

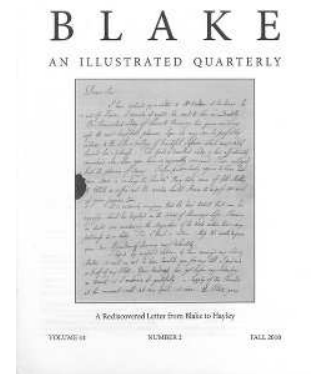
# AN ILLUSTRATED QUARTERLY BLAKE

A R T I C L E

## “the fiends of Commerce”: Blake’s Letter to William Hayley, 7 August 1804

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"the fiends of Commerce":  
Blake's Letter to William Hayley,  
7 August 1804

BY MARK CROSBY AND ROBERT N. ESSICK

WILLIAM BLAKE's letters to William Hayley, February 1800 to December 1805, are a significant resource for our understanding of Blake's life during that period, one in which Hayley and Thomas Butts were major patrons for his art. Thirty-four of thirty-seven recorded letters to Hayley were sold as part of the "Hayley Correspondence" at Sotheby's London, 20 May 1878, lots 1-18, 20-33. None of these had been published prior to the auction; thirteen have been untraced since the late nineteenth century. Fortunately, nine among those now untraced were published in the second edition of Gilchrist's *Life*.<sup>1</sup> It would be unwise to trust the 1880 transcriptions in the finer points of punctuation, capitalization, and spelling, but at least they provide us with most of the verbal contents of these letters. The texts of the remaining four—dated in the 1878 catalogue to 19 September 1803, 7 August 1804, 9 August 1804, and 17 May 1805—have been known only through excerpts in that catalogue, supplemented by additional quotations from the 7 August 1804 letter in an 1885 auction catalogue.<sup>2</sup> The discovery of any of the untraced

The original spelling and punctuation have been retained in all quotations.

1. Alexander Gilchrist, *Life of William Blake*, 2 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1880) 1: 163-64, 194-95, 205-06, 209-13, 215-16, 218-20, 222-23. Gilchrist died in 1861; the 1880 edition was prepared by his widow, Anne, with the assistance of Dante Gabriel and William Michael Rossetti. W. M. Rossetti often regularized Blake's writings. The Gilchrist transcriptions are reprinted in standard editions, including *William Blake's Writings*, ed. G. E. Bentley, Jr. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), vol. 2; *The Letters of William Blake with Related Documents*, ed. Geoffrey Keynes, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980); and *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, ed. David V. Erdman, newly rev. ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), hereafter cited as "E" followed by page number. For some of the normalizations and even omissions in the Gilchrist transcriptions, see Bentley, *Blake's Writings* 2: 1755n2.

2. Sotheby's London, 27 July to 1 Aug. 1885, lot 1031 on the final day. The 1885 excerpts are printed in Bentley, *Blake's Writings* 2: 1610 and in E 754, but only the passages from 1878 are included in Keynes, *Letters* 98. The 17 May 1805 letter was very probably among the eleven manuscripts (ten letters, apparently plus the "Charge of Sedition" against Blake, sold to Quaritch as lot 34 in the 1878 auction) offered in Bernard Quaritch's *General Catalogue of Books* of 1880, item 12,893 (£52.10s.). This group definitely included two letters, and probably six others, purchased by

letters, and particularly those not printed in Gilchrist, would be a significant event for Blake scholarship. The 7 August 1804 letter came to light late in 2009, after an absence of 124 years.

It was acquired at the 1878 auction, lot 22, by the London dealer F. Naylor for £3.10s. and sold posthumously from his stock at the 1885 auction for £3.18s. to the London dealer Molini and Green of King William Street, Strand. The letter next came to market at Sotheby's London on 17 December 2009, lot 72.<sup>3</sup> According to this last auction catalogue, it had resided for many decades, possibly since the 1880s, in the collection of Robert Griffin (c. 1840-1921) of Court Garden, Marlow, Buckinghamshire. It then passed "by descent" to Sotheby's anonymous vendor. There may have been several bidders up to the low estimate of £25,000, but from that point bidding continued in small increments between two parties. The lot was sold to the San Francisco book dealer John Windle acting for Robert Essick for £38,000 (£46,850 inclusive of the buyer's premium), a hammer price £3000 above the high estimate. Sotheby's sent Windle digital images of the letter, exclusive of the address, on 18 December. He immediately passed these along to Essick, but the latter did not receive the original document until 9 February 2010 (see illus. 1-3).

