despite its contemporary reception, Barry presents the Thames and British commerce as inextricably linked and as such, to be celebrated. However this patriotic vision is

²⁹ Denham, J. (1642); see Irwin, J. and Herbert, J. (1951), pp. 47-8.

³⁰ Pressly, W. (1983), p. 83.

³¹ See Pressly, W. (1981), p. 103.

³² Text entitled *Thames* attached to *The Thames or the Triumph of Navigation* [Fig. 95].

³³ Myrone, M. (2008), p. 60. In 1801 Barry, perhaps in an attempt to contemporise his work, added his design for a naval monument in response to the Duke of Clarence's competition for a suitable memorial. See also James Gillray's ironic graphic contribution to the competition *Britannia Victorious*, a vision of Britannia atop a bizarre pillar isolated in the middle of the ocean; see NMM: PAI7644.

tempered with a gentle warning of the danger 'extensive commerce' presents to virtue, through the peril of luxury (considered later in this chapter).³⁴

Father Thames

The supposed origin of all river gods including the water divinity that became known as Father Thames, was the patron deity of the 'silver swirling' Achelous River, the largest river in Greece.³⁵ Homer positioned Achelous as the ultimate source of the entire world's fresh water. By Roman times, Homer's reference was interpreted as designating Achelous as the 'prince of all rivers'.³⁶ Achelous (or Acheloiros) was generally depicted as either a grey-haired old man or a vigorous bearded man in his prime, with a horned head and a serpent-like body. In Greek mythology, when he battled Heracles over the river nymph Deianeira, Achelous transformed into a bull, but his opponent tore off one of his horns and forced the god to surrender. Heracles gave the horn to the Naiads, who transformed it into the cornucopia or the 'horn of plenty' which became associated with river gods in general and which, in turn, would be adapted into the overflowing cornucopia held by Father Thames as a symbol of abundance and signifying that a river, once tamed, can become fruitful. The Father Thames of eighteenth century British art bears a striking resemblance to the tutelary gods of the Nile and the Tiber; with Thames' characteristic flowing beard and hair, his creators were employing the same ancient associations between hair and water that can be found, for example, in the Graeco-Roman sculpture of the reclining gods of the Tiber and the Nile at the base of the staircase of the Capitoline Hill in Rome. Salvator Rosa (1615-1673), in his highly poetic visualisation of a scene from Virgil's *Aeneid*, produced a new version of the river god's appearance in his *The Dream of Aeneas* (1660-73) in which the artist depicted the Trojan hero asleep on the banks of the Tiber at the moment 'old Tiber himself arose from his pleasant stream'.³⁷ Rosa's figure of Tiber later became the model for John Cheere's 1751 sculpture of a river god in the garden at Stourhead, Wiltshire at a time when statues of river gods first became popular as ornaments in landscaped country gardens, the demand for such statuary being driven by the experiences of those who had undertaken the Grand Tour and witnessed such works as Bernini's *Fontana dei Quattro Fiumi* (1651) in Rome.³⁸

³⁴ For further discussions of commercial wealth's ambivalent connotations see Berg, M. and Eger, E. (2003), pp. 7-27.

³⁵ Hesiod (2006), 337f.

³⁶ Homer (2003), 21,194: '...there is no fighting Zeus the son of Kronos – not even lord Acheloiros can equal him, or the great strength of Ocean's deep stream, from which all rivers and all the sea and all springs and deep wells take their flow'.

³⁷ Virgil (2006), viii, 26ff; *The Dream of Aeneas* (1660-65) by Salvator Rosa, MMA: AN 65.118.

³⁸ Woodbridge, K. (1974), p. 756. The grotto at Stourhead was designed by Henry Flitcroft for Henry Hoare in 1748 and contains a lead statue of a river god by John Cheere. The source of the river Stour is engineered to flow through the river god's upturned urn, as he points towards the Pantheon, also within the gardens. In this installation Henry Hoare was attempting to recreate the same scene from Virgil's *Aeneid* in which Aeneas meets the nymphs and the river god (Father Tiber) and is shown the way to the Pantheon and the future site of Rome. Bernini's *Fontana dei Quattro Fiumi*, designed for Pope Innocent X, incorporates four river gods: the Nile, the Danube, the Ganges and the Río de la Plata; symbols of the four continents through which papal authority had spread.

In London, throughout the eighteenth century images and statues of Thames, Father Thames or Old Father Thames were used to ornament some of the most important new buildings. In 1789, six years after Barry had completed his Adelphi cycle, a three-dimensional personification of the Thames in the form of John Bacon's public sculpture *George III with the River Thames*, was given a prominent position in the courtyard of William Chambers' new Somerset House [Fig. 96]. The statue was described in the *Public Advertiser* of 27 February 1793 as follows:

...a pedestrian statue of his present majesty, holding a laurel branch in his right hand, and his left leaning upon a rudder; on one side is a couchant lion, and the prow of an ancient galley on the opposite; at the foot of the pedestal is a Colossal figure of Father Thames reclining upon a rock.

The naked, bearded figure of 'Thames' supports an upturned urn under his right arm. Behind him is a large cornucopia from which spill a variety of flowers and fruits over the edge of the rock.³⁹ John Bonehill has identified the ultimate source of Bacon's reclining figure as Roman and suggests that it may be the colossal marble figure of Nile exhibited at the Museo Pio Clementino at the Vatican.⁴⁰ Bacon's group was erected in sections rather than as a whole and there is evidence to suggest that the design of the statue of Father Thames might not have been produced specifically for Chamber's commission.⁴¹ It was certainly modelled and cast in Coade stone some years before the Somerset House sculpture was begun (in 1782) or even planned (in 1778). Bacon's *Thames* was listed in the *Royal Academy Catalogue* for the year 1788 as 'Statue of the Thames (a model)', which coincides with the sculptor's association with Chamber's Somerset House scheme, but in a volume of plates issued by the Coade Factory of Artificial Stone, of which Bacon was the manager in 1774, there is an etching of the same statue by William Blake.⁴² Some years later, Blake included an image of a recumbent and serene Father Thames in one of his illustrations for *The Poems of Thomas Gray: Ode on a distant prospect of Eton College* (1797-98) [Fig. 97]. His visualisation of the river god shares characteristics which points to a possible collaborative effort between the two artists. The existence of Blake's drawing for the catalogue certainly suggests that the figure already existed and that its design was produced for commercial purposes at the Coade Factory of Artificial Stone well before Bacon became involved with Somerset House. Two examples of identical statues of Father Thames in Coade stone exist in the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames in the grounds of Ham House [Fig. 98] and in the Terrace Gardens. Known simply as *River God (Father Thames)*, the Ham House statue stands as a centrepiece in the north courtyard. It was purchased by the 6th Earl and its description is recorded in the collection catalogue as 'cast like the bronze at Somerset House, London, from a model by John Bacon the

³⁹ See Ward-Jackson, P. (2003), p. 253.

⁴⁰ Bonehill, J. (NYP).

⁴¹ See Esdaile, K. (1939) where the author argues that 'the statue of the Thames was not made for this position at all' but employed by Bacon when he received the Somerset House commission from Chambers. Bonehill, J. (NYP) suggests instead that 'Bacon and Chambers had, it seems likely, been planning a statue of the king, attended by a figure of Thames, since 1778'.

⁴² Esdaile, K. (1939), p. 168.

Elder'.⁴³ The Richmond Terrace version is dated 1775 and known either as *Father Thames* or *The River God*. Based on the evidence of these two statues of Thames, it is possible that when the commission for the Somerset House work came to him, Bacon clearly understood the effectiveness of combining a statue of the sovereign with his extant Thames figure to create a powerful symbol of the capital in a group destined for a prominent London site. The overall design of the sculpture may have been further influenced by Caius Gabriel Cibber's river god group, including the Thames, which then formed a fountain at the base of the statue of Charles II in Soho Square (1681).⁴⁴ Indeed, the contract drawing for Bacon's 'group' shows it was conceived as a fountain with an abundant stream of water flowing from the urn held by 'Father Thames', and falling into a surrounding pool with the aquatic theme further emphasised by the inclusion of a clump of sedges at the river god's feet.⁴⁵ It is, however, quite clear, from an engraving done only a short time after the group's erection, that no pool ever existed.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, the conclusion that can be drawn from Bacon's successful commission and the existing commercial value of a Father Thames produced in Coade stone, not to mention the popularity of the Bacon-designed 'river god' keystones also produced by the Coade factory, is that the personification of London's river was either continuing to maintain a high symbolic currency or enjoying an artistic renaissance by the end of the eighteenth century.⁴⁷ Yet despite an increased frequency of river god imagery in London, to which James Barry's *Commerce* at the Adelphi [Fig. 94] was a further addition, the Father Thames allegory failed to generate universal approval. Take for example the barbed comments aimed at Bacon's *George III with the River Thames* sculpture written by John Williams (under the pseudonym Anthony Pasquin) in 1794: 'beneath the nose of the sovereign is a putridinous pool of stagnant rain water', an allusion to the 'effluvium' of the 'swinish democracy' of the realm.⁴⁸ In his publication of 1792, Samuel Ireland described Bacon's statue of Father Thames as 'excellent' and predicted that 'from its superior merit [it will] claim the world's attention' but added the comment that 'this river God is totally misplaced, and so far removed from his proper element, as to induce us to believe that from indignation and disgust, he will not, under these circumstances, be prevailed upon to dispense the blessings of his urn'.⁴⁹ The story of Queen Charlotte's question addressed to the sculptor, 'Why did you make so frightful a figure?' may well be apocryphal, but the repeated telling of it suggests that such imagery was not necessarily well-received towards the end of the eighteenth century. Bacon supposedly gave the self-deprecatory response that 'Art [...] cannot always effect what is ever within the reach of nature – the union of beauty and majesty'.⁵⁰ Esdaile maintains that 'whether we look at the original, or at Blake's etching, neither beauty nor majesty is lacking in the figure of the

⁴³ National Trust (2005), pp. 6-7. Ham House was built in 1610, and the 6th Earl took control of the House from 1799 until 1821. *River God (Father Thames)* is undated, although Ackroyd states: 'this is from the mid-eighteenth century' (see Ackroyd, P. (2007), p. 25).

⁴⁴ See Monks, S. (2012), p. 28.

⁴⁵ Ward-Jackson, P. (2011), p. 254. Sedge is a grass-like plant with triangular stems which grows in wet ground.

⁴⁶ See engraved frontispiece by S. Rawle in *European Magazine*, Vol. 38 (Jul-Dec 1800).

⁴⁷ For example the keystones found over the doorways of the houses in Bedford Square featuring the bearded face of a river god which closely resemble the contemporary image of Father Thames.

⁴⁸ *Memoirs of the R. A.'s* (1794) under the respective names of Bacon and of Chambers quoted in Esdaile, K. (1939), p. 168.

⁴⁹ Ireland, S. (1792), pp. 190-91.

⁵⁰ Cunningham, A. (1830), p. 221.

Thames'.⁵¹ However, Sarah Monks has commented that 'Bacon's statue of the king seems lost in a fantasy land of ships and lions, made gothic by the dynamism and grotesqueness of Father Thames below'.⁵² In this respect the erection of Bacon's statue in the courtyard of the new Somerset House and Barry's inclusion of Thames in his painting of *Commerce* at the Adelphi, failed to personify London's river as an ambiguous embodiment of civic and national pride in the commerce of London. This suggests a contemporary awareness of the inherent problems in synthesising conflicting ideologies associated with the Thames into a single artistic statement.

The personification of the Thames was perhaps less problematic during the first half of the eighteenth century when the exterior of the city residence of the Lord Mayor was decorated with the figure of Father Thames as part of a bas relief pediment sculpture: *The City of London trampling Envy and receiving the Benefits of Plenty brought to London by the River Thames* (1744-45) [Fig. 99]. Located a short distance downriver from Somerset House to the east of St Paul's the Palladian-style Mansion House, built by George Dance between 1739 and 1752, is fronted by six Corinthian columns which support a pediment with a tympanum sculpture by Robert Taylor (1714-88).⁵³ British-born Taylor was apprenticed to Henry Cheere in 1728 and was working for him from 1736-1737; Cheere, who would later be responsible for the river god sculpture in the grounds of Stourhead, Wiltshire, had also submitted a design for the Mansion House pediment, along with Roubiliac, Rysbrack and Dance.⁵⁴ Taylor succeeded later on in his own career to become a prominent London architect who, together with Dance, was responsible for the removal of houses from and the renovation of old London Bridge (1756-66), amongst other important projects.⁵⁵ Taylor presented his proposal for the commission at Mansion House to the Committee on 30 May 1744. His drawing was later produced as an engraving together with the printed *An Explanation*, probably based on the description Taylor gave the Committee to clarify the intention of his sculpture [Fig. 100].⁵⁶

The Figures in this Composition are disposed into three Groups; and their general Design, is to exhibit *LONDON* Triumphant, not in military Atchievements [*sic*], but in the necessary and social Arts of Trade and Commerce, which are the true Arts of Life.

This statement is closely aligned with Barry's own portrayal and description of commerce at the Adelphi [Fig. 94]. Father Thames, according to Bacon, embodies the social arts of trade and commerce, raising the commerce of the Thames and British trade with the world to the status of an 'Art of Life', a euphemism that pushed aside contemporary concerns with congestion and crime that paralysed the port and camouflaged the mundane hardships and workaday activities that characterised London's wharves and quays. Taylor goes on to describe the specifics of his design:

⁵¹ Esdaile, K. (1939), p. 168.

⁵² Monks, S. (2012), p. 29.

⁵³ Timbs, J. (1855), pp. 540-1.

⁵⁴ See Jeffery, S. (1993), pp. 81-84. Of the five designs, four drawings survive: Roubiliac, Dance and Taylor's in JSM; Rysbrack's in Huntington Library and Art Gallery, San Marino, CA.

⁵⁵ For Robert Taylor see *Dictionary of National Biography*; for the renovation of old London Bridge see Ch. 3, pp. 98-100.

⁵⁶ See Jeffery, S. (1993), pp. 81-84.

A Lady enthroned [...] appears to be *LONDON* [and] *TRADE*, the Sources of Riches, is the great Object of *Envy* between Rival Communities: *LONDON*, THE Chief *Emporium* in the Universe, is therefore justly represented with *Envy* at her Feet; her commercial Superiority making the most essential Part of her Triumph.

Within this allegorisation of the city and its commerce appears ‘a venerable hoary *River-God*, crown’d with Flags, [...] reclin’d upon an Urn, from which Water plentifully streams’ and ‘by the Swan at his Feet he is known to signify the *Thames*’. Taylor’s *Explanation* continues:

The *Rudder* in his Right-hand, the *Anchor* lying beneath, and the *Ship* appearing behind him, sufficiently indicate the sovereign of Navigation of that Noble River, which commands the Wealth of remotest Nations [and with] a mix’d view of *Plenty*, as it appears on her Kays, and as it flows in to her both from the Sea and the Inland Country.

These highly patriotic themes represented by Taylor at Mansion House were replicated in another pediment sculpture in the City created towards the end of the century. The Father Thames figure was also incorporated into interior decorative schemes installed a short distance from Mansion House where the road known as Cornhill leads to the site of East India House in Leadenhall Street. The East India Company, founded in 1600, moved its headquarters to Craven House, an Elizabethan mansion in Leadenhall Street in 1648, eventually purchasing the building in 1710. The house was reconstructed twice, first to the designs of Theodore Jacobsen from 1720-29 and again in 1799 when it was extended and refaced by the Company’s Surveyor and architect, Richard Jupp to designs commissioned from Henry Holland.⁵⁷ From these once impressive headquarters of the East India Company, British India was ruled until the British Government took control of the Company’s possessions in India on 1 November 1858. The image of a river god symbolising the Thames appears in three artworks made specifically for East India House, the first two commissioned for the Directors’ Court Room and the Revenue Committee Room inside the palatial headquarters and the third for the external pediment.⁵⁸

The Director’s Court Room featured an elaborate marble chimneypiece supported by bearded term figures. Made by the Flemish sculptor John Michael Rysbrack (1694-1770), the bas relief overmantel panel depicts *Britannia Receiving the Riches of the East* (1728-1730) [Fig. 101].⁵⁹ Nearby, the Revenue Committee Room was adorned with a ceiling painting, *The East Offering its Riches to Britannia* (1778) by Spiridione Roma (d. 1786) [Fig. 102]. These two pieces would have originally complemented other decorative motifs that referred to British imperial authority, such as six canvases by George Lambert that depicted the East India

⁵⁷ See Stroud, D. (1966), p. 140, fig. 118; Archer, M. (1965), p. 408. The exterior of East India House is known from various engravings, for example *East India House* (1 June 1817) by Thomas Hosmer Shepherd and Joseph Constantine Stadler, NMM: PAH9921.

⁵⁸ East India House was demolished to make way for the offices of the Royal Mail Steamship Lines in 1929, but its furniture and some fittings were moved to the India Office in Whitehall. The works by Rysbrack and Roma, discussed below, were relocated to the Commonwealth Relations Office within the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, King Charles Street, Westminster.

⁵⁹ See *Model – A Term* (c. 1729) by Michael Rysbrack, V&A: A.14-1955; Coutu, J. (2006).

Company's main 'factories' to which Samuel Scott had added shipping in the form of East Indiamen to the foregrounds, as well as the numerous plasterwork details modelled on Indian fruits and flowers.⁶⁰ In addition these works capture an essence of British imperial ideology spanning a period of five decades embedded in the symbolic representation of London, the power of British commerce and a confidence in naval supremacy condensed into the figure of a benign Father Thames.

Rysbrack fuses the central thrust of the East India Company in an allegorical work dominated by Britannia in a regal seated pose as she is presented with a casket of jewels by a figure representing India. Behind 'India' appear the standing personifications of 'Asia' and 'Africa' who lead a camel and a lion respectively. Beneath Britannia two *putti* pour out the contents of a cornucopia while to the right a river god, symbolising the Thames, leans on the rudder of a ship as it is emptied of its cargo.⁶¹ Commerce is further symbolised by a fleet of ships in the background and labour is represented by a figure shown cording a bale.⁶² The subject of Rysbrack's overmantel was both echoed and embellished in the Revenue Committee Room where an oval painted ceiling panel titled *The East Offering its Riches to Britannia* was installed some fifty years later. Commissioned from the Italian artist, Spiridione Roma, the painting depicts a kneeling, bare-breasted, dark-skinned woman representing India offering a casket of jewels including pearls which are eagerly taken up by a white-complexioned woman, Britannia, seated on a high perch.⁶³ In addition to India, China and Persia are identified as women submissively presenting their riches: a tea chest, a Ming vase and silk.⁶⁴ Here Roma keeps within the conventions of contemporary allegorical art which easily lent themselves to the idealisation of a relationship between the Orient and Occident in which a compliant, ingratiating East queues to hand over jewels and other costly goods to a receptive, passive Britannia. An East Indiaman under sail, identifiable by its flag (the cross of St George and stripes) appears in the space between Britannia and India. The ship symbolises the organisation that facilitates the exchange and the conveyance that takes the treasures of the East back to London.⁶⁵ A contemporary article in *The Gentleman's Magazine* describes Britannia sitting on a rock 'to signify the firmness and stability of the empire', characterised by the usual emblems of the shield and spear and guarded by a lion to represent Britain's power. The article reflects the imperial ideology in Roma's work by explaining that Britannia is 'guardian and protectress of the Company who are denoted by children behind [her], and overshadowed by her veil' and looks amiably at the goods massed before her.⁶⁶ The various provinces are represented under the conduct of Mercury, the same god of merchandise who appears in Barry's *Triumph*, who directs the performance of the offering by pointing towards Britannia with his caduceus symbolising commerce and negotiation and encourages them to deposit their produce and manufactures before Britannia's throne. In the lower left hand side of the picture a reclining river god, Father Thames, pours water at Britannia's feet, which, as in

⁶⁰ Bremner, G. (2005), p. 734.

⁶¹ Groseclose, B. (1995), p. 50; Foster, W. (1924), p. 135.

⁶² Allen, B. (1990), p. 27.

⁶³ Swati, C. (2005), p. 37; Archer, M. (1965), p. 406.

⁶⁴ Black, J. (2002), p. 51. At this time China was not under British domination and may have been included as a statement of future intention.

⁶⁵ Swati, C. (2005), p. 37.

⁶⁶ Anon., (1778), p. 628; the use of the word 'homage' in the title of the article reaffirms this: 'Explanation of the allegoric Picture representing the East Indian Provinces paying Homage to Britannia'.

Rysbrack's bas relief version, symbolises London and the port city's power.⁶⁷ In both Rysbrack and Roma's work the symbolic version of Father Thames is a benign yet all-powerful river god of commerce, overseeing this great wealth so effortlessly pouring into London with casual indifference from his relaxed, reclining position. Such confidence is a leitmotif of imperial ideology which implies the almost natural character of what is going on behind him. Indeed, the importance attached to the allegorical river god in visual art produced during this period appears to have increased as if to reinforce a patriotically-driven concept.

The East India Company also displayed a personification of the Thames above the entrance to its newly extended headquarters. With the growth of the Company in the 1760s the need for additional space led to the purchase and demolition of adjoining structures so that the building could be enlarged. New designs were commissioned and the work was awarded to Henry Holland, overseen by Richard Jupp, from 1766 to 1799.⁶⁸ The style was neoclassical, with an Ionic portico of six fluted columns and the tympanum of the pediment was filled with a group of figures designed by John Bacon.⁶⁹ Atop the pediment and seated on a lion was a statue of Britannia holding a spear surmounted by a cap of liberty, and above the two corners were figures of Europe on a horse and Asia on a camel. Bacon, in a continuation of the theme he employed for his Somerset House commission, again represented George III in Roman costume this time defending the commerce of the East.⁷⁰ Unfortunately extant images of East India House provide insufficient detail for a close reading of the pediment sculpture.⁷¹ However, a soft-ground etching of the design titled *Pediment of the Portico to the East India House* (after 1793) [Fig. 103], provides an illustration of what is probably Bacon's original design for the sculpture together with a short descriptive text:

Commerce, represented by Mercury, attended by Navigation and followed by Tritons on Sea-horses; is introducing Asia to Britannia; at whose feet She pours out Her Treasures [...] In the Back ground is the City Barge &c – near to which stand Industry and Integrity – the Thames fills the Angle to the right Hand, and the Ganges the Angle towards the East

The explanation goes on to state that 'The Sentiment of this Composition is':

That a Nation can then only be truly Prosperous, when it has a King who makes Religion and Justice the Basis of His

⁶⁷ The account printed in *The Gentleman's Magazine*, Anon., (1778), pp. 628-9, suggests the river god is 'the genius of the Ganges, in a majestic attitude, pouring out his whole stream on Britannia's footstool'. This is echoed by Allen, B. (1990), p. 27: 'A river god, representing the Ganges, pours his stream at Britannia's feet'. However, there is no pictorial evidence to suggest the river god who completes the allegorical trinity with Britannia and the lion on one side of the picture should not be taken to symbolise Thames, as is generally accepted in descriptions of Rysbrack's version.

⁶⁸ Jupp's design was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1798.

⁶⁹ Crinson, M. (1996), p. 65.

⁷⁰ Bacon's design was criticised for the 'unwarlike manner' in which the King held his sword in his left hand, and the inappropriate appearance of a city barge in the background, see Foster, W. (1924), pp. 139-40.

⁷¹ See *North west view of East India House* (1800) by W. Watts; *North view of East India House* (c. 1800), Anon.; *View of East India House* (1800), Anon.; *North west view of East India House* (1803) by S. Rawle; *View of East India House...* (1836) by T. H. Shepherd and *View of Portico of East India House* (1860) by T. Lane, LMA: q4024; q4024977; q4024954; q4025014; q607876x; q4025267.

Government, and a Constitution, which while it secures the Liberties of the People, maintains a due Subordination in the several Ranks of Society; and where the Integrity of the People, secures to each Individual those advantages which Industry creates and cultivates

Here again, following the paradigm set out in both Barry's Adelphi mural painting and Taylor's Mansion House sculpture, the Thames is associated with the celebration of commerce, but also deftly linked to subtle warnings that relate to greed and excess, or luxury. Barry communicated this with his 'sportive' Nereids, while Taylor personified Envy by introducing a scrawny figure closely resembling the allegorical figure of Desolation in Cibber's relief sculpture on the base of the Monument; here, the status quo is balanced through a tightly organised hierarchy within which the individual is urged to heed the advantages that are presented by Industry and facilitated by London's river.

Barry's print, *The Thames or the Triumph of Navigation* (1791) [Fig. 95], made after his vast painting for the Royal Society's Adelphi headquarters, presented the image of a majestic Father Thames to a wider audience than could have been achieved by either Rysbrack's or Roma's work inside the headquarters of the East India Company. Barry's choice of imagery was reinforced by the powerful personification of Father Thames that was by this time appearing in public and semi-public art commissions across the capital. Concurrent with the ascension of the figure of Father Thames was the employment by artists of the image of the actual Thames, or at least a generic version of it, to symbolise an aspect of polite society that also encapsulated and embraced the theme of commerce but which focussed on the prospects of the individual rather than the generalised benefits to the country as a whole. These were usually purportedly instructive scenarios where an image of the Thames was introduced into the pictorial narrative as a positive suggestion of Industry. In the last section of this chapter I will argue that the image of the physical Thames became an equally affirmative symbol as its personification as a river god. The first example I will explore was commissioned specifically for the Council Chamber of the Guildhall in the City of London, a short distance from Taylor's pediment at Mansion House and the works by Rysbrack, Roma and Bacon installed at East India House.

'Cheerful toil, and glowing health.
Proclaim a patriot nation's wealth.'⁷²

Mansion House, East India House and the Guildhall were three centres of power in the city that deployed symbolic Thames imagery to express and reinforce an awareness of the power of London and its dominant role in international trade. The Mansion House that displayed Robert Taylor's pediment sculpture featuring Father Thames was the home and office of the Lord Mayor of London; East India House, with its symbolic works by Rysbrack, Roma and Bacon was the focal point of overseas trade in Asia, and since the twelfth century, the Guildhall in the heart of London represented the City's motivating force: maritime commerce. During the long eighteenth century, when the position of Lord Mayor of London was highly influential and

⁷² Peacock, T. (1810), pp. 23-4.

prestigious, the Guildhall was intrinsic to the port city's international trade and merchant shipping. This was where the Lord Mayor and the ruling merchant class debated and agreed the laws and trading regulations to uphold a legal infrastructure that underpinned London's phenomenal wealth. The artworks displayed on the walls of the Guildhall were selected to 'proclaim a patriot nation's wealth' through the representation of glorious elements in Britain's past and contemporary history. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, the artist and printmaker John Boydell, by this time Alderman Boydell, took responsibility for selecting the decorative scheme of the Guildhall's newly refurbished council chamber.

John Boydell (1720-1804), a successful businessman and entrepreneur, devoted much of his later years to the civic affairs of the Corporation of the City of London.⁷³ He had already served as Lord Mayor (1790-91), the pinnacle of a remarkable career trajectory that mirrored the story of Francis Goodchild, the fictional apprentice who rose to the position of Lord Mayor in Hogarth's *Industry and Idleness* series of 1747. From 1792 Boydell began a series of donations and commissions intended to redecorate the Guildhall Council Chamber.⁷⁴ Amongst other projects, Boydell financed the fresco decorations on the pendentives beneath the cupola, with designs that he intended to be both aesthetically pleasing and to act as a moral guide to those who occupied the space.⁷⁵ Painted by John Francis Rigaud (1742-1810), the frescoes represented allegorical figures of Providence, Innocence, Wisdom and Happiness together with symbols to denote the four necessary foundations for leading a moral, spiritually advantageous and worthwhile life.⁷⁶ Boydell wanted these 'guides' to encourage the young and the poor in the pursuit of ways that would lead them to present and future happiness.⁷⁷ To achieve this, in 1793 he commissioned the Royal Academician Robert Smirke (1752-1845) to produce a work for public display beneath Rigaud's frescoes: *Conjugal Affection, or Industry and Prudence*, now known only through the stipple engraving made by Robert Thew in 1799 after the original oil painting [Fig. 104].⁷⁸

When the frescoes were later engraved and presented alongside the engraving of Robert Smirke's painting *Conjugal Affection*, they comprise what Boydell was later to describe as 'A Sermon in Prints, which improves the mind, and pleases the Eye'.⁷⁹ In her biography of Boydell, Vivienne Painting describes her subject as a 'religious and moral' and 'industrious' man who 'abhorred idleness in others'.⁸⁰ Boydell's assiduous character is transparently replicated in Smirke's vast canvas (213.4 x 269.1 cm) on the subject of Industry which was added to complement the frescoes in the Council Chamber on 18 June 1795. Smirke's painting epitomised the upstanding role of a supportive family through its depiction of a City merchant (representing Industry) and his wife (representing Prudence) together with their children.⁸¹ The picture presented the viewer with an ostensibly wealthy family gathered in a well-

⁷³ Boydell published *One Hundred and Two Views, &c. in England and Wales* (1755) containing the Thames prospects taken from Limehouse, Deptford and Woolwich, and *An History of the River Thames* (1796) which embraced the picturesque, both discussed at length in Ch. 1.

⁷⁴ Painting, V. (2005), p. 13.

⁷⁵ See Boydell, J. (1794).

⁷⁶ Two of the frescoes are visible in Pugin and Rowlandson's illustration of the Guildhall Council Chamber published in *The Microcosm of London* (1808), see Fig. 105.

⁷⁷ Rigaud, J. and Smirke, R. (1795).

⁷⁸ The original painting by Smirke was destroyed by bombing in 1941.

⁷⁹ Letter reproduced in *The Cheshire Sheaf*, July 1879.

⁸⁰ Painting, V. (2005), p. 13.

⁸¹ See Painting, V. (2005), p. 41.

furnished room, dominated by the patriarch who occupies the centre space, posed confidently as he leans on the back of a chair which supports the standing figure of his youngest child who reaches up to embrace his father. An older child stands close to them, holding an open book to which he points. Elsewhere the seated figure of the mother looks on while another daughter plays with a kitten. There is a bird in a cage on the table beside them. On the right, separated from the family group by a sash window, a young man anxiously looks out over the busy wharf side activity and shipping on the Thames in the vicinity of old London Bridge, the alderman's fur-trimmed cloak draped over his arm. In *A Brief Account of the Guildhall in the City of London* (1819), John Bowyer Nichols described the painting as representing 'the family of a Merchant whose personal exertions have raised him, in the prime of life, to senatorial importance in the Councils of his Fellow Citizens'.⁸² Smirke has effectively updated the popular rags to riches legend of Richard Whittington, a story also echoed through the career of Francis Goodchild in Hogarth's *Industry and Idleness*, and imbued it with the additional resonance of Boydell's own impressive career, resulting in a contemporary depiction of an archetypical successful merchant and philanthropist at the height of his career in his domestic environment. As Christine Riding has observed with reference to Hogarth's *Industry and Idleness*, 'popular urban culture provided positive role models' for moralising prints and a 'reference to Whittington underlined how venerable and time-honoured the position was and why it was promoted as the ideal for an aspiring City apprentice', and this is reflected in Smirke's moralising painting.⁸³

John Boydell provides his own reading of Smirke's painting in an account published in tandem with an engraved print. The title of the print was shortened to *Conjugal Affection* and it was issued alongside prints depicting Rigaud's frescoes of *Providence*, *Innocence*, *Wisdom* and *Happiness* and sold from Boydell's Shakespeare Gallery on Pall Mall.⁸⁴ In his *A Description of Several Pictures presented to the Corporation of the City of London*, briefing notes intended 'for the benefit of the servants who shew the pictures', Boydell pronounced that married couples should pay particular attention to the picture with 'a strong resolution to promote each other's happiness' and by doing so 'they will both be induced to avoid all strife and contention'. In his 'Explanation of Conjugal Affection' Boydell explained that the subject of the picture is 'intended to represent conjugal and domestic happiness, as the result of prudence, and industry, and a well regulated life' through the example of 'the family of a merchant or tradesman'. Boydell clarifies the link with 'Sir R. Whittington [...] whose industry and good fortune have become proverbial' who is represented by the small statue on top of the escritoire 'in the robes of an ancient magistrate'. Of the ornament Boydell adds:

Its pedestal is formed of several steps: at each end of the lowest stands a beehive, to shew that industry is the basis of

⁸² Nichols, J. (1819), p. 51.

⁸³ Hallett, M. and Riding, C. (2007), p. 182.

⁸⁴ Rigaud added to the triangular compositions of *Providence*, *Innocence*, *Wisdom* and *Happiness* to make them suitable for rectangular engravings. According to Painting, V. (2005), p. 43, the frescoes themselves rapidly deteriorated in the cold and damp conditions of the Council Chamber, and in 1814 they were painted over. They can be seen in position in Fig. 105. In addition to the engravings, four oil studies for the frescoes survive in CLC: 1319-22.

prosperity; and also, that it is by gradations the man of business rises to honour and wealth.⁸⁵

In 1800 Boydell had his own portrait painted at the behest and cost of the Corporation of London. Boydell selected the artist Sir William Beechey who depicted him in his mayoral robes alongside other insignia of the office of Lord Mayor, and in the background is a beehive. The beehive is an element which he mentions in his manuscript notebook of 1793 when he roughed out imagery for his initial conception of 'Industry and Prudence' (which became *Conjugal Affection*). It seems likely that Boydell chose to employ the same symbols in his own portrait to suggest that through hard work one could achieve honour and renown.⁸⁶

In his *Explanation*, Boydell clarified the significance of the clock above the open window ('a strict attention to the progress of time, is essential to regularity and promptitude in every profession') and its surrounding motifs of a cock, an owl and cornucopia (denoting 'the dawn of morning, and the shades of evening, begin and terminate the labour's of an industrious man'). The paintings hanging on the wall behind the group represent, amongst other things, commerce and agriculture. In fact, every corner of Smirke's image is loaded with allusions to the benefits of individual industry, but perhaps the most significant and powerful symbol appears on the right side of the picture where the young male servant gazes out through an open window overlooking a busy Thames-side scene. The servant holds across his arm the gown of the alderman, which Boydell explains as 'intimating, that his master, who had arrived to that dignity, was then going to attend upon public business'. However, it is the open window that presents a view onto the river with shipping and wharves 'and other appearances of traffic' which connects the original vocation of the master of this house to 'the commercial importance of this great city': maritime commerce attributable to the Thames.⁸⁷ As Geoff Quilley has identified in relation to the East India Company, 'sentimental image[s] of the family [...] [were] firmly connected to the moralised discourse on commerce, and to discourses on luxury, nationhood and imperial decline'.⁸⁸ Here in *Conjugal Affection* Smirke, under instruction from Boydell, presents a wholly positive view of commerce by the inclusion of a view of the mercantile Thames. The image of the Thames, framed by the window as if it was a picture on the wall and a further complementary accessory of this harmonious domestic scene, is a clear and affirmative reference to commerce generally and the maritime trade that was supported by the river specifically. This allusion to the river and commerce had a particular relevance in the context of the intended location of the painting in the Council Chamber of the Guildhall where the ruling merchant class gathered to influence and promote this very business.

Through the commission of *Conjugal Affection*, Boydell returned his own focus to the subject of the activity of the commercial Thames, the original site of some of his earliest works when he produced prints of Limehouse, Deptford and Woolwich, and the same subject to which he was to devote much of his effort and capital in a venture which contributed to the failure of his business, *An History of the River Thames* published two years later in 1796.⁸⁹ Boydell would also publish a set of prints of Hogarth's *Marriage A-La-Mode* in 1795 [Figs 106

⁸⁵ Boydell, J. (1794), p. 10.

⁸⁶ Painting, V. (2005), pp. 49-50.

⁸⁷ Boydell, J. (1794), p. 10.

⁸⁸ Quilley, G. (2002), p. 198.

⁸⁹ See Ch. 1, pp. 40-43.

and 107], which included the representation of the working river as seen through an open window in an image laced with an alternative metaphorical meaning to that intended by *Conjugal Affection*. As Sabine Rewald comments in *Rooms with a View*, the motif or the harbour through an open window is ‘sometimes chosen because of its significance as a gateway to faraway places’ and by including the subject ‘the artist has rendered a slice of topical contemporary life’, in this case by highlighting the lively industry of the London wharves and the Thames as a link with international commerce.⁹⁰ This is complemented by the palpable admiration for the successful businessman manifested in the well-ordered domestic tableau depicted by Smirke in *Conjugal Affection*. This approbation harks back to Joseph Addison’s praise of the new merchant class, which he described as ‘Citizen[s] of the World’ for their efforts in transforming London into ‘a kind of *Emporium* for the whole Earth’.⁹¹ In Smirke’s aspirational blueprint for familial contentment, the notion of ‘happiness both here and hereafter’ achieved through material success is balanced by the necessity of religious devotion which is denoted by the church clearly shown through another window on the left of the picture.⁹² The image of the Thames employed as a symbol of wholesome commerce is subsumed into an affectionate scene of deserved prosperity, domestic stability and dutiful piety.

The only known extant visual record of Boydell’s decorative scheme including the display of oil paintings within the Council Chamber is the book illustration by J. Bluck after Thomas Rowlandson and A. C. Pugin, published as an illustration to the *Microcosm of London* (1808) by Rudolph Ackerman [Fig. 105]. According to this image Smirke’s large scale canvas, *Conjugal Affection*, was positioned just above the heads of the council officials seated in the back row of the chamber. It was hung immediately beneath John Opie’s dramatic painting *The Murder of Rizzio* (1787) and directly opposite James Northcote’s vast *The Death of Wat Tyler* (1786) in a room dominated by John Singleton Copley’s vast canvas, *Defeat of the Floating Batteries of Gibraltar* (1783-1791).⁹³ Smirke’s painting was given a central position within the chamber. As such, its attendant Thames imagery can be better understood in the context of Boydell’s overall decorative scheme. This gives further credence to the notion that the intended audience of these works was anticipated to be receptive to the concept of London’s commercial river as a symbolic metaphor for wholesome work and its ideology of prosperity earned through industry and prudence. Finally, Smirke’s work defined, recorded and reinforced Boydell’s own rags to riches rise to a position ‘of senatorial importance in the Councils of his Fellow Citizens’.⁹⁴

Smirke’s painting, with its unambiguous Thames symbolism and aggrandisement of Boydell’s own back story, may not have retained its moralising impact for very long. By 1819,

⁹⁰ Rewald, S. (2011), p. 56.

⁹¹ Tickell, T. (ed.) (1811), v. 1, p. 178.

⁹² In his *Description* Boydell confirmed that his choice of painted subjects were intended to ‘instruct us through the different stages of life, in the ways we ought to pursue’ adding that ‘we should listen attentively, and view with pleasure, the road that leads us to happiness both here and hereafter’. The church has not been identified and may be generic. The apartment apparently overlooks wharves below London Bridge, given the presence of the tall masts, locating it in the vicinity of the Alderman’s home in plate 6 of Hogarth’s *Marriage A-la-Mode* [Figs. 106 and 107].

⁹³ Also known as *The Siege of Gibraltar*, CLC: AN 43. For further reading on exhibition strategy and the way paintings could relate to each other across the walls of exhibition spaces to present nationalistic ideological statements see Hallett, M. (2004) and Dias, R. (2007).

⁹⁴ Nichols, J. (1819), p. 51.

only fifteen years after Boydell's death, the large canvas was already removed from its prime position on the wall of the Council Chamber and unceremoniously placed into storage when it was 'deposited in the Guildhall Chapel'.⁹⁵ Later prints of the Council Chamber dating from 1825 indicate that subsequent to this the room was entirely re-hung; Northcote's *The Death of Wat Tyler* is moved to replace Opie's *The Murder of Rizzio* and a painting depicting naval action, possibly by Robert Dodd, takes the position previously occupied by Smirke's canvas.⁹⁶ However Boydell was not entirely obliterated from memory once the frescoes and moralising painting he commissioned had disappeared. In *Interior View of the Guildhall Council Chamber* (c. 1840) by Thomas Hosmer Shephard, the portrait of Boydell by William Beechey is shown looming on the wall to the left of the central section once reserved for *Conjugal Affection*.⁹⁷ Changing fashions in artistic taste might account for the dismantling of Boydell's overall scheme for the Council Chamber so swiftly after his demise, but an addendum to the account came much later in 1939, when most of the Corporation's collection was evacuated to safe storage in the country. Several of the larger pictures commissioned and donated by Boydell including *Conjugal Affection* were deemed insufficiently valuable to be moved. Consequently they were destroyed during the German bombing raids on the City in 1940 and 1941.