The letter is written in pen and black ink on a sheet of laid paper folded to make two leaves, and then folded several more times to form a packet typical of most eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century letters sent through the post. The body covers two and a half pages, with the address on the verso of the third page. Blake wrote in a very clear hand; the address approaches the formality and quality of his calligraphic writing (or "copperplate hand") in the *Four Zoas* manuscript of c. 1796-1807. The left margin of the text is neatly maintained on all three pages. The care that Blake took with his penmanship suggests that he considered this to be a significant letter addressed to a correspondent deserving respectful attention.

On the following pages is a complete transcription. We have preserved Blake's spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and lineation.

Blake refers to a number of individuals that may not be immediately familiar. "M<sup>r</sup> Walker" is Adam Walker (1731-1821), a self-taught natural philosopher and author who shared a house with Henry Moyes, another scientist, in George Street, Hanover Square, London, where they gave public lectures on scientific subjects.<sup>4</sup> Like Hayley, Walker was a member of the Unincreasable Club, a Whig dining club that convened at the Queen's Head, Holborn, and a longtime friend of the painter George Romney. Blake's dealings with Walker were part of his efforts to help Hayley locate Romney's paintings.

Quaritch in 1878 and known only through the transcriptions in Gilchrist. There are no quotations from the letters in Quaritch's catalogue.

3. For the excerpts printed in the 2009 catalogue, see Essick, "Blake in the Marketplace, 2009," *Blake* 43.4 (spring 2010): 119-20.

4. For Walker and Moyes, see Albert Edward Musson and Eric Robinson, *Science and Technology in the Industrial Revolution* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1969) 125.

[address]

To

William Hayley Esq<sup>re</sup>  
Felpham near  
Chichester  
Sussex

[page 1]

Dear Sir

I have deliverd your Letter to M<sup>r</sup> Walker. at his house. he is out of Town. I desired it might be sent to him immediately 'Our benevolent Lady of Lavants Recovery, has given me & my wife the most heartfelt pleasure. hope she may soon be perfectly restored to the hills & valleys of beautiful Sussex which must sadly lament her sickness \_ The Good & Excellent Lady & her affectionately rememberd Son, whom you have so agreeably announcd. I have not yet had the pleasure of seeing. I also particularly rejoice to hear that your Muse is rocking the Cradle Pray take care of both Mother & Child & suffer not the wicked harlot Prose to ingross too much of your precious time

It is certainly necessary that the best Artists that can be engaged should be Employd in the Work of Romneys Life. Flaxman no doubt was considering the Magnitude of the Work rather than any politeness to a Lady. This I think is certain Miss. W. would Engrave your Sons Medallion of Romney most delicately.

I hoped by incessant Labour to have managed my Money Matters so well as not to have troubled you for any till I producd a Proof of my Plate. Your Kindness has got before my Industry as Usual & I embrace it gratefully. a Supply of ten Pounds at this moment will set me quite at ease. the Plate goes

[page 2]

on with Spirit & neatness as does Romneys Head I doubt not to get that which it wants by labour. & attention. I know my own weak side & will by labour supply what Genius Refuses how it can be that lightness should be wanting in my Works, while in my life & constitution I am too light & aerial is a Paradox only to be accounted for by the things of another World. Money flies from me Profit never ventures upon my threshold tho every other mans door stone is worn down into the very Earth by the footsteps of the fiends of Commerce. Be it so as long as God permits which I foresee is not long I foresee a mighty Change Your kind Genius will at length conquer for me this heaviness I will obey to a tittle your kind hints & I do know that Soon these fiends will be vanquishd \_ Thanks for the very beautiful Verses you sent me they would furnish very beautiful Designs but I dare not touch any thing but the Graver for some time to come & they will no doubt fall to the Lot of some happier Designer before that time

You have quite Elated my Wife & not a little  
made me remember my own unworthiness. by your kind  
Klopstockian Compliment to her. She desires me with  
her affectionate remembrances to you to Assure you  
[page 3]  
that She thinks herself Quite as happy in every respect. Wishes  
she was as worthy. This she makes me write & I obey  
her injunction merely because it is a Wifes regard to her  
Husband to which every one allows a Great deal of Latitude  
with hers accept my Affectionate Respects

I am Dear Sir

7 August

Yours Sincerely

1804

[1] 7 S<sup>th</sup> Molton S<sup>t</sup>.