London Bridge to the Tower: Hogarth, Singleton and Morland

The setting for Smirke's Thames-side scene in *Conjugal Affection*, a painting commissioned by Boydell and intended for limited public consumption in a specific location in the Guildhall can be identified as eighteenth-century London's mercantile quarter on the north side of the river overlooking Custom House and the Legal Quays. This stretch of the river flowed close to the City itself, and its banks encompassed an area that extended from the east side of London Bridge to the Tower. Within this distance of approximately half a mile the bustling commercial activity that was the focal point of the port of London was concentrated, itself a sight which inspired a raft of highly symbolic river imagery in the visual art of the mid to late eighteenth century. Hogarth referred to it in two works and the prolific artists Henry Singleton and George Morland, like Robert Smirke also employed the imagery of the busy Thames-side commercial wharves in their moralising works designed to evoke a response towards the working river and what it symbolised in terms of commerce.

Hogarth's *oeuvre* contains several highly symbolic references that are specific to the Thames and its locales. In Plate 5 of *Industry and Idleness* (1747), *The Idle 'Prentice turn'd away and sent to Sea*, Hogarth makes a vivid contemporary reference to the downriver Thames.⁹⁸ In this image Hogarth utilised a notorious Thames location to achieve the maximum impact from the inherent associations of the locale. In the same series Hogarth utilises another Thames-side location, this time in the mercantile quarter near London Bridge as seen

⁹⁵ Nichols, J. (1819), p. 51.

⁹⁶ See for example *Group Portrait of the Lord Mayor, Aldermen and Common Council in the Guildhall Council Chamber* (1825) by R. Dighton, LMA: q5613262.

⁹⁷ LMA: q5613285 and CLC: 82.

⁹⁸ This is discussed in Ch. 1, pp. 22-23. For further reading see Paulson, R. (1970), p. 45; Hallett, M. and Riding, C. (2007), p. 184; Wagner, P. (1994), pp. 56-7; Shesgreen, S. (1976), p. 575.

through the open window in Smirke's *Conjugal Affection*. Plate 8, *The Industrious 'Prentice grown rich & Sheriff of London* is set inside Fishmongers' Hall and is a scene of plenty and prosperity where rows of merchants gorge themselves on slabs of meat, soup and alcohol. Such images of excess succeed to introduce into this Thames-setting a wariness of the contemporary notion of luxury borne of commerce, a subject which would become increasingly linked to maritime trade and the port of London and these concepts were then reflected in moralising pictures produced in the later decades of the eighteenth century.⁹⁹ The accompanying print in Hogarth's series, Plate 9, *The Idle 'Prentice betray'd by his Whore, & taken in a Night Cellar with his Accomplice*, on the other hand, depicts a robbery which has ended in murder. Viewed alongside Goodchild's lavish banquet in the Fishmongers' Hall, Tom Idle also inhabits a Thames-side location, but his abode is down-at-heel and in a seedy part of town, possibly on the east-side of London Bridge beyond the Tower on the river at Wapping, where a trapdoor opens onto the Thames providing the means for the expedient disposal of murder victims.¹⁰⁰ Hogarth employed a further reference to the river Thames in another work, *The Lady's Death*, which forms the final scene of the series *Marriage A-la-Mode* [Figs 106 and 107]. The six pictures in the series chart a disastrous marriage of convenience between a profligate aristocrat's son and the daughter of an aspirant bourgeois.¹⁰¹ Scene 6 is set in the Countess's father's frugally furnished house on the north side of the Thames on the edge of the merchant quarter.¹⁰² The view through the open window [Fig. 107] reveals old London Bridge clearly identifiable by the dilapidated houses along its length which are run-down and ramshackle and teetering on the brink of collapse into the river. Hogarth's symbolic representation of the Thames here suggests the existence of a socially constructed and ingrained distaste for the topography of London that it signifies; the implication is that to live within such close proximity of this vulgar commercial thoroughfare demonstrated a lack of polite refinement. But it may also be construed as an indication of the existence of a mid-eighteenth century mindset which harboured an embedded stigmatisation of the urban Thames; a social tendency which generally went unexpressed in riverscapes and topographic art more concerned with playing to perceived national strengths. In Hogarth's series, the Countess' father who has squandered the family money has his fallen status symbolised through his shabby living quarters, evidenced by both the unkempt interior and reinforced by the proximity of an urban Thames-side location. This genre of symbolic Thames imagery, particularly in connection to the merchants' quarter and the commercial reaches of the river beyond London Bridge, became part of the visual language of the capital. The association between the port and individual downfall would eventually become effective currency for nineteenth-century artists inclined to focus their morality tales on the ills of the overpopulated and polluted city.¹⁰³

The four examples by Hogarth outlined above and the subsequent early- to mid-nineteenth century taste for morality paintings in which the river stood for the ills of London,

⁹⁹ See Hallett, M. and Riding, C. (2006), pp. 187-88. The subject of luxury will be addressed later in this chapter.

¹⁰⁰ Paulson, R. (1991), p. 299.

¹⁰¹ See Hallett, M. and Riding, C. (2007), pp. 141-2 and 146-52.

¹⁰² See Phillips, H. (1951), p. 63; Phillips identifies the Alderman's home with the small corner-house on the east side of Old Swan Stairs as seen in *Fishmongers' Hall to Waterman's Hall* (1749) by S. and N. Buck, reproduced on p. 62.

¹⁰³ See Conclusion, pp. 238-39.

bookend a period that saw three leading eighteenth-century artists employ the image of the Thames to different ends. In each case, instead of the river being wedded to downfall it was raised up on a pedestal; the Thames, and more specifically the commerce with which it could be aligned, symbolised social ideals and virtues such as propriety, industry and prudence. These pictures alleged that an adherence to these principles would pave the way for financial stability and domestic contentment.

A 1794 mezzotint engraved by William Ward after Henry Singleton and titled *Industry and Oeconomy* provides an example of a pictorial theme that was taken up during the closing years of the eighteenth century [Fig. 108]. Its pendant print, *Extravagance and Dissipation*, presents an alternative world that is intended to highlight the positive effects of an application to and an engagement with commerce, and the negative consequences of indolence and apathy [Fig. 109]. Henry Singleton (1766-1839), best known for his illustrations of Shakespeare's plays, also produced sentimental genre scenes aimed at the print trade, of which this pair is an example. The moralising tale is presented through two opposing scenes which echo the pairings found in Hogarth's *Industry and Idleness* series. But while Hogarth drew back the curtain on the apparent virtue and rapid promotion purportedly linked to hard-work and satirised the root causes of fecklessness and criminality, Singleton's message lacked the same level of complexity. Singleton's scenarios, as reproduced by Ward, are annotated by Samuel Collings' verses printed together with the title beneath each image. Collings' words convey the concept that only dedication and industry can provide reward and happiness.

The underlying sentiment of *Industry and Oeconomy* is an unambiguous one. The protagonist is depicted as an unostentatious yet successful shipping merchant and the head of a family who, together with his employees, are in attendance here. The assembly are located within a commercial river wharf environment which is presumably the family's harbour domicile on the Thames. On the river are various sailing vessels and there is a signboard on a wall next to a freight elevator with the inscription 'Bell Wharf'. The merchant father, dressed in a black coat and hat, stands writing a letter, perhaps of recommendation, resting the paper on a crate, looking to his right at a young man in a necktie, who we might assume to be the eldest son. Elsewhere in the image is a man carrying a sack while gesturing to another man who brings a barrel up the steps and talks to a further man in a rowing boat alongside. Through the open window in the background, a young housewife is visible as is the family's youngest child who appears fascinated by the father's quill. Meanwhile an older child playing on the quayside attempts to sit astride a dog. Regardless of the exact familial relationships which are not very clear, this is ostensibly a depiction of a confident young man resolved in his dedication to a future tied to the business of maritime trading, and specifically the maritime commerce facilitated by the Thames. His optimism is reiterated in the accompanying verse by Samuel Collings:

These are the cares that give a zest to life
 Source of no social, no domestic strife;
 Hence health and competence, - the vigorous mind
 To frankness and to probity inclin'd.
 The fair perspective opening on the view
 An offspring dutious and a consort true
 A long career of honor clos'd with ease
 Who would not purchase such cares as these.

A parallel exists here between the image of the commercial Thames in the context of Singleton's work and the silk-weaving workroom where the two young apprentices might learn a trade in Plate 1 of Hogarth's *Industry and Idleness*.¹⁰⁴ The presence of the river in this wharf-side tableau and the Spitalfields workshop delineated in Hogarth's scene are symbols of honest and worthy trades which, in harness with industry and application, have the potential to fulfil aspiration and lead to future prosperity for the young men involved. In Singleton's *Industry and Oeconomy* the bustling quayside operation and the contented family are evidence that this patriarch has reaped success from the commercial opportunities offered by the river, as too will the son as he embarks on his own 'long career of honor'. The river imagery is a literal illustration of Collings' 'fair perspective opening on the view'.

The pendant print, *Extravagance and Dissipation*, is concerned with the consequences that lie in wait for those who choose to turn their backs on commercial enterprise and industriousness. In Hogarth's satire, Tom Idle's aversion to work, or inability to conform to the will of society, leads to a self-destructive life spent in the company of rough sailors, double-dealing prostitutes and violent thieves. Singleton's wayward figure is a dishevelled 'gentleman' shown seated in the parlour of his comfortably furnished home. He has removed his hat which rests beside him as he holds his head in his hand and mops at his brow unhappily. His nervous expression and general demeanour suggest that he has recently indulged in reckless behaviour, perhaps he has stayed out late at night, drinking to excess and gambling away the family money; squandering (dissipating) it in the pursuit of selfish pleasures. In contrast, the maternal protagonist is neatly dressed in white. She has been reading a book but has now turned her chair to greet her husband with an attitude of regretful concern. A watch is attached to her dress which she holds in one hand, suggesting the late hour. An old woman watches from a seated position behind her and she displays shock by the raised hand held to her mouth. A maid holds a sleeping baby in her arms, reminding the husband of his paternal responsibilities. Through the open door the figure of a man is glimpsed. He holds his hat and faces away from the scene, his shadowy presence suggestive of a debt collector. But the situation is desperate for the husband's miser's purse lies empty on the floor; the family's money has been frittered away and the man who should protect them has instead brought them to the brink of financial ruin. Beneath the image Collings' lines describe a mother's despair as she 'Sees penury await her darling boy'. Hogarth's Francis Goodchild's success as a workshop owner with a respectable position in the City of London is ostensibly achieved by a positive commitment to work, while his gambling and womanising counterpart, Tom Idle, slides down the social scale as he falls lower into the criminal underworld.¹⁰⁵ In Singleton's morality tale, the opportunities presented by the wholesome and honest commerce of the river Thames are set against the inevitable outcomes of squandered opportunity.

The inclusion of pictorial references to the London Thames in moralising prints, where the river symbolised the virtue of industry and a healthy engagement with commerce, became most prevalent during the final years of the eighteenth century. Paintings by successful artists that were reproduced on a relatively large scale regurgitated a trope that a life dedicated to industry in connection with the Port of London's maritime trade was respectable, and downfall

¹⁰⁴ *The Fellow 'Prentices at their Looms* (30 Sep 1747) by William Hogarth, BM: 1896,0710.13

¹⁰⁵ Bindman, D. (1997), p. 104. 'Ostensibly' because *Industry and Idleness* is a complex satire in which Hogarth shows both Goodchild and Idle to be pawns in a larger game; see Paulson, R. (1970), p. 45'.

and destitution would be the fate of those who failed to grasp the opportunities of commerce. An example which both develops and challenges this tradition is found in George Morland's pair of paintings titled *The Fruits of Early Industry & Oeconomy* and *The Effects of Youthful Extravagance & Idleness* [Figs 110 and 111]. The gentle punning of the first title (a basket of fruit features in the image) offers a hint of an alternative satirical reading or a subtle double-meaning. The first of the two images depicts the interior of a room; a domestic setting which overlooks a bustling Thames-side wharf with warehouses and commercial shipping in full view.¹⁰⁶ Seated close to the window is a corpulent merchant and maternal grandfather whose jacket strains at the button emphasising his well-fed frame. This patriarch is seated at a table with a drink in his hand, his attention distracted by the activity of maritime labour on the quayside below as he discusses business matters with his clerk who holds a quill in his mouth. To the right stands the merchant's daughter with her back to her father; she offers her elegantly dressed children a bunch of grapes which she holds up delicately by the stem. Her youthful and attentive husband half-kneels behind the child, who stands on a plush leather chair, while the child's fallen hat lies abandoned on the floor.¹⁰⁷ Another child is lying on the richly-decorated carpet and plays half-heartedly with a small pet spaniel. As witness to this domestic scene of supposed familial contentment is a young black servant boy who stands with his hands balancing the basket of fruit from which the grapes have been lifted by his mistress. His face has a look of disdain and his gaze directs the viewer's gaze across the room.¹⁰⁸ A picture of a large house, which can be assumed to be the family's country residence, hangs on the wall behind the assembly.

Morland adopts a moralising tone through the replication of themes previously expounded by Hogarth, Singleton and Smirke. However, in *The Fruits of Early Industry & Oeconomy* the artist employs this format to launch a typically pithy attack on capitalist bourgeoisie aspiration. Here, the combined effects of the imagery of material comfort ranging from the richly furnished interior, the liveried black servant and the country estate to the freely available exotic fruits, particularly the grapes, conspire to suggest not contentment or even harmony; instead, the luxury, ostentation and flashy display amount to an expression of joyless materialism. The view of the commercial Thames with its bustling mercantile dockside suggests that the lavish and ostentatious trappings within the apartment have been earned on the back of the drudgery and hardship endured by a poorly rewarded maritime labour force, visible in action through the window and regarded with a degree of disinterested detachment by the bloated merchant. This reading of Morland's imagery can be extended to a critique of the exploitation of cheap labour, abuse of foreign markets and even slavery upon which the merchant's fortune is probably founded. The black servant with his appalled expression compounds this point and serves as a reminder of the slave trade which Morland vehemently opposed.

¹⁰⁶ Extant as an oil painting and coloured mezzotints engraved by William Ward (Morland's brother-in-law) and published in London by Thomas Simpson (Nov 1, 1789), later reissued by Louis Wolff & Co.. See Marceau, H. et al (1932), pp. 19-31.

¹⁰⁷ The fallen hat as a symbol of an underlying unease are a recurring motif in Morland's paintings from this period; see Oldfield, J. (1998), p. 168.

¹⁰⁸ See Tobin, B. (1999), p. 36; Tobin observes that Morland's black servant mirrors Hogarth's turbaned boy in the second plate of *A Harlot's Progress* (1732) and indicative of social advancement and the trappings of high society.

Michael Roberts has commented that at the time Morland's *The Fruits of Early Industry & Oeconomy* was published (1789), 'luxuria' was considered to be a sin and the pursuit of personal pleasure before religious and social duty imperilled one's soul and one's reputation, as well as setting a bad example to 'the poor'.¹⁰⁹ Certainly William Paley (1743-1805), the late Georgian moral philosopher, was warning of 'the true evil and proper danger of luxury', suggesting that it was bad for the economic health of the nation especially when it led to the propagation of unrealistic aspirations 'to the ranks that compose the mass of the community'.¹¹⁰ Indeed, there existed a contemporary school of thinking that condemned wealth that was derived from overseas trade as morally suspect.¹¹¹ For example, in his poem *The Deserted Village* published in 1770, Oliver Goldsmith (1730-74) argues that the dazzling commodities and garish entertainments of London had diverted the gentry away from their rural responsibilities, making room for a new class of owners associated with 'trade' to take over.¹¹² This Goldsmith blamed on 'Luxury', a word which had a contemporary association with money generated by speculation and with the consumption of expensive and useless commodities provided by overseas trade, colonial ventures, and the slave trade.¹¹³ Goldsmith's condemnation of London for its corruption, materialism and avariciousness, and his beliefs in the corroding effect of money on the morals of the nation are, to an extent, reflected in Morland's treatment of the household's showy domestic interior in *The Fruits of Early Industry & Oeconomy*.¹¹⁴ Here, the room that overlooks the commercial Thames is ostentatious, ornamental and fashionable, but ultimately it is the paraphernalia of luxury which betrays a hollow fortune and an unfulfilling materialistic existence.¹¹⁵ These gewgaws comprise, it would appear, the 'fruits' of the merchant's industry and by exhibiting them in this manner Morland is drawing our attention to the folly of luxury in a moralising picture which doubles as a parody that is comparable to Hogarth's satirical view of city dignitaries greedily feasting at Fishmongers' Hall. Finally, the inclusion of grapes and the basket of exotic fruit offered by the servant is representative of the expensive and luxurious foodstuffs which were exclusively available to this and other such upwardly mobile merchant families. The fruits are another ostentatious display of wealth diametrically opposed to the bourgeois miserliness on display in the home of the alderman in Hogarth's *Marriage A-La-Mode: The Lady's Death*, where the parsimonious meal on display comprises a boiled egg on a bed of rice and a pig's head set out on a table positioned immediately below the window open to the view of the Thames and the dilapidated old London Bridge [see Fig. 107]. The presence of the black servant in Morland's work is also a symbol of the family's status. Throughout the eighteenth century, black servants were associated with the popular concept of the immense riches of Africa and India, and the enormous riches amassed by the West and East Indians. A black pageboy was therefore considered to be a 'luxury item' which conferred 'an air of luxurious wellbeing' to a household.¹¹⁶ They were at once charming, exotic ornaments, objects of

¹⁰⁹ Roberts, M. (2012), p. 20.

¹¹⁰ Paley, W. (1830), pp. 683-5.

¹¹¹ Tobin, B. (1999), p. 31.

¹¹² Rep'd in Friedman, A. (ed.) (1966), v. 4, pp. 287-304, ll. 385-88.

¹¹³ Tobin, B. (1999), p. 31.

¹¹⁴ For a study of luxury as a moral and political concept see Sekora, J. (1977); Colley, L. (2009).

¹¹⁵ See Solkin, D. (1993), ch. 2 and 3, for a discussion of how the discourse on luxury and intemperance was negotiated visually in the conversation piece.

¹¹⁶ Woodson, C. (1935), p. 29. See also Hallett, M. and Riding, C. (2006), p. 144.

curiosity, talking-points, and above all, in the context of Morland's picture, symbols of prestige. In *Picturing Imperial Power* Beth Fowkes Tobin explains that 'the figure of the black servant in domestic portraiture is emblematic of overseas trade and colonialism' and 'best understood in the context of the eighteenth-century response to Britain's mercantile and imperialistic activities'.¹¹⁷ In the phrase of a minor poet of the 1790s, a black attendant served as the 'Index of Rank or Opulence supreme'.¹¹⁸ Hogarth introduced black pageboys into several of his works with the purpose of satirising their masters' own slavery to fashion, and the presence of the servant in Morland's work accentuates this same underlying theme.¹¹⁹ In addition, Morland was one of the first artists to treat slavery as a subject in art, especially the prevalent subject of abolition in Britain, through the exhibition of his painting titled *Execrable Human Traffick, or The Affectionate Slaves*, displayed at the Royal Academy in 1788.¹²⁰ Morland's pictures undoubtedly broadened the abolitionist debate amongst the Royal Academy audience as well as publicising the cause further afield through the publication of printed versions.¹²¹

The text printed beneath Morland's printed version of *The Fruits of Early Industry & Oeconomy* reads:

Lo here, what ease, what elegance you see,
The just reward of youthfull Industry.
The happy grandsire looks thro' all his race
Where well earn'd plenty brightens every face,
The beauteous Daughter school'd invites love,
Now gives th'example she receiv'd before
While her fond husband train'd to fairness
Sees future laurels his brave offspring crown.

Here the emphasis is on 'ease' and 'elegance' as opposed to the ordinary satisfaction of honest work symbolised by the maritime labourers on view through the open window. This has echoes of the less complex implications of Singleton's *Industry and Oeconomy* and Smirke's *Conjugal Affection*. Morland is passing a social comment to counter received wisdom relating to work and laziness. The 'well earn'd plenty', when considered in connection with the busy wharf scene beyond the flashy domestic interior together with the miserable servitude of the fashionably exotic servant invites the viewer to question at whose expense the position of this well-heeled family has been bought. The enquiry becomes clearer when considered alongside the contemporary phenomenon that was the rise of the entrepreneur and mercantile capitalism. Early eighteenth-century writers had long since expressed their suspicion of both this and the consumption of foreign luxury items, which Jonathan Swift described as 'those

¹¹⁷ Tobin, B. (1999), p. 28. See also Honour, H. (1989) and Dabydeen, D. (1987).

¹¹⁸ Milton, M. [pseud.] (1790), p. 14.

¹¹⁹ See Hallett, M. and Riding, C. (2006), p. 144; *Taste in High Life* (c. 1742) by William Hogarth, Private Collection; *A Harlot's Progress*: Plate 2 (1732) by William Hogarth, BM: 1868.0822.1519; *Marriage A-la-Mode*: Scene 4, *The Toilette* (1735) by William Hogarth, NG: NG116.

¹²⁰ Menil Collection, Houston, TX.: 83-110DJ; this is a version of the original painting now known as *The Slave Trade*. See Honour, H. (1989), pp. 67-8 (plates 25 and 26). The theme is continued in a pendant image exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1790 and made available as a print in 1814: *African Hospitality* (1814), NMM: ZBA2506, which depicts African kindness towards a group of shipwrecked Europeans, an expression of the brotherhood of man that stands in marked contrast to the cruelty inflicted by the European slave traders upon the Africans.

¹²¹ See Quilley, G. (2003), p. 123; Oldfield, J. (2010), pp. 33-46.

detestable Extravagances'.¹²² For example, a link between imported luxury goods and moral decay was made by Bernard Mandeville in *The Fable of the Bees* (1714) in which he expounded his theory that prosperity is contingent upon vice. In 1718, John Woodward stated that:

the Consequence of this great Increase in the Arts of Luxury and Intemperance, are Vice and Immorality: Irreligion, Impiety, Passion, Animosity, Contention, Factions: Neglect of Thought, Studies, and Business, Misspending of Time, Ignorance, Stupidity, Poverty, Discontent, Sickness, Disease.¹²³

The assumption that hard work will be well-rewarded and impoverishment, as presented by the pitiful circumstances of the downfallen family of the companion piece *The Effects of Youthful Extravagance & Idleness* [Fig. 111], is the deserved result of self-indulgent behaviour and idleness is challenged - not ratified - by Morland's images. Indeed, *The Effects* appears to reflect Woodward's diagnosis through a handling of a subject that is both sympathetic and non-judgemental to the family's ruin, unlike Singleton's *Extravagance and Dissipation* where the viewer is encouraged to scorn the reckless protagonist. Morland's own life was testimony to the danger of generalisations about his work and also provides further explanation of his motives.¹²⁴ Morland, although considered to have been of generous and good-natured character, was notorious for being thoroughly dissolute himself, living recklessly and without regard for either his health or his reputation. Pursued through the later years of his life by dealers and creditors, he was eventually imprisoned for debt in 1799 and died aged forty-one in a sponging house in Clerkenwell in 1806.¹²⁵ Despite a propensity for long periods of drunkenness, Morland's output was prodigious, running into thousands of paintings and his name became synonymous with scenes of lowly life from the interior of cottages to stables and inn yards. These he tended to portray in an affected, sentimental manner, but as John Barrell has suggested, Morland was also capable of providing insights into the 'dark side of the landscape'.¹²⁶ Between 1788 and 1792 Morland's paintings frequently adopt a moralising tone out of kilter with his own lifestyle, for example, *The Miseries of Idleness* (1790) and *The Comforts of Industry* (1790).¹²⁷ The former shows a bare interior with a man drinking and smoking and his wife sitting listlessly beside him. Each of their three children exhibit signs of discomfort: the baby in disarrayed clothes in its straw bed, the girl pawing at her mother's skirts and the boy in tattered clothing gnawing hungrily on a bone. The pendant print presents another cottage interior where a neatly-dressed man has just returned home from work and passes his earnings to his wife. He holds his son's hand, the daughter playing with her doll shows delight in the return while the baby sleeps contentedly. In comparison, *The Fruits of Early Industry and Oeconomy* produced a year earlier in 1789, reveals Morland's distrust of 'new money' raised on the backs of the hard working proletariat, in this case the labour employed in the commercial trade of the river Thames. In his monograph on Morland

¹²² Swift, J. (1726) cited in Turner, P. (ed.) (1986), p. 256. See Dabydeen, D. (1982) in which the author identifies Hogarth's fear of the foreign and an association of the exotic with moral decay.

¹²³ Woodward, J. (1718), pp. 194-95.

¹²⁴ See Hassell, J. (1806); Richardson, R. (1895); Dawe, G. (1904); Wilson, D. H. (1907).

¹²⁵ See Oldfield, J. R. (1998), pp. 167-8.

¹²⁶ See Barrell, J. (1980).

¹²⁷ *The Miseries of Idleness* and *The Comforts of Industry* (before 1790) by George Morland, Scottish National Gallery, Edinburgh: NG1835 and NG1836.

published in 1895, Ralph Richardson suggested that the artist 'was fully conscious of the worldly advantages secured by industry and the certain doom of dissipation' even at the age of twenty-six which was the artist's age when these pictures were engraved in 1789. However, what Richardson fails to mention is Morland's underlying cynicism in relation to traditional moral tropes that unquestioningly categorise people and their behaviour into good and bad types based entirely on financial success. Certainly Richardson did not take this into consideration when he declared that *The Fruits of Early Industry & Oeconomy* presents the viewer with a scene 'of prosperity, happiness and wealth, and finds its counterpart in the companion picture entitled *The Effects of Youthful Extravagance & Idleness*' [Fig. 111].¹²⁸ The setting for the companion piece is an attic room with a boarded-up broken window and plaster flaking from the ceiling. A forlorn-looking man sits on the makeshift bed, while two women fuss about the mean lodging, one using bellows on the meagre fire, the other mending clothes in the limited light afforded by the small, broken window. Here, the luxurious apartment of the successful merchant has been replaced by a sordid garret of an out-of-work and quite possibly unpaid seaman.¹²⁹ His downfallen family's poverty is represented by the thin and hungry-looking dog and a boy of stunted growth as they gaze up expectantly at their master and father respectively. At first glance this might appear to be a variation on *The Miseries of Idleness*, but there is no sense of blameworthiness here and with the exception of the title, which I suggest is satirical, the viewer is not being manipulated to look unkindly upon this scene of familial destitution and deprivation. At the date when these prints were produced, it was not uncommon for the crew of merchant trading ships to go unpaid for years and sailors were sometimes forced to beg or hawk the streets through no fault of their own.¹³⁰ Also, unlike *The Comforts of Industry*, the setting in *The Fruits of Early Industry & Oeconomy* has shifted from an allegedly honest rural setting, to an urban one associated with corruption particularly in connection with the mercantile nature of the city and its river. Here, the 'industry' is no longer effectively represented as the effort exerted by the individual worker in order to provide for his family but instead the exploitive industry of international maritime trade facilitated by the river Thames which has the potential to generate fortunes for avaricious entrepreneurs. Morland has effectively swapped his ruminations on the potential shortcomings of simple, rural domestic life with a morally didactic critique of London's burgeoning capitalist maritime economy.

Rebirth: 'Presage of Britain's patriot pride'¹³¹

Maritime commerce linked the figure of Father Thames, as imagined by Barry, Bacon, Taylor, Rysbrack and Roma in their works across the city of London, to the river imagery drawn from the merchants' quarter in the moralising paintings and prints of Hogarth, Smirke, Singleton and Morland. The commercial Thames, as it wound its way out of the City to the great dockyards

¹²⁸ Richardson, R. (1895), p. 8.

¹²⁹ In *The Effects of Youthful Extravagance & Idleness* the patriarch's attire is identical to the protagonist, also an out of work seaman, in *The Wandering Sailor* (c. 1798) by Henry Singleton, YCBA: B1981.25.571.

¹³⁰ See Rediker, M. (1987), p. 33. A further example of a contemporary awareness in visual art of the difficulties faced by low paid seamen can be seen in *A Mid on Half Pay. Tower Hill* (1 June 1825) by C. Hunt, NMM: PAF3722.

¹³¹ Taylor, J. (1827), p. 108.

at Deptford, Blackwall and Woolwich, linked these urban locations to the royal architecture of rural Greenwich where, in 1707, James Thornhill was commissioned to paint the ceiling of the Great Hall of the naval hospital.¹³² The theme of the lower hall ceiling is the triumph of Peace and Liberty over Tyranny and Thornhill's work pays tribute to King William and Queen Mary, seated in glory in the middle of the central oval, and the importance of naval power to the fortunes of the nation. This naval power and fortune, provided courtesy of London's river, are represented by a powerful, mature male figure in one of the earliest depictions of Father Thames in high art [Fig. 112] with a personification which predated the allegorical manifestations on display in the city by several decades.¹³³ A description for visitors notes amongst the various allegorical references 'a figure representing the City of London, with the arms, sword, and cap of maintenance, supported by Thames and Isis, with other small rivers offering up their treasures to her'.¹³⁴ As Richard Johns has noted, the overall effect is a 'forthright display of British military power and commercial might' through 'the tripartite arrangement of the Thames, the City of London and a triumphant English battleship [which] allegorises the modern commercial relationship between mercantile, military and civic power'.¹³⁵ As Johns goes on to explain, 'the City relies for its prosperity on the trade that was made possible by the Thames and, in turn, is able to support the military adventures that would secure the commercial advantage of England's merchant fleet and bring ever greater riches to the City'. Throughout this chapter I have considered works symbolising the Thames. In each case as it is here, the underlying theme is commerce. In Thornhill's representation, a strand of azure blue drapery wrapped around the river god's muscular torso traces the shape of a riverine meander which closely resembles the twists of the commercial Thames between the Nore and the Port of London.

In 1800 Maria Cosway (1760-1838) celebrated the dawn of the new century with the exhibition at the Royal Academy of a brand new symbol of the Thames; a version much removed from the magisterial river god allegory favoured by eighteenth-century poets and artists. *The Birth of the Thames*, displayed in the Great Room at Somerset House introduced an image of the Thames that was without reference to Thornhill's river god in Greenwich. Nor did it nod to Bacon's recumbent statue in the courtyard that could be seen from the Academy's windows. Unlike the symbolic works traced in this chapter, Cosway's imagery bore no relation to any of the Thames allegories that had appeared in London over the preceding century.¹³⁶ With *The Birth of the Thames* Cosway had affectively refreshed the symbolic expression of London's river in a painting which imagined the Thames as a baby. The child is shown raised aloft and held above the bull-rushes of the pastoral river by a chorus of water-nymphs and a swan.¹³⁷ Cosway's painting was later engraved by P. W. Tomkins and published by Rudolph Ackermann from his influential print-selling business, the 'Repository of Arts' in 1802 [Fig. 113]. John Taylor wrote the following lines on the subject which reflect the meaning and reception of Maria Cosway's work:

¹³² Now known as the Painted Hall, Thornhill's work covers 2612sqm and is the largest figurative painted interior in Britain.

¹³³ See Aslet, C. (1999), pp. 155-57.

¹³⁴ Cooke, J. and Maule, J. (1797), pp. 20-22.

¹³⁵ Johns, R. (2004), pp. 183-84 and subsequent addendum.

¹³⁶ *Birth of the Thames* was No. 23 in the Royal Academy Catalogue (1800) which suggests its position within the Great Room.

¹³⁷ See Lloyd, S. (1995), p. 38.

Maria's genius shews its ancient source,
 With fancy, spirit, elegance and force.
 The happy Naiads raise the smiling boy,
 Presage of Britain's patriot pride and joy,
 When his bold waves shall join her subject main,
 O'er all the world her glory to maintain.¹³⁸

Father Thames, presiding for a century as the symbol of power and commerce, is here reincarnated as an unblemished, newborn child. In Cosway's painting and in the words of Taylor, the baby boy represents a 'presage of Britain's patriot pride and joy' and the 'glory' of the nation. As the Thames child is raised up by his cohorts he stares directly out at the picture viewer to deliver a rejuvenated sense of optimism and renewed confidence in London and its river and the nation as a whole.

Conclusion

Since the first references to the Thames as a god-like entity in English poetry, to his emergent visual incarnation rooted in classical imagery, Father Thames embodied the commercial identity of London and the nation. This strong, solid and reliable giant presented a palatable metaphor of trade that neatly encapsulated all that could be celebrated in London's port city and conveniently cloaked all that was deemed disagreeable to eighteenth-century polite society. Father Thames became an expression of maritime commerce in an allegorical form which appeared in increasingly expressive forms through the course of the long eighteenth century. In addition to the personification of the Thames, the contemporary associations between the river and maritime trade were so entrenched that stylised or generic images of the working Thames were employed as potent symbols in moralising prints. Like Father Thames the depiction of London's river, perhaps glimpsed through an open window, condensed the meaning of complex eighteenth-century commercial ideologies. For instance, in one picture maritime commerce could represent a force for good, providing opportunity and the potential for success, while in another context, the same image of the commercial Thames could be understood as a warning against the damaging effects of luxury and dissipation – an association with immorality which gained momentum as the nineteenth century progressed.¹³⁹

The Thames as an allegorical personification of commerce and empire encompasses a broad range of genres and media in the visual culture of the long eighteenth century. The examples I have discussed in this chapter are representative of an even wider canon of works that synthesised the essence of maritime London into positive expressions of national identity built around notions of commerce, imperial aspiration and empire. By the turn of the nineteenth century the image of the Thames, in all its forms, was ubiquitous and appeared across a variety of genres and media. From painted ceilings, statues, carved keystones and

¹³⁸ Taylor, J. (1827), pp. 108-10. The print was dedicated to HRH Princess Augusta Sophia and published in Ackermann's *Repository of Arts* on 1 Jan 1802 and in Landon's *Nouvelles des Arts* (1801-2). The oil painting was purchased by the 3rd Duchess of Leinster and installed in Shell Cottage, Carton Desmesne, nr. Maynooth, Ireland. I am indebted to Dr Stephen Lloyd for his advice regarding the location of this work.

¹³⁹ See Conclusion.

pediment sculptures, Thames gazed down on Londoners, his reassuring benevolence asserting a sense of natural order and entitlement to the benefits of imperial expansion. In moralising prints, the Thames was frequently held up as a paradigm of contemporary socio-economic harmony and the potential source of individual fulfilment.

The symbolic expressions of the river discussed here can now be placed back into the wider survey of the image of the Thames presented over the previous chapters where the river is understood as an emblem of modernisation through improvements to the capital, as the benefactor of a vibrant yet dangerous maritime community representative of solid patriotic virtues and as a positive and idealised synthesis of commerce and nationhood. The symbol of the Thames encompasses the broad repertoire of imagery that was evolved by artists to recognise the fundamental importance of the river to the nation throughout the course of the long eighteenth century. Whether representing the benefits of plenty, the arts of commerce or the triumph of navigation, the river Thames as it flowed through the port of London or transmogrified into an age-old river god provided a reliable subject through which artists could effectively denote the maritime strength, stability and security supported by Britain's commerce with the rest of the trading world.

CONCLUSION

Time and Tide:

The Thames under a 'murky veil' of 'commercial care and busy toil'¹

*A mighty mass of brick, and smoke, and shipping,
 Dirty and dusky, but wide as eye
 Could reach, with here and there a sail just skipping
 In sight, then lost amidst the forestry
 Of masts; a wilderness of steeples peeping
 On tiptoe through their sea-coal canopy;
 A huge, dun cupola, like a foolscap crown
 On a fool's – and there is London Town!*²

In *London from Greenwich Park* (exhibited 1809) [Fig. 114], J. M. W. Turner adapts the familiar view of the Thames and the city from One Tree Hill [see Figs 62 and 63] in order to suggest the prodigious extent of the metropolis towards the end of the long eighteenth century. However, the brightly lit Thames leads the eye back into the picture space towards an indistinctive smoky fog which Turner calls a 'murky veil'. In *Don Juan* (1819) Lord Byron describes the physical sight of the pollution that blighted the view of London and its river as a 'sea-coal canopy' or 'huge, dun cupola' (see above). *London from Greenwich Park* was first exhibited in 1809 at Turner's own gallery along with a number of other landscapes including *Near the Thames' Lock, Windsor* [Fig. 115]. The pictures were the only two of the Thames to have been shown in this exhibition; they are also the same size and both were accompanied by poetry, all indications that Turner intended them to be viewed as a pair. When considered as such, they represent a marked contrast to the prevalent contemporary image of the Thames and a destabilisation of the *concordia discors* that sustains the representation of London and its river through the long eighteenth century. *London from Greenwich Park* was accompanied by Turner's own epigraph expressing an apparent sense of rhetorical disappointment at the polluted state of contemporary London³:

Where burthen'd Thames reflects the crowded sail,
 Commercial care and busy toil prevail,
 Whose murky veil, aspiring to the skies,
 Obscures thy beauty, and thy form denies,
 Save where thy spires pierce the doubtful air,
 As gleams of hope amidst a world of care.⁴

As a redeeming counterbalance to what Turner implies to be London's grimy materialism or 'commercial care and busy toil' represented in this view of the polluted, industrialised river, Turner's late Augustan verse refers to the obscured 'beauty' of the Thames.

¹ From verse accompanying *London from Greenwich Park* (1809) by J. M. W. Turner [Fig. 114].

² Lord Byron (1819), canto x, v. 82.

³ Warrell, I. (2004), p. 78.

⁴ Butlin, M. and Joll, E. (eds) (1984), no. 97.

If Turner's *London from Greenwich Park* is perceived to convey a message of anti-urbanism represented by a river spoilt by commerce, then it grates against the more common celebration of the Thames in visual culture, and the association with positive contemporary commercial ideology established in the preceding chapters. Ian Warrell has suggested that 'Turner could not at this date reconcile the thrusting modernity of his native city with a sensibility wedded to the established aesthetics of an earlier age'.⁵ In some respects, *London from Greenwich Park* has certain similarities with the traditional 'prospects' from Southwark produced since the sixteenth century [see Figs. 1 and 3-5]: the architecture of Greenwich Hospital and the Queen's House is sharply outlined, and the view looks down on the prosperous commercial centre represented by the Thames.⁶ But unlike the representations of the prosperous port city in prospects by Visscher and Hollar for example, Turner appears to portray commerce in a pessimistic light. Moreover, this work and its accompanying verse seem to echo an alternative discourse that considered commerce to be an agent of power and luxury that leads, ultimately, to a state's corruption and collapse. By contrast, *Near the Thames' Lock, Windsor* presents a misty idyll, an enchanted classical landscape of the Thames banked by leafy trees and lush meadows where schoolboys play in the river and relax on its banks on a summer's afternoon. The picture is accompanied by Gray's poetic lines addressed to the river:

Say Father Thames for thou has seen
Full many a sprightly race,
Disporting on thy margin green,
The paths of pleasure trace,
Who foremost now delight to cleave
With pliant arms thy glassy wave.

The core theme here is the melancholic loss of youth and innocence. This can be transposed onto a sense of regret at the ever more industrialised state of the Thames, especially its commercial hub located between old London Bridge and the downriver docks. With the city of London expanding rapidly, Turner presents an increasingly prosaic metropolis where 'commercial care and busy toil prevail' and contrasts this with the bucolic delights of the river at Windsor. *London from Greenwich Park*, read as a commentary on industrialisation, draws a distinction between two contrasting categories of river landscape: the active commercial life of the Thames in and surrounding the city of London and the passive enjoyment of nature and retirement associated with the countryside of the Thames above London.⁷ By polarising the Thames in this way, Turner reprises the common thread of *concordia discors* that is woven throughout the representation of London's river in the long eighteenth century. However, Turner looks back to Augustan models and re-works them, destabilising the adopted rhythm of *concordia discors* by introducing an image of Greenwich which functions as pastoral, with its tranquil, grazing deer, but which is also shrouded with less positive overtones effectively locating the modernity of the river within a more Blakean paradigm. Turner's nostalgic contemplation of the increasingly industrialised downriver Thames resonates with the

⁵ Warrell, I. (2004), p. 78.