Will<sup>m</sup> Blake

1. (right) Blake, autograph letter signed to William Hayley, 7 August 1804. Essick collection. Address, seal, and postmark on the left, page 1 of the letter on the right. Pen and black ink on laid paper, full sheet 22.8 x 36.6 cm. folded to make two leaves of 22.8 x 18.3 cm., then folded several more times to make a letter packet. A large watermark in the center of the full sheet shows a shield with a horn within, the shield surmounted by a crown and with a finial at its lower termination. Below these motifs is an elaborate JW cipher that identifies the paper as Whatman; see Thomas Balston, *James Whatman Father and Son* (London: Methuen, 1957) 157-58. The chain lines are 2.4 cm. apart. The paper is in a remarkably fine state of preservation; it may have been professionally cleaned shortly before its sale at Sotheby's in December 2009.

Blake sealed the letter with the wax (illus. 3) still present along the left edge. When the letter was opened, presumably by Hayley, the right edge of the folded sheet (middle of the full sheet shown here) tore away, leaving a large, round hole affecting only Blake's street number on the final page (illus. 2). The poorly printed postmark, half below the seal and half below the central hole, indicates the month ("A" and part of "U" for August, below the hole) and year ("[1]804," below the seal). The day of the month is within the inner circle, but only a fragment of the number is printed. The double ring of the postmark indicates that the letter was posted during the evening (that is, late afternoon) shift of the post office. See Bentley, *Blake's Writings* 2: 1753-55, and John G. Hendy, *The History of the Early Postmarks of the British Isles* (London: Gill, 1905), for information on early nineteenth-century postmarks.

Right of the word "near" in the address is a large, curled line that may be a "6" or "9" or a lowercase "g." This was written in dark brown ink, similar to the ink used for the postmark, rather than in Blake's black ink. The same number or letter, also in

brown ink, is written over or next to the address on several other letters by Blake, including those of 16 September 1800 and 12 March 1804 to Hayley and 19 October 1801 to John Flaxman. Postal workers probably added these figures as part of their receipt or delivery of the letters.

A horizontal fold running through the center of the full sheet does not appear to be related to the folding into two leaves or to the subsequent multiple folds made to create a letter packet. It was probably added during the later history of the document.

2. (on page 56) Blake's letter to Hayley of 7 August 1804, pages 2 (left) and 3 (right). The only palimpsest in the letter is on the second (lefthand) page, fourth word in the fourth line from the end. Blake appears first to have written an uppercase "E" followed by an upward curve, then to have stopped and written over these a larger capital "E," a lowercase "a," and continued to pen the word "Elated." Alexander Gourlay has suggested that Blake began to write "Excited," starting with the initial "E" and the upward curve of an "x," but changed his mind before adding the diagonal of the "x."

Dear Sir

I have delivered your letter to Mr. Watson, at his house. he is out of Town. I desired it might be sent to him immediately. Our benevolent Lady of Arundel, Recusant, has given me a very large the most heart-felt pleasure. hope she may soon be perfectly restored to the hills & valleys of beautiful Wales which must really lament her absence. The good & excellent Lady & her affectionately remembered son, whom you have so agreeably surrounded. I have not yet had the pleasure of seeing. I also particularly rejoice to hear that your Muse is reciting the Grand Poem to the care of both children & Child & as for all the riches I should have to express too much of your precious time.

It is certainly necessary that the best talents that can be engaged should be employed in the work of Remembrance. I am sure no doubt was considering the magnitude of the work rather than any possibility to a lady. Sir I think in certain Miss W. would be your own Mrs. Medallion of Remembrance most delicately.

I hope by my present labours to have managed my share of the matter so well as not to have troubled you for any till I provided a proof of my Plate. Your kindness has got before my industry as usual. I embrace it gratefully. a supply of ten pounds at this moment will set me quite at ease. the Plate goes

To  
William Hayley Esq<sup>r</sup>  
Felpham near  
Chichester  
Sussex



on with spirit & merriment