⁶ Finley, G. (1999), p. 88.

⁷ John Denham, in *Cooper's Hill* (1642), associates the city with activity; the countryside with passivity, retirement and reflection; see Turner, J (1979), p. 55; see also Barrell, J. (1972), pp. 21-2.

visualisation of a monumental transformation of London's historic topography at the close of the long eighteenth century when the river was visibly marked with the construction of a new London Bridge and the removal of its medieval predecessor. Like *London from Greenwich Park*, this presented an ambiguous view of the river that represented a break with its past.

In 1823, two decades after the first of the new docks opened to the east of the city, old London Bridge was condemned by an Act of Parliament.⁸ The removal of the internationally renowned landmark that had stood since Norman times effectively severed the most significant physical and symbolic link between the Thames and the capital's ancient history.⁹ Remarkable, and on the face of it iconoclastic, the decision to demolish what Drayton described in 1622 as 'the Crowne of the Tames' was not an unpopular one.¹⁰ Rennie's replacement to old London Bridge, comprising five elliptical arches, was built adjacent to the ancient structure and was opened with great fanfare by the newly crowned King William IV on 1 August 1831 [see Fig. 82]. The removal of old London Bridge coincides with the end of the long eighteenth century and marks the close of a transitional chapter in the evolution of the image of the Thames.¹¹ It also defines the opening of a new phase in artistic engagement with the Thames; a visualisation of the port city that recognised aspects its own ailing health. The new London Bridge was the first new river crossing in the vicinity of the trading port and this proximity made it a potent symbol of national enterprise and commerce with which to highlight the central role of the capital city. It was also uniquely significant because it was constructed immediately alongside its medieval predecessor.¹² This juxtaposition of ancient and modern functioned as a physical manifestation of London's metamorphosis at the end of the long eighteenth century. Once the familiar form of old London Bridge was finally removed from the cityscape, the eighteenth century image of the Thames was effectively swept aside and the face of London and the symbolic meaning of its river were altered irrevocably.

In 1830 George Scharf (1788-1860) produced three large-scale lithographs commissioned by the London Bridge Committee of the City Corporation to coincide with the building scheme that would significantly impact on the image of the Thames [see Fig. 80].¹³ These views record the enormous scale of the works involved in the construction of the new London Bridge. A further lithograph was published in 1831 to commemorate the new river crossing's inauguration: *View of the opening of London Bridge by King William IV and Queen Adelaide*. In 1831, Scharf painted *View of the old and new London Bridges looking south, also showing St Magnus the Martyr* [Fig. 116]. This, and Scharf's other views of the large scale construction works on the northern and southern approaches, teem with the activity of working figures and clearly evoke the idea of a city in flux. They are also intrinsically optimistic images where the busy workers and the upheaval for which they are responsible will lead to a

⁸ See Ch. 3, p. 102.

⁹ See Hill, D. (1993), p. 152.

¹⁰ See App. 1. This phrase appears as an annotation to the lines: 'With that most costly Bridge, that doth him most renowne, By which he cleerely puts all other Rivers downe.'

¹¹ The 'long' eighteenth century, as defined by Colley, L. (1986), p. 359: '...began with [the] aristocratic revolution in 1688 and ended with another [The Reform Act] in 1832'.

¹² On the occasion of laying the foundation stone for new London Bridge in 1825 Lord Mayor, John Garratt, spoke of 'the increased commerce of the country, and the rapid strides made by the Sciences in this Kingdom'; quoted in Higgitt, R. (2012), p. 192.

¹³ Scharf's prints were produced from the two large-scale watercolours he painted for the Committee, each five feet in length (subsequently destroyed); see Ch. 3, p. 103.

perceived future improvement.¹⁴ A painting of *The Demolition of London Bridge* (c. 1832) by J. W. S. [Fig. 81] further highlights the march of the new by showing the solid replacement bridge dwarfing the remains of the old river crossing, its once monumental arches reduced to a series of pathetic crumbling stumps in the river. In 1833 a collection of engravings made from drawings by Edward William Cooke (1811-1880) were published under the title *Views of the Old and New London Bridge*.¹⁵ Scharf's detailed pictures, J. W. S.'s oil painting and Cooke's publication of prints effectively comprise an accurate account of the processes involved in the erection of John Rennie's new London bridge alongside its outdated and outmoded medieval predecessor. Finally, Cooke's images provide an unusual visual account of the latter's demolition. One of Cooke's views, *The Old and New London-Bridge* [Fig. 117] contrasts the clean lines and bright white granite of Rennie's wide, modern bridge with the squat and narrow medieval edifice. Here old London Bridge is presented as a dysfunctional relic with its overcrowded thoroughfare, darkly-shadowed archways and crumbling supports on rubble-strewn starlings. In the centre of the foreground a resting labourer reclines amongst the roughly hewn, unfinished blocks of granite, building materials for the replacement bridge. Having flung aside his empty tankard, the workman looks across towards the overcrowded old bridge and the chaos of congested traffic upon it. The gaze of this labourer, who together with the granite blocks represents the facilitation of the modern structure, functions as an invitation to the picture viewer to join in with this contemplation of the significance of the imminent irreversible destruction of the oldest of London's landmarks. Simultaneously Cooke's image suggests the promise of benefits that the new bridge will bring, a symbolism that was shared with other turn-of-the-century improvements occurring along the Thames as well as throughout the capital. In this case, the new London Bridge offers the advantages of light and airy archways for the easy passage of river transport and broad, open carriageways along which the road traffic can freely cross the Thames, neither hindered nor inconvenienced by cumbersome vestiges of the past.

The beginning of a new phase in the artistic visualisation of the Thames, and the opening of London Bridge in 1831 with which it loosely coincided, mark a shift away from the tradition of painted scenes of the urban riverscape in London. The established views, originally constructed in the mid-eighteenth century to align the image of the capital city and its river with the classicism of Venice or Rome, were overshadowed by a new imagery that increasingly promoted a domestic national identity. Such works consisted of precisely executed and neatly composed printed topographical views of the Thames in conjunction with architectural improvements that were closely associated with British commerce and sea power [see for example Figs 88, 89 and 92]. Topographical prints representing the commercial 'improvements' of entrepreneurial capitalism were well-received; they served to epitomise the prevalent ideologies by emphasising the city's visual magnificence.¹⁶ The new Vauxhall, Waterloo and Southwark bridges opened up south London to more than ribbon development and a network of factories transformed the south bank into the industrial powerhouse of post-

¹⁴ See Arscott, C. (2009), pp. 28-29.

¹⁵ Cooke, E. W. (1833).

¹⁶ This point is addressed by Potts, A. (1988), pp. 29 and 54: 'The new vision of London as something quite spectacularly out of the ordinary did have its roots in earlier perceptions of the city as a vast and bustling metropolis, but a definably new, darker and more intense and dramatic rhetoric does make its appearance by the 1820s'.

Napoleonic London. The early industrialists' exhilaration in physically mastering the environment for the improvement of commerce and in the completion of developments designed to further accommodate the needs of an expanding population found its visual counterpart in a new kind of painting: the circular 'panorama' invented by Robert Barker in 1792, which offered a 360-degree survey of the city with the accuracy of a camera obscura.¹⁷ These early panoramas of London seen from the south bank of the Thames can be interpreted in the context of other examples of entrepreneurial pride in the interplay between commerce and technology.¹⁸ England's first balloon ascent had taken place in London in 1784 and the novelty of an aerial view of the city was quickly exploited by architects in search of town planning commissions. This in itself provoked innovations in representational modes and visual technology. While there is no evidence to suggest that William Daniell himself rode in a balloon above London, his bird's-eye views are evocative of such an ascent, especially when envisioning George Dance the Younger's daring design for a replacement to London Bridge in 1800 [Fig. 58] or the newly opened West India Docks in 1802 [Fig. 89]. These grandiose and idealised visualisations of an imperial capital able to vie architecturally with Napoleonic Paris can be linked to the apparently boundless prospects opened up by the new aeronautical technology.¹⁹

As the city grew exponentially, so the sights of London and its river were considered less an embodiment of a patriotic national identity and more the unaesthetic agglomeration of bridges and warehouses that were mired in filth, smoke and general wretchedness that overwhelm Turner's *London from Greenwich Park* [Fig. 114]. Nevertheless, the idea of London, the great port city, became even more magnificent and powerful, and the dramatisation of the capital rapidly gained currency in travel and topographical writing and other forms of literature. However, the nineteenth century saw a lack of artistic engagement with the new visual 'drama' of modern city life heavily dominated by the activity of its newly industrialised port. This might be explained by the desire of the consuming middle classes to avoid the more troubling or alienating aspects of the environment they inhabited or visited, even when these subjects had become an integral part of the aesthetic response to the modern city environment in travel and topographical writing. Paintings of London and the Thames became increasingly sentimentalised and Victorian genre pictures frequently looked outside the metropolis, evidencing an agrarian nostalgia and a desire to reconstruct social harmony and deferentiality so conspicuously absent from the metropolis, but ideologically central to the rural genre tradition. English artists had initially responded to the romance of the industrialisation of the river but the fascination with technological progress had waned by the mid-nineteenth century. An increasing awareness of the problems of urbanisation in terms of pollution and other undesirable elements that were associated with the Thames meant that stark depictions of maritime London would have had little market potential.²⁰

The city was changing and providing new subjects for artists, but it was the manner in which it was portrayed that was ultimately revised. Before 1831, the artistic visualisation of

¹⁷ For example, Robert Barker's London panorama from the top of Albion Mills exhibited in 1792 and Thomas Girtin's *Eidometropolis* exhibited in 1802; see Hyde, R. (1988).

¹⁸ See Snell, G. (2013), pp. 31-51.

¹⁹ The new docks bolstered London's dominant role in Britain's imperial trade and global financial, communications and information networks [see Figs 88 and 89]; Fox, C. (1992), p. 54.

²⁰ Robinson, A. (2004), p. 125.

the Thames had been dominated by an iconography that focused attention on the positive: the modernisation of the metropolis and the industrialisation of the port city for the greater good of an expanding imperial nation. The image of the Thames in London embraced the advancements that would come to define the new era. However, another form of harsher Thames imagery was also emerging. The symbol of London's river retained its positive associations with the commercial wealth of the nation, but it also became tarnished with the filth of the river and the ensuing implications for public health that exposed the physical limitations of a city that had outgrown its infrastructure. By the 1840s the London Thames was branded a dirty and dangerous problem:

*Filthy river, filthy river,
Foul from London to the Nore,
What art thou but one vast gutter,
One tremendous common shore*²¹

This was not without reason, as the Thames and its tributaries were, at the turn of the nineteenth century, little more than sewers and there were regular outbreaks of water-borne diseases like cholera, which killed more than 5000 people in 1832.²² As early as 1828 William Heath, known as 'Paul Pry' (c. 1790-1840) had created an etching entitled *Monster Soup Commonly Called Thames Water, Being a Correct Representation of That Precious Stuff Doled Out to Us!*.²³ Heath's savage caricature, with its passing reference to the fashionable enthusiasm for the technology of natural science, reflects the distaste of the wider public for the brown and fetid fluids supplied by the Thames-side water companies, to whom the print was sarcastically dedicated. The allegorical Thames, once a purely majestic figure, was swiftly adapted to become a filthy vagrant, the nineteenth-century expression of the polluted river, as demonstrated by these lines from an edition of *Fraser's Magazine* published in 1848:

There was a time when Father Thames could compare with the best of his brother deities, if not in magnitude, at least in purity; but now, how sadly he must hang his metaphoric head as he sits in the conclave of river gods and nymphs, dirty and dishonoured! How unlike that vigorous immortal embodied by the chisel of Bacon, in the square of Somerset House!²⁴

The fall and degradation of 'Father Thames', frequently described with emotive adjectives such as 'dirty' and 'dishonoured', reinforce the shame that had become associated with the Thames. The physical state of the river was mocked by one *Punch* columnist who suggested in 1850 that 'any one who delights in Rambles by the River' should 'take a stroll along the banks of the Thames between Limehouse and Battersea' and it would not be long before he would 'find himself up to his knees in slush – the sort of Black Death which we are daily drinking – and though every step would add mud there would be nothing to admire'.²⁵ With 'nothing to admire' the early decades of the nineteenth century became a dark time in terms of the

²¹ Anon. (1848), 'Dirty Father Thames' in *Punch*, Jul-Dec.

²² White, J. (2007), p. 50.

²³ LMA: p5427045.

²⁴ 'The Thames: its Uses and Abuses', Vol. 38, p. 686.

²⁵ 'The Terrors of the Thames' (Jul-Dec), n.p.

imagining of the river and the Thames became increasingly associated with death, corruption and despair. In Charles Dickens' novels dating from the 1830s the Thames is repeatedly cast as a dank, stinking sludge, or the setting of murders and crime with the Thames as a metaphor for the corruption and poverty flowing through Victorian London. In 1851 Dickens published a piece by Richard Home in the weekly paper *Household Words* in which the eighteenth century personification of the Thames, in the form of John Bacon's Somerset House sculpture [Fig. 96], comes to life as a world-weary character who complains bitterly about the lack of respect he receives from the nineteenth-century metropolis. This bedraggled version of Father Thames, far from existing as a benign guardian of commerce, is resentful and the spread of disease represents his revenge on Londoners: 'I have been deeply injured, but I am amply avenged.'²⁶ The physical pollution of the river was also associated with immorality in Victorian London, especially the social disgrace represented by the figure of the 'fallen woman'. In contemporary paintings the positioning of a solitary woman by the river Thames was enough to indicate her 'fallen' status, and to suggest, if not actually to depict, as many did, her drowned body. Alexandra Warwick identifies the early nineteenth century as the first time that Londoners learnt to fear the increasingly abject river Thames.²⁷ The malodorous nature of the Thames is reflected in nineteenth century representations of the river as a place of moral and political degradation. This subject has been explored in depth in Lynda Nead's study of the representation of women in Victorian society. Nead reasons that the Thames was associated with the figure of the fallen woman as a cheap (and in the view of some Victorians) wholly appropriate place for such women to end their decent into sin with a watery suicide.²⁸

The rapid decent of the symbolic meaning attached to the Thames in visual art, particularly its diminishing reputation and its subsequent weakened ability to convey the accepted eighteenth-century allusions to wealth and happiness, fed into nineteenth-century fine art in pictures that represent the urban river, albeit with revised motives. Thomas Hood's poem, *The Bridge of Sighs* (1844) concerns the suicide of a homeless young woman who threw herself off a bridge over the Thames.²⁹ The poem describes the woman as having been immersed in the grimy water, but as a result she is washed so that whatever sins she may have committed are obliterated by the pathos of her death. The poem was widely anthologised and frequently illustrated in books of Victorian poetry, including an etching also titled *Bridge of Sighs* by Sir John Everett Millais which depicts a young woman standing by the Thames near Blackfriars Bridge, holding a child who, presumably born through an adulterous relationship, is the cause of her despair [Fig. 118]. Paintings inspired by the poem included Augustus Egg's *Past and Present* triptych of modern morality which depict the fate of a family ruined by a mother's adultery. The final scene is set under the Adelphi Arches by the Thames, a site which had fallen so far from its eighteenth-century heyday that it had become 'the lowest of all the profound deeps of human abandonment in this metropolis' according to *The Art Journal* [Fig. 119].³⁰ A further example is George Watts's social realist painting *Found Drowned* (c. 1848-50) which takes the legal term used by coroners as the title [Fig. 120]. The painting depicts a

²⁶ Home, R. (1851), pp. 445-50.

²⁷ Warwick, A. (2007), n.p.

²⁸ See Nead, L. (1988).

²⁹ Hood, Thomas (n.d.), "*Bridge of Sighs*." *Poetical Works*, pp. 526-29.

³⁰ *The Art Journal*, 1 May 1863, quoted in Wood, C. (1999), p. 53. The construction and celebration of the Adams' Adelphi Terrace in paintings is discussed in Ch. 3.

suicide victim, her legs still in the water, lying on the banks of the Thames. Again, the setting is underneath Waterloo Bridge, a site of celebration upon its opening in 1817, which within thirty years was notorious for suicides.³¹ A view of the industrialised south bank in the distance, rather than an acknowledgement of the role of commerce, is reimagined as a symbol of social dislocation and despair. Finally, George Cruikshank's morality tale charting the harmful effects of alcohol in *The Drunkard's Children* ends with the fictitious daughter covering her eyes with her hand as she throws herself to her death by leaping off the newly inaugurated London Bridge [Fig. 121]. A forest of masts, seen through an arch of the bridge, represents the trading ships that fill the mercantile port and signifies the relentless nature of the maritime commerce that underpins London and therefore the society to which this suicide has fallen victim.

Throughout this work it has been argued that the image of the river Thames in the visual art of the long eighteenth century rose up from a relatively subordinate role in landscape and topographic paintings to become a powerful symbol of national identity. This national identity, a complex and sometimes nebulous amalgam of Britishness, history, royalty, religion, economic wealth, imperial expansion and industrial progress, could be and was succinctly represented by London's river. The rural Thames west of London with its bucolic meadows and homes of the aristocracy connected the city with the English pastoral and history. The urban Thames in the centre of London was represented as a stage for royal and civic pageantry with St Paul's cathedral providing the backdrop and connecting the river with the Anglican Church. The commercial river east of old London Bridge, with its crowded wharves and quays, prosperous shipbuilding yards, functional royal dockyards and vast docks at the heart of imperial trade and naval power symbolised a modernising and forward-looking Britishness. With the nineteenth century came a shift in this paradigm and its early decades heralded new perspectives and meanings that would also become attached to a reinvented image of the Thames.

During the long eighteenth century the image of the Thames came to function as an assured confirmation of the marine power that underpinned Britain's maritime commerce and highlighted the nation's status as an expanding imperial nation. By the turn of the nineteenth century, confidence in the nation was expressed and reinforced by idealised views of a modernised Thames, newly adorned with capacious, well-organised docks and prestigious new bridges. Representations of Father Thames were adapted to an imperial iconography of the British Empire, but a new image of the Thames also emerged when the river became increasingly associated with pollution. This pollution was physical (the consequences of insanitary living conditions, industrialisation and an overpopulated city) and moral (in terms of prostitution, fallen women and suicide). However, the Victorian expressions of imperialism and empire, pollution and immorality, all stem entirely from a long-standing genealogy of Thames imagery that is rooted in eighteenth-century interpretations. London's river retained its role as an essential conduit of maritime trade well into the twentieth century, but the visual imagery of the Thames as 'the most famous market in the entire world' remain inextricably tied to the social ideologies and artistic constructs of the long eighteenth century.

³¹ See *The Opening of Waterloo Bridge ('Whitehall Stairs, June 18th, 1817')* by John Constable, TB: T04904.

FIGURES

Fig. 1



Van den Wyngaerde, Anthonis

The Tower and Greenwich – from the London Panorama [Detail] (1554)

Pen and ink over indications in black chalk

Ashmolean Museum of Art and Archaeology, University of Oxford: AN. WA1950.206.11 and WA1950.206.13

Fig. 2



Braun, Georg and Hogenberg, Frans

Map of Mid-Tudor London (1572)

Published in Braun, G. and Hogenberg, F. (1572) *Civitates Orbis Terrarum*

British Library, London: UIN BLL01004964566

Fig. 3



Visscher, Claes Jansz.

London (1616)

Etching on paper, 43 x 216.9 cm

British Museum, London: 1880,1113.1124.1-4

Fig. 4

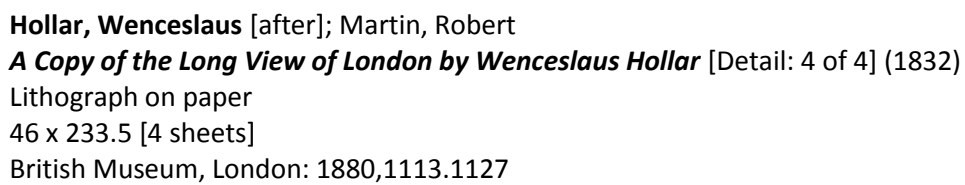


Hollar, Wenceslaus

London (1647)

Etching on paper, 46 x 232.7 cm

British Museum, London: G,13.25



A Copy of the Long View of London by Wenceslaus Hollar [Detail: 4 of 4] (1832)

46 x 233.5 [4 sheets]

British Museum, London: 1880,1113.1127

Fig. 6



Wenceslaus Hollar

Richmond Palace (c. 1640)

Oil on canvas mounted on oak panel, 33 x 77.5 cm

Society of Antiquaries of London, London: AN LDSAL 1304

Fig. 7



Hondius, Abraham

***The Frozen Thames, Looking Eastwards towards Old London Bridge, London* (1677)**

Oil on canvas, 107.8 x 175.6 cm

Museum of London, London: AN 35.190

Fig. 8



Griffier, Jan the Elder

***London and the River Thames from One Tree Hill, Greenwich Park* (c. 1690)**

Oil on canvas, 86.5 x 129.5 cm

National Maritime Museum, London: BHC1833

Fig. 9



Canaletto

***The Thames from the Terrace of Somerset House, Looking toward St Paul's* (c. 1750)**

Oil on canvas, 38.6 x 72.9 cm

Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection, New Haven, CT.: B1976.7.96

Fig. 10



Canaletto

***The Thames from the Terrace of Somerset House, Looking toward Westminster* (c. 1750)**

Oil on canvas, 38.7 x 71.8 cm

Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection, New Haven, CT.: B1976.7.97

Fig. 11



Sandby, Paul (attrib.)

View to the East from the Gardens of Somerset House (before 1776)

Pen, ink and watercolour over graphite, 51.4 x 189.3 cm

British Museum, London: G.13.31

Fig. 12



Sandby, Paul (attrib.)

View to the West from the Gardens of Somerset House (before 1776)

Pen, ink, wash and watercolour over graphite, 46.7 x 192.4 cm

British Museum, London: G.13.30

Fig. 13



Sandby, Paul

View from the Terrace of Old Somerset House (before 1775)

Oil on canvas, 37.5 x 65 cm

Victoria and Albert Museum, London: 158-1904

Fig. 14



Scott, Samuel (School of)

Entrance to the Fleet River (c. 1750)

Oil on canvas, 58 x 112 cm

Guildhall Art Gallery, City of London Corporation: AN 46

Fig. 15



Scott, Samuel
***A Danish Timber Bark Getting Under Way* (1736)**
Oil on canvas, 260.9 x 252.1 cm
National Maritime Museum, London: BHC1040

Fig. 16



Scott, Samuel

***A Morning, with a View of Cuckold's Point* (c. 1750-60)**

Oil on canvas, 52.1 x 95.9 cm

Tate Collection, London: N05450

Fig. 17



Scott, Samuel

***A Sunset with a View of Nine Elms* (c. 1750-60)**

Oil on canvas, 51.5 x 95.9 cm

Tate Collection, London: T01235

Fig. 18



Hogarth, William

The Idle 'Prentice turn'd away and sent to Sea (1747)

Etching and engraving on paper, 26.3 x 34.7 cm

British Museum, London: 1848,1125.214

Fig. 19



Cleveley, John

'St Albans' Floated out at Deptford, 1747 (1747)

Oil on canvas, 91 x 157 cm

National Maritime Museum, London: BHC1046

Fig. 20



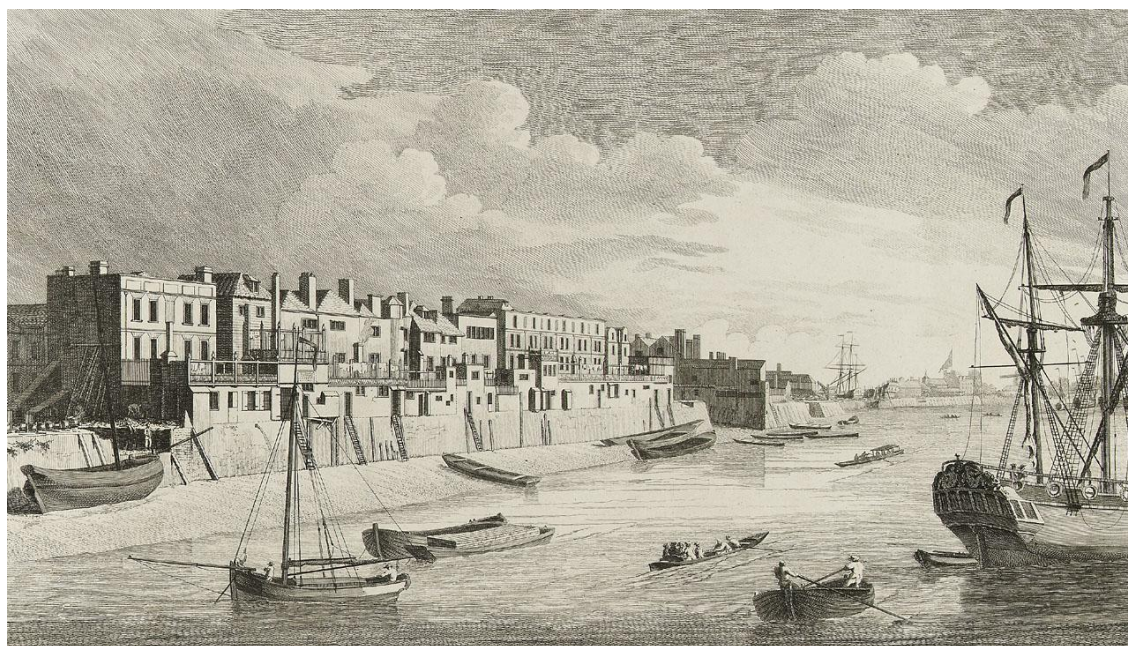
Bowles II, Thomas; published by Sayer, Robert

***A General View of the City of London, next the River Thames* (1751)**

Etching and engraving on paper, 25.9 x 39.9 cm

British Museum, London: 1880, 1113.1657

Fig. 21



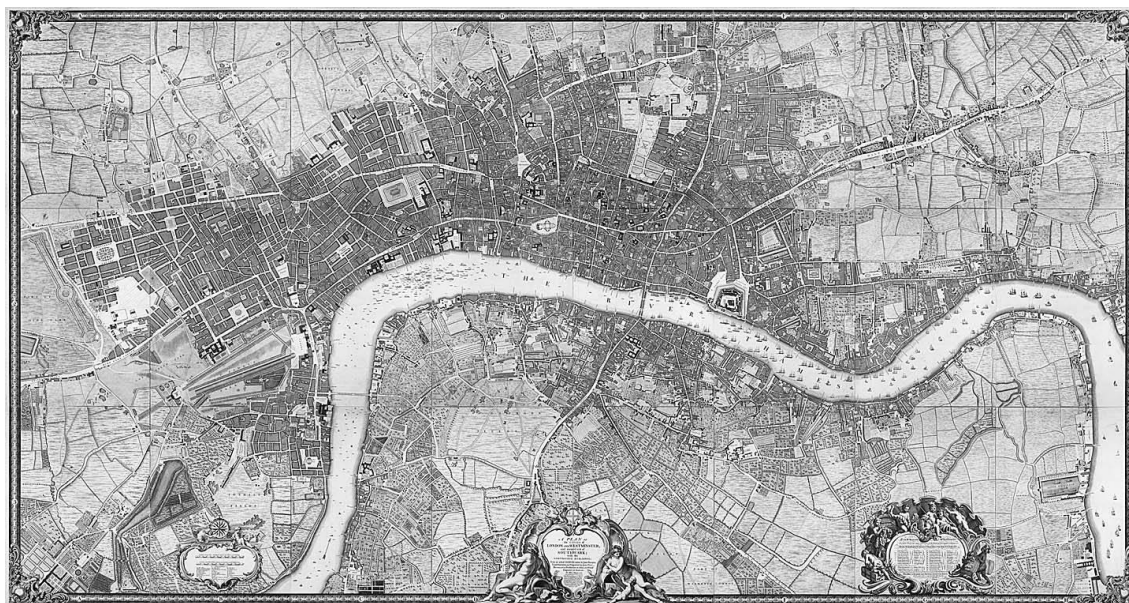
Boydell, John

A View taken near Limehouse Bridge, looking down the Thames (1751)

Etching on paper, 26.2 x 43 cm

National Maritime Museum, London: PAH2196

Fig. 22



Rocque, John

John Rocque's Plan of the Cities of London and Westminster and Borough of Southwark (1746)

Engraving on 24 sheets, paper on gauze, 55 x 103 cm

London Metropolitan Archives, London: q8972932

Fig. 23



Dodd, Robert; Woodfall. Published by Freeman & Co.
View of the River & Shipping at Limehouse (4 Jun 1793)
Hand-coloured aquatint and etching on paper, 55.7 x 81.2 cm
National Maritime Museum, London: PAI7128

Fig. 24

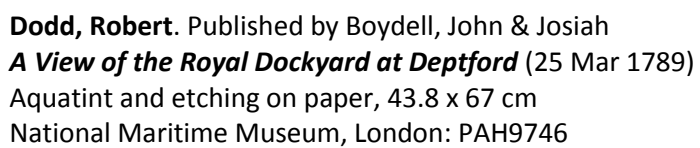


Boydell, John

***A View taken near the Store House, at Deptford* (1750)**

Hand-coloured etching and engraving on paper, 26.3 x 43 cm

British Museum, London: 1948,0310.2.69



Dodd, Robert. Published by Boydell, John & Josiah
A View of the Royal Dockyard at Deptford (25 Mar 1789)
Aquatint and etching on paper, 43.8 x 67 cm
National Maritime Museum, London: PAH9746

Fig. 26



Boydell, John

***A View of the Blackwall looking towards Greenwich* (1750)**

Hand-coloured etching on paper, 50.6 x 63.7 cm

National Maritime Museum, London: PAJ2700

Fig. 27



Anderson, William

Cavalry Embarking at Blackwall, 1793 (1793)

Oil on canvas, 48.3 x 63.5 cm

National Maritime Museum, London: BHC1805

Fig. 28



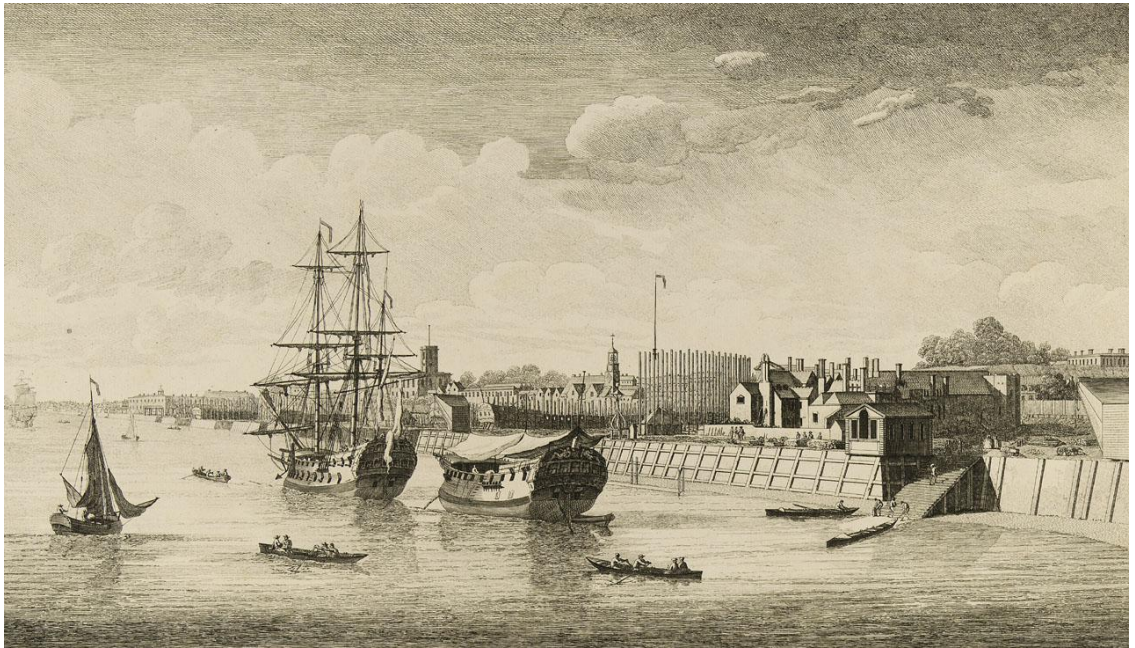
Mellish, Thomas

***Shipping off Woolwich* (1748)**

Oil on canvas, 88.7 x 123 cm

National Maritime Museum, London: BHC1048

Fig. 29

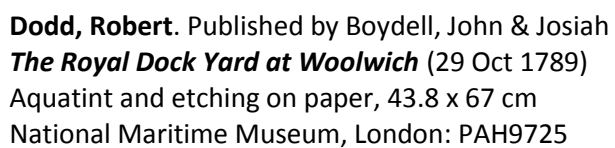


Boydell, John

***A View of Woolwich* (1750)**

Etching on paper, 26.4 x 43 cm

National Maritime Museum, London: PAH1990



Dodd, Robert. Published by Boydell, John & Josiah
The Royal Dock Yard at Woolwich (29 Oct 1789)
Aquatint and etching on paper, 43.8 x 67 cm
National Maritime Museum, London: PAH9725

Fig. 31



Farington, Joseph; Stadler, Joseph Constantine. Published by Boydell, John & Josiah
View of Greenwich from Deptford Yard (1 Jun 1795)
 Hand-coloured aquatint and etching on paper, 25.9 x 36.4 cm
 National Maritime Museum, London: PAH3295

Fig. 32



Gillray, James. Published by Humphrey, W.
The Liberty of the Subject (The Press Gang) (15 Oct 1779)
 Hand-coloured etching on paper, 25.9 x 36.7 cm
 National Maritime Museum, London: PAG8527

Fig. 33



Rowlandson, Thomas

The Press Gang (undated)

Graphite and watercolour on paper, 16.6 x 23.2 cm

National Maritime Museum, London: PAF5934

Fig. 34



Collings, Samuel; Barlow, J. Published by Bentley & Co.
Attic Miscellany. Manning the Navy (1 June 1790)
 Coloured etching on paper, 20 x 24 cm
 National Maritime Museum, London: PAD4732

Fig. 35



Morland, George

***The Cottage Door* (1790)**

Oil on panel, 35.5 x 45.7 cm

Royal Holloway College, Surrey: THC0046

Fig. 36



Morland, George

***The Press-Gang* (1790)**

Oil on panel, 35.5 x 45.7 cm

Royal Holloway College, Surrey: THC0047

Fig. 37



Bow Porcelain Co.

Thames Waterman (1750-54)

Porcelain figure, 200 x 145 x 85 mm

National Maritime Museum, London: AAA6052

Fig. 38



Anon.

Thames Waterman (c. 1785)

Hand-coloured mezzotint on paper, 36 x 27 cm

Lewis Walpole Library, Farmington, CT: 785.00.00.19

Fig. 39



Anon.

Gentleman Helping a Lady Into a Wherry (undated)

Etching on paper, 2.2 x 7.4 cm

National Maritime Museum, London: PAI9262

Fig. 40



Anon.

Waterman (undated)

Etching on paper, 11.1 x 6.9 cm

National Maritime Museum, London: PAI9347

Fig. 41



Rowlandson, Thomas

The Miseries of London....being assailed by a group of watermen.... (1816)

Pen and ink with graphite and watercolour, 29.2 x 24 cm

National Maritime Museum, London: PAF5935

Fig. 42



Anon. Published by Robert Sayer

Taking the water for Vauxhall. Be cautious my love – don't expose your leg. (1790)

Stipple etching on paper, 19.9 x 24.9 cm

British Museum, London: 1861,0518.959

Fig. 43



After Hayman, Francis

The Humours of a Wapping Landlady (c. 1743)

Etching and engraving on paper, 34.7 x 44 cm

British Museum, London: 1862,0614.1587

Fig. 44



Anon., published by Carington Bowles

Book 25 *The modern harlot's progress, or adventures of Harriet Heedless / Harriet being discarded for her infidelity, takes lodging, turns common, is attended by rakes and gamesters, and furnished by the millener, with dresses to continue her prostitution* (1780)

Hand-coloured etching on paper, 17.6 x 27.1 cm

British Museum, London: 1882,0909.5

Fig. 45



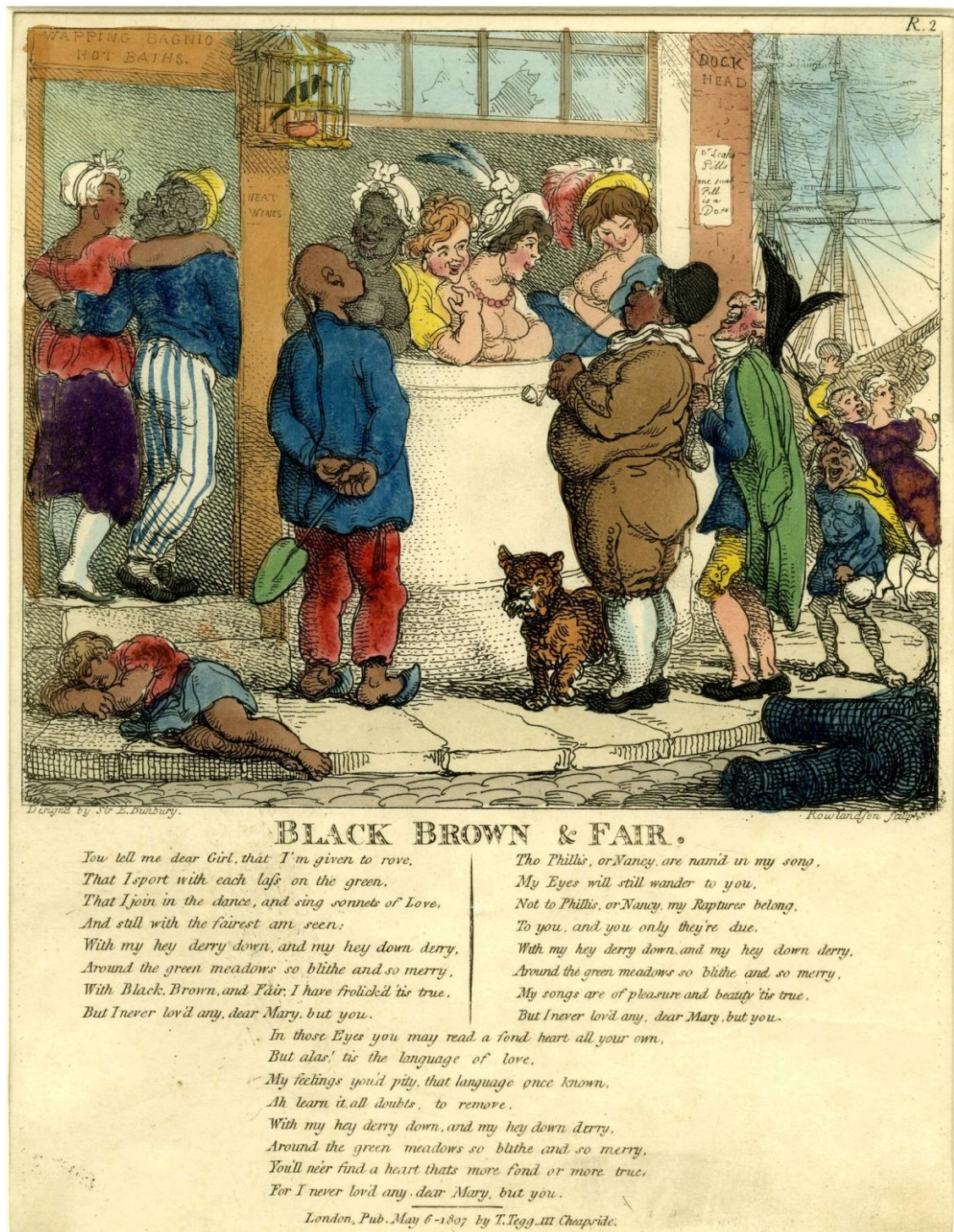
Anon., published by Laurie & Whittle

Meg of Wapping (12 Apr 1797)

Hand-coloured stipple etching on paper, 35.6 x 25.7 cm

British Museum, London: 1948,0214.402

Fig. 46



Rowlandson, Thomas, after Bunbury, Henry William; published by Thomas Tegg
Black, Brown & Fair (1807)
 Hand-coloured etching on paper, 27.8 x 21.6 cm
 British Museum, London: 1872,1012.4915

Fig. 47



Elmes, William; published by Thomas Tegg

Jack Jolly steering down Wapping in Ballast trim (29 Oct 1813)

Hand-coloured etching on paper, 24.8 x 34.7 cm

National Maritime Museum, London: PAF3787

Fig. 48



Elmes, William; published by Thomas Tegg

Jack in a white squall, amongst breakers – on the lee shore of St Catherines (16 Aug 1811)

Hand-coloured etching on paper, 25.8 x 35.3 cm

National Maritime Museum, London: PAF4153

Fig. 49



Rowlandson, Thomas; published by Rudolph Ackermann

Wapping (Sep 1807)

Hand-coloured etching and engraving on paper, 35.4 x 45.7 cm

National Maritime Museum, London: PAF3823

Fig. 50



Vanhaeck, Arnold

***The View and Humours of Billingsgate* (1736)**

Etching and engraving on paper, 45 x 58cm

British Museum, London: 1869,1211.86

Fig. 51



Rowlandson, Thomas

Billingsgate (1784)

Etching on paper, 11.2 x 17.3 cm

British Museum, London: 1875,0710.998

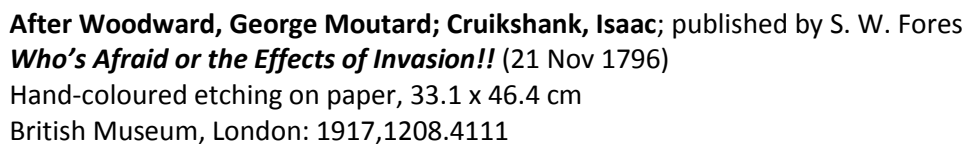
Fig. 52



Rowlandson, Thomas; Bluck, John; Pugin, Augustus Charles; published by Rudolph Ackermann
Billingsgate Market. Plate 9 (1 Mar 1808)

Aquatint on paper, 23.5 x 27.9 cm

National Maritime Museum, London: PAD1359



Who's Afraid of the Effects of Invasion!! (21 Nov 1796)

Hand-coloured etching on paper, 33.1 x 46.4 cm

British Museum, London: 1917,1208.4111

Fig. 54



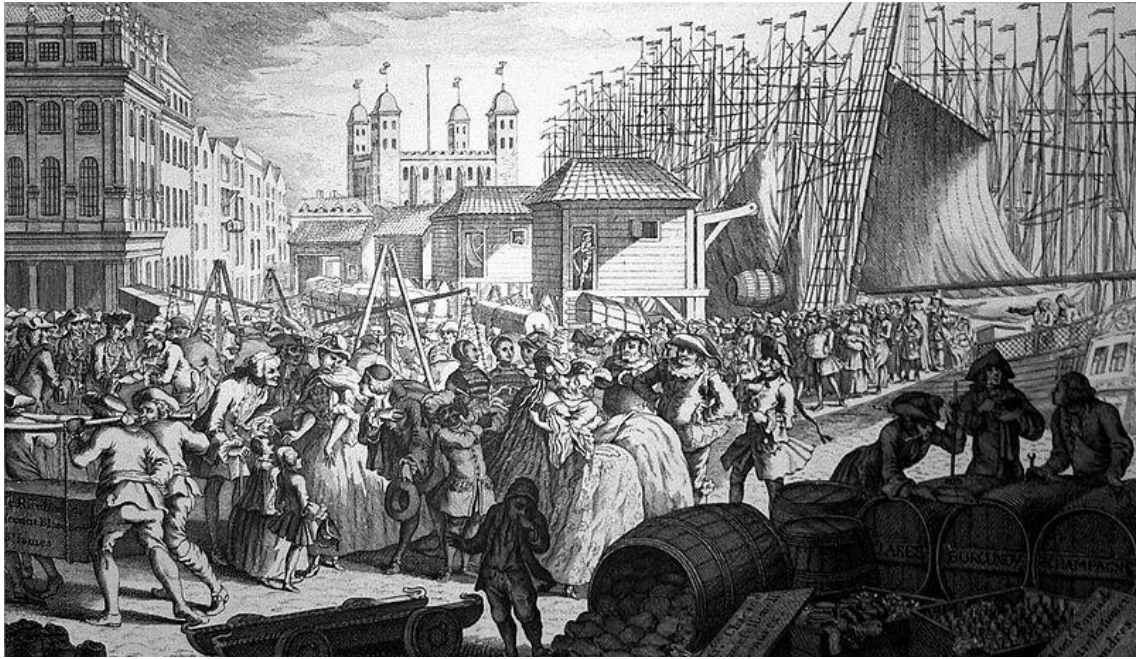
Rowlandson, Thomas; published by S. W. Fores
Billingsgate Brutes (1 Jan 1795)
 Hand-coloured etching on paper, 21 x 15.4 cm
 British Museum: 1878,0511.1388

Fig. 55



Sandby, Paul; published by Francois Vivarez
Twelve Cries of London: Mackerel Seller (1760)
 Etching on paper, 27.8 x 21.3 cm
 London Metropolitan Archives, London: p7515144

Fig. 56



Boitard, Louis Philippe; published by John Bowles & Son
The Imports of Great Britain from France (7 Mar 1757)
Etching on paper, 24.7 x 35 cm
British Museum, London: 1871,1209.981

Fig. 57



Bowles, Thomas after Maurer, J.; published by John Bowles, Henry Overton & Robert Sayer
A View of the Custom house, with part of the Tower, taken from the River Thames, London
(1753)

Engraving and etching on paper, 26.3 x 40.2 cm

National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London: PAJ0758

Fig. 58



Daniell, William

***George Dance's Design for the New London Bridge, London* (1802)**

Oil on canvas 92 x 182 cm

City of London Corporation, London: AN1378

Fig. 59



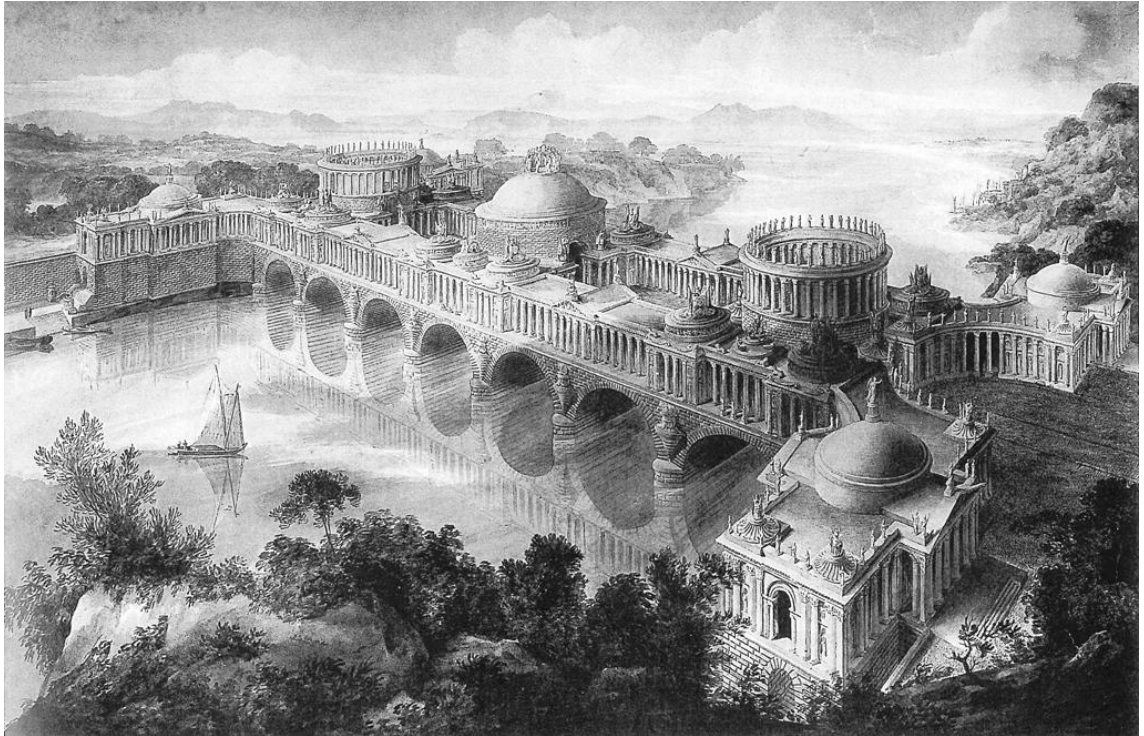
Piranesi, Giovanni Battista

***Ponte Magnifico* from *Prima Parte di Architettura e Prospettive* (1743)**

Etching on paper, 24 x 34.8 cm

British Library, London: Shelfmark 744.f.1(1)

Fig. 60



Gandy, Joseph Michael

View of a Design for a Triumphal Bridge made by Mr Soane at Parma 1780 (21 Jan 1799)

Pen, pencil and watercolour on paper, 47.5 x 73.6 cm

Sir John Soane's Museum, London: SM volume 60/174

Fig. 61



Sandby, Thomas

Design for a Bridge at Somerset House: View Looking East (after 1780)

Pen, ink and watercolour over pencil, 25.1 x 61.9 cm

Victoria & Albert Museum, London: D822-1899

Fig. 62



Feary, John

***One Tree Hill, Greenwich, with London in the Distance* (1779)**

Oil on panel, 69.9 x 121.9 cm

Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection, New Haven, CT: B1981.25.286

Fig. 63



Anon.

***Greenwich from the Park showing the Tudor Palace* (c. 1620)**

Oil on panel, 29 x 63.5 cm

National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London: BHC1820

Fig. 64



Griffier, Jan, The Younger

***The Thames during the Great Frost of 1739* (1739)**

Oil on canvas, 47 x 65 cm

City of London Corporation, London: AN1706

Fig. 65



Lens, Bernard III (attributed)

***View of a Frost Fair* (1740)**

Pen and ink with grey wash on paper, 15.1 x 34.4 cm

British Museum, London: 1880,1113.1756

Fig. 66



Nicholls, Joseph

***View of Westminster Bridge* (1740)**

Oil on canvas, 61.5 x 100.3 cm

University of Greenwich, London: AN91

Fig. 67



Scott, Samuel

The Building of Westminster Bridge (c. 1749)

Oil on canvas, 81.3 x 149.8 cm

The Governor and Company of the Bank of England, London: AN0589

Fig. 68



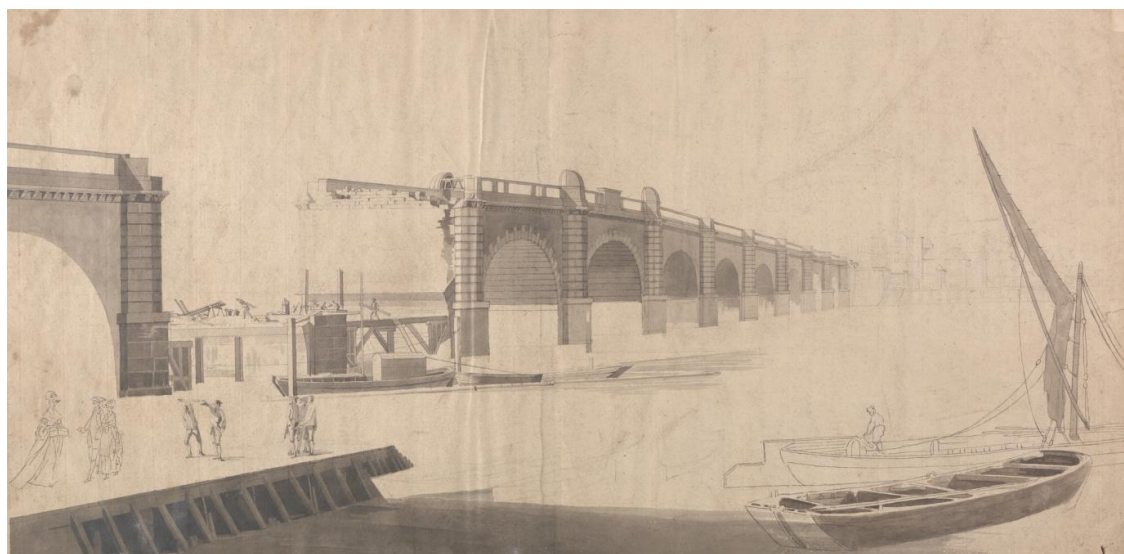
Canaletto

A View of Westminster Bridge, the Western Arches (1747)

Chalk, pen and brown wash on paper, 41.4 x 73.1 cm

British Museum, London: 1905,0520.1

Fig. 69



Scott, Samuel

Westminster Bridge Under Construction (undated)

Graphite and pen and black ink with grey wash on paper, 35.9 x 72.1 cm

Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection, New Haven, CT: B2009.5.4

Fig. 70



Sandby, Paul

A Group of Men on Westminster Pier (c. 1752)

Watercolour, pen and blank ink over graphite, 9.2 x 16.8 cm

Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, CT: B1977.14.6262

Fig. 71



Robert, Hubert

***La Démolition des Maisons du Pont Notre-Dame, en 1786* (1786)**

Oil on canvas, 8.5 x 159.5 cm

Musée Carnavalet, Paris: P 173

Fig. 72



Marlow, William

***Blackfriars Bridge and St Paul's Cathedral* (c. 1762)**

Oil on canvas, 104 x 168 cm

City of London Corporation, London: AN2185

Fig. 73



Turner, Daniel

A View of London Bridge (early 19th century)

Oil on panel, 11.4 x 15.9 cm

Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, CT: B2001.2.184

Fig. 74



Scott, Samuel

***Old London Bridge* (1749)**

Oil on canvas, 81.3 x 149.8 cm

The Governor and Company of the Bank of England, London

Fig. 75



De Jongh, Claude

***View of London Bridge* (c. 1632)**

Oil on panel, 48.9 x 109.2 cm

Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection, New Haven, CT: B2005.4

Fig. 76



Anon.

***Frost Fair on the Thames, with Old London Bridge in the distance* (c. 1685)**

Oil on canvas, 64.1 x 76.8 cm

Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection, New Haven, CT: B1976.7.113

Fig. 77



Collings, Samuel

Frost Fair on the Thames (1788 to 1789)

Oil on canvas, 76.7 x 122.4 cm

Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection, New Haven, CT: B1976.7.99

Fig. 78



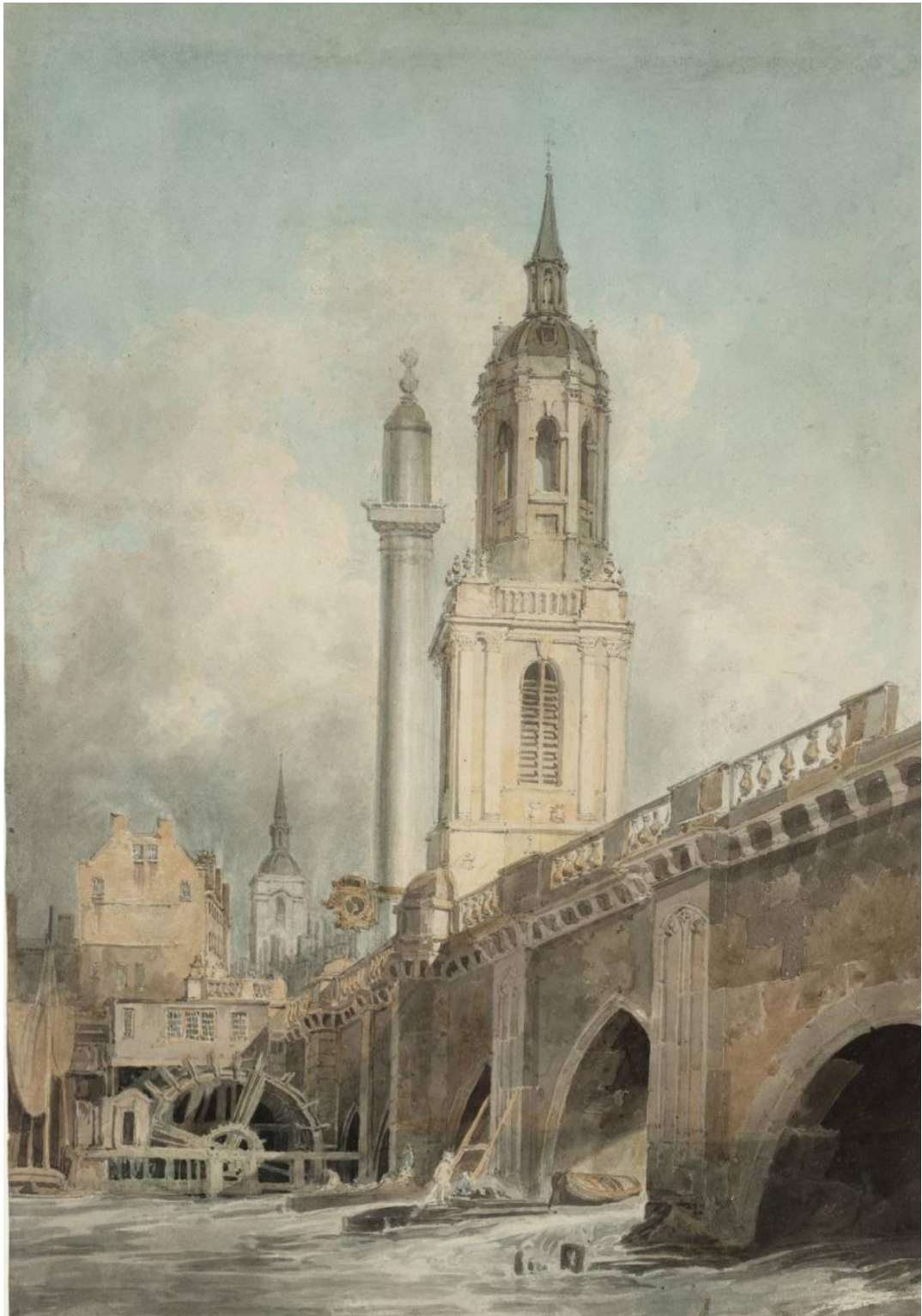
Nickolls, Joseph

View of the City of London from the South Bank of the Thames with Old London Bridge, Fishmongers' Hall and the Monument (1758)

Oil on canvas, 61 x 112 cm

Rountree Fine Art, London

Fig. 79



Turner, J. M. W.

Old London Bridge, with the Monument and the Church of St Magnus King and Martyr (1794-5)

Pencil and watercolour on paper, 34.2 x 21.7 cm

Tate Collection, London: D00696, TB XXVIII K

Fig. 80



Scharf, George

***A View of the Northern Approach to London Bridge while in a State of Progress* (1830)**

Lithograph, 53.7 x 75.2 cm

Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, CT: B1977.14.19087

Fig. 81



J. W. S.

Demolition of Old London Bridge (c. 1832)

Oil on canvas, 53 x 79 cm

City of London Corporation, London: AN515

Fig. 82



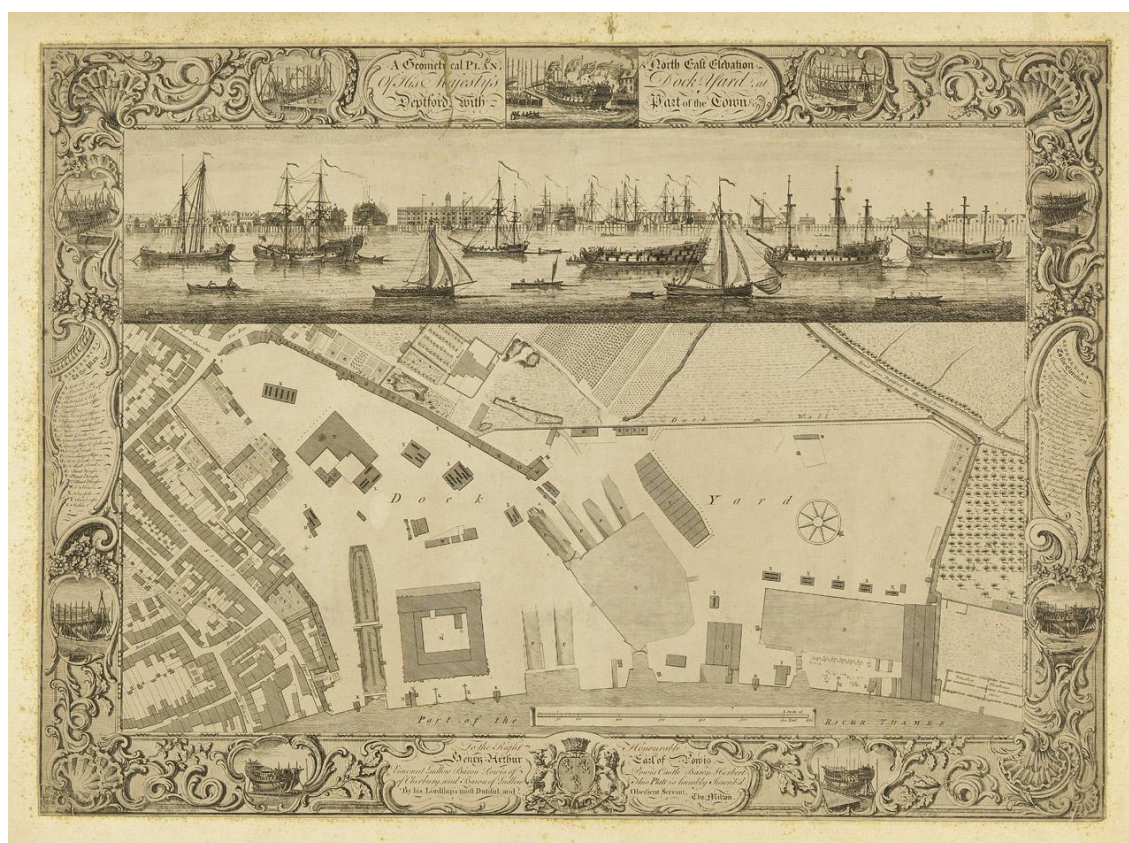
Stanfield, Clarkson

The Opening of London Bridge by William IV, August 1st 1831 (c. 1831)

Oil on canvas, 71 x 91cm

City of London Corporation, London: AN1260

Fig. 83



Canot, Pierre Charles; after Milton, Thomas and Cleveley, John, The Elder

A Geometrical Plan and North East Elevation of His Majesty's Dockyard at Deptford... (30 Jul 1753)

Engraving and etching on paper, 47.4 x 65.2 cm

National Maritime Museum, London: PAI5606

Fig. 84



Farington, Joseph

Deptford Dockyard (c. 1794)

Oil on canvas, 138.5 x 195.5 cm

National Maritime Museum, London: BHC1874

Fig. 85



Pocock, Nicholas
***Woolwich Dockyard* (1790)**
 Oil on canvas, 138.5 x 279.5 cm
 National Maritime Museum, London: BHC1950

Fig. 86



Reed, William and Roberts, Thomas
***Royal Dockyard at Deptford* (c. 1774)**
 Laminate, metal, mica, paint, paper and wood, 17 x 162.8 x 91.5 cm
 National Maritime Museum, London: SLR2906

Fig. 87



Reed, William and Roberts, Thomas

Royal Dockyard at Woolwich (1772-1774)

Bone, brass, cotton, laminate, metal, paint and wood, 9.5 x 116 x 41.7 cm

National Maritime Museum, London: SLR2905

Fig. 88



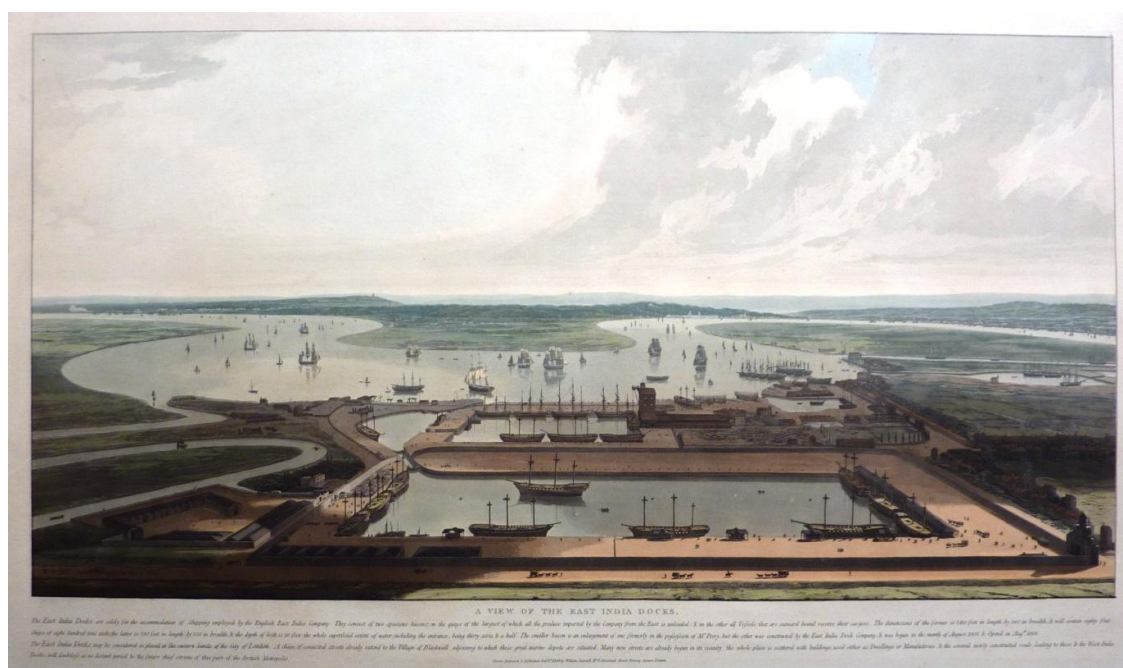
Daniell, William

An Elevated View of The New Docks & Warehouses now constructing on the Isle of Dogs near Limehouse for the reception & accommodation of shipping in the West India Trade... (15 Oct 1802)

Coloured aquatint and etching on paper, 46.4 x 79.8 cm

National Maritime Museum, London: PAI7124

Fig. 89



Daniell, William

A View of the East India Docks (1 Oct 1808)

Hand-coloured aquatint on paper, 40.5 x 77.8 cm

National Maritime Museum, London: PAJ2438

Fig. 90



Holman, Francis

Blackwall Yard from the Thames (1784)

Oil on canvas, 94 x 202 cm

National Maritime Museum, London: BHC1866

Fig. 91



Daniell, William

Six Views of London: Title Sheet (1 Jan 1805)

Aquatint and soft ground etching on paper, 40 x 54 cm

Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection, New Haven, CT: B1977.14.18530

Fig. 92



Daniell, William

Plate II: London, the Pool and the Tower from Six Views of London (1 Aug 1804)

Hand-coloured aquatint on paper, 40 x 54 cm

Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection, New Haven, CT: B1977.14.18532

Fig. 93



Anonymous

The Rhinebeck Panorama of London (c. 1806-07)

Watercolour on paper, 71 x 259 cm

Museum of London, London: ID no. 98.57

Fig. 94



Barry, James

Commerce, or the Triumph of the Thames (1783 - with additions in 1801)

360 x 462 cm

The Royal Society, London.

Fig. 96



Bacon, John [Senior]

***George III with the River Thames* (1789)**

Bronze figures, stone pedestal, figure of George III 220 cm high,
 'Thames' 280 cm long, pedestal 210 cm high
 Somerset House, London.

Fig. 97



Blake, William

***Illustration for the Poems of Thomas Gray: Ode on a distant prospect of Eton College* (1771)**

Black ink and watercolour on paper, 41.9 x 32.4 cm

Paul Mellon Collection, Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, CT.: B1992.8.11(8) Verso

Fig. 98



The Coade Factory after Bacon, John

River God (Father Thames) (c. 1800)

Coade stone on a carved stone plinth, figure and plinth 195 x 228.5 x 102 cm

Ham House, London (North Courtyard)

Fig. 99



Taylor, Robert

***The City of London trampling Envy and receiving the Benefits of Plenty brought to London by the River Thames* (1744-5)**

Portland stone, 5 x 14.5 m

Pediment Sculpture, Mansion House, London.

Fig. 101



Rysbrack, John Michael

***Britannia Receiving the Riches of the East* (1728-1730)**

Bas relief overmantel

Foreign and Commonwealth Office, London.

Fig. 102



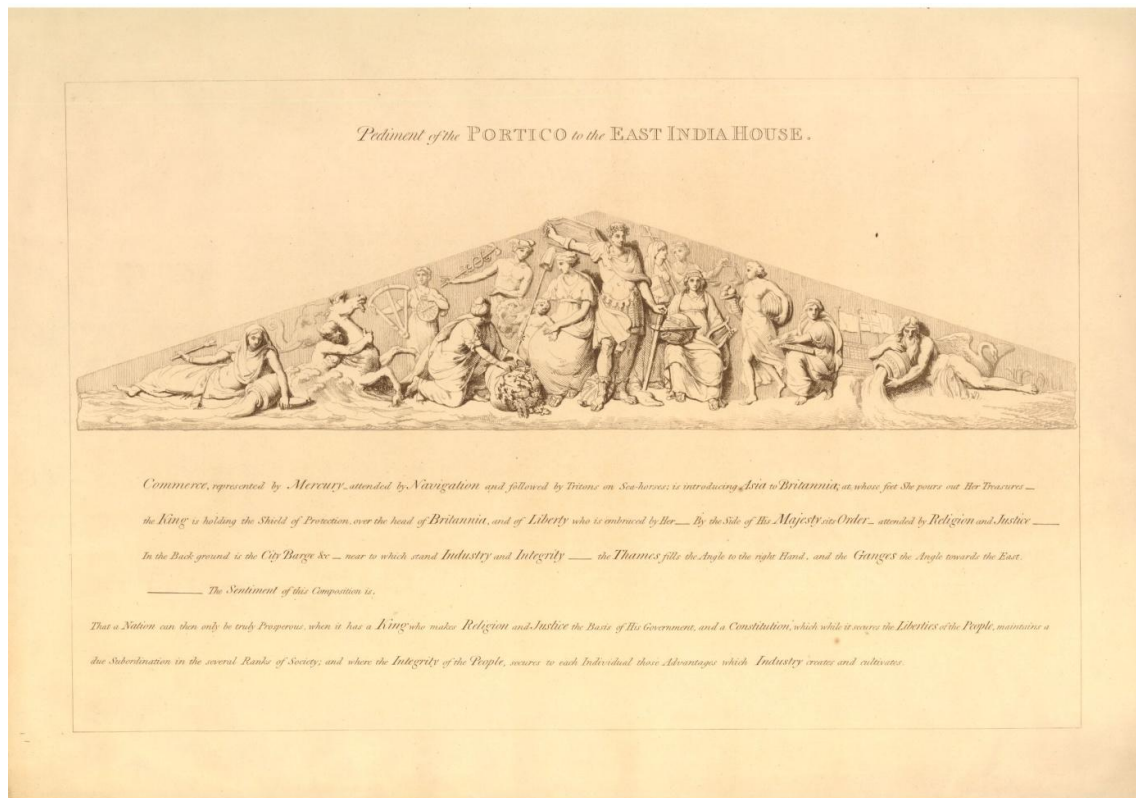
Roma, Spiridione

***The East Offering its Riches to Britannia* (1778)**

Oil on canvas, oval 228 x 305 cm

Foreign and Commonwealth Office, London.

Fig. 103



Bacon, John [after]

***Pediment of the Portico to the East India House* (1793-1811)**

Soft-ground etching on paper

British Museum, London: 1852,0328.33

Fig. 104



Smirke, Robert [after]; Thew, Robert; published by Boydell, Josiah
Conjugal Affection (29 Sep 1799)

Stipple engraving on paper, 49 x 62.8 cm

British Museum, London: 1880,1113.1554

Fig. 105



Pugin, Augustus Charles and Rowlandson, Thomas [after]; Bluck, John; published by Ackerman, Rudolph

Common Council Chamber, Guildhall (1808)

Book-illustration; hand-coloured etching and aquatint on paper, 27.6 x 23.6 cm
London Metropolitan Archives, London: q5613196

Fig. 106



Hogarth, William

Marriage A-la-Mode: 6, The Lady's Death (c. 1743)

Oil on canvas, 69.9 x 90.8 cm

National Gallery, London.

Fig. 107



Hogarth, William

Marriage A-la-Mode: 6, The Lady's Death [Detail] (c. 1743)

Oil on canvas, 69.9 x 90.8 cm

National Gallery, London.

Fig. 108



Singleton, Henry [after]; Ward, William; published by Simpson, Thomas
Industry and Oeconomy (9 Apr 1794)
 Mezzotint on paper, 65.1 x 48.3 cm
 National Maritime Museum, London: PAH7343.

Fig. 109



Singleton, Henry [after]; Ward, William; published by Simpson, Thomas
Extravagance and Dissipation (25 Mar 1794)

Mezzotint on paper, 64 x 48 cm

National Maritime Museum, London: PAH7356

Fig. 110



Morland, George [after]; **Ward, William**; published by **Simpson, Thomas**
The Fruits of Early Industry & Oeconomy (1 Nov 1789)
 Mezzotint on paper, 55.4 x 40.3 cm
 British Museum, London: 1860,0728.138

Fig. 111



Morland, George [after]; **Ward, William**; published by **Simpson, Thomas**
The Effects of Youthful Extravagance & Idleness (25 Mar 1794)
 Mezzotint on paper, 62.5 x 47.5 cm
 British Museum, London: 1878,0914.12

Fig. 112



Thornhill, James

The Painted Hall at the Old Royal Naval College [Detail] (1708-1712)

Oil on plaster, total area 2612 sqm

The Painted Hall at the Old Royal Naval College, Greenwich, London.

Fig. 113



Cosway, Maria

***The Birth of the Thames* (1802)**

Stipple etching on paper, 56.7 x 43.4 cm

British Museum, London: 1873,0809.232

Fig. 114



Turner, Joseph Mallord William
London from Greenwich Park (exh. 1809)
Oil on canvas, 90.2 x 120 cm
Tate Britain, London: N00483

Fig. 115



Turner, Joseph Mallord William

Near the Thames' Lock, Windsor (exh. 1809)

Oil on canvas, 89 x 118 cm

Tate Britain, London: T03877 [in situ at Petworth House, West Sussex]

Fig. 116



Scharf, George

View of the old and new London Bridges looking south, also showing St Magnus the Martyr
(1831)

Watercolour on paper, longest dimension 68 cm

London Metropolitan Archives, London: q6888676

Fig. 117



Cooke, Edward William

***The Old and New London Bridge* (1830)**

Hand coloured engraving, 32.9 x 41.9 cm

Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, CT: B1977.14.15447

Fig. 118



Millais, John Everett

The Bridge of Sighs (19th century)

Etching on paper, 17.5 x 12.5 cm

Victoria and Albert Museum, London: E.464-1903

Fig. 119



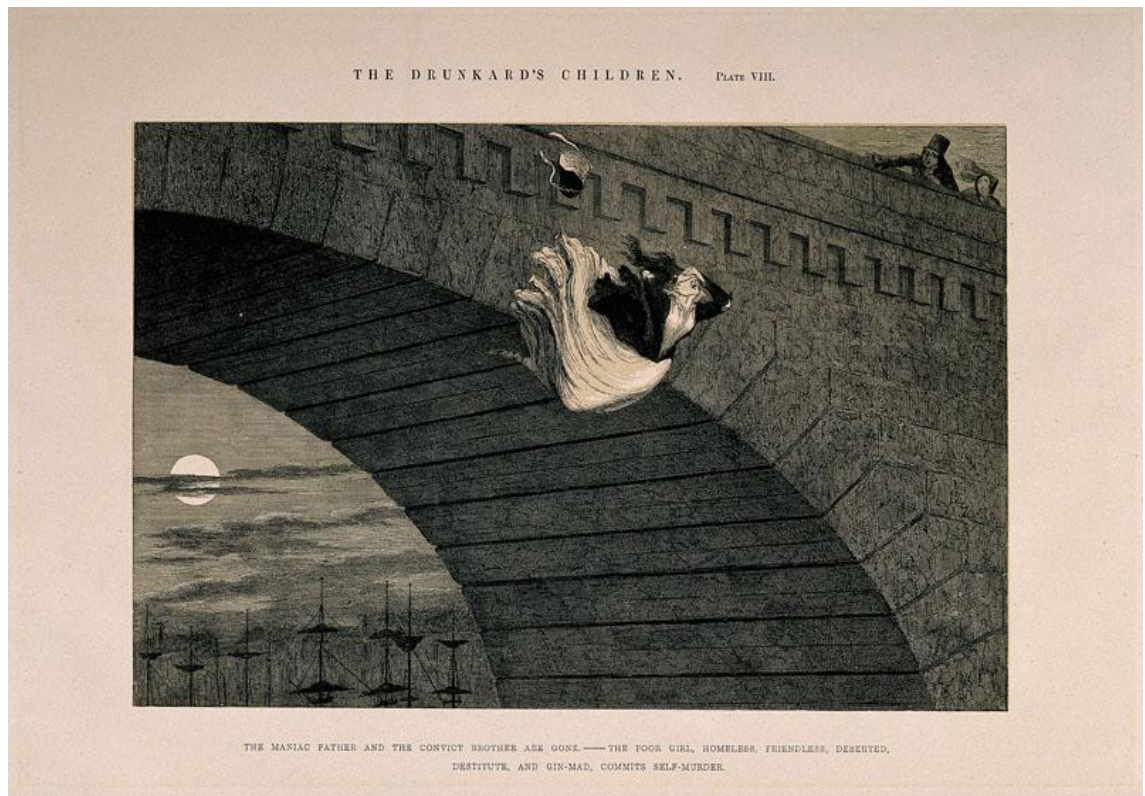
Egg, Augustus Leopold
***Past and Present, No. 3* (1858)**
Oil on canvas, 63.5 x 76.2 cm
Tate Britain, London: N03280

Fig. 120



Watts, George Frederic
Found Drowned (1848-1850)
Oil on canvas, 119.4 x 213.4 cm
Watts Gallery, Surrey: COMWG. 161

Fig. 121



Cruikshank, George

***The Drunkard's Children [Plate VIII]* (1848)**

Woodcut on paper, longest dimension 39 cm

London Metropolitan Archives, London: p7517982

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APPENDIX

Appendix 1

But now this mighty Flood, upon his voyage prest,
 (That found how with his strength, his beauties still increast,
 From where, brave *Windsor* stood on tip-toe to behold
 The faire and goodly *Tames*, so farre as ere he could,
 With Kingly houses Crown'd, of more than earthly pride,
 Upon his either Banks, as he along doth glide)
 With wonderfull delight, doth his long course pursue,
 Where *Otlands*, *Hampton Court*, and *Richmond* he doth view,
 Then *Westminster* the next Great *Tames* doth entertaine;
 That vaunts her Palace large, and her most sumptuous Fane:
 The Lands tribunall seate that challengeth for hers,
 The crowning of our Kings, their famous sepulchers.
 Then goes he on along by that more beautious Strand,
 Expressing both the wealth and the bravery of the Land.
 (So many sumptuous Bowres, within so little space,
 The All-beholding Sun scarce sees in all his race.)
 And on by *London* leads, which like a Crescent lies,
 Whose windowes seem to mock the Star be-freckled skies;
 Beside her rising Spyres, so thick themselves that show,
 As doe the bristling reeds, within his Banks that growe.
 There sees his crouded Wharfs, and people-pestred shores,
 His Bosome over-spread, with shoales of labouring ores:
 With that most costly Bridge, that doth him most renowne,
 By which he cleerely puts all other Rivers downe.

From: Drayton, M. (1622), *Poly-Olbion*, The Seventeenth Song, p.259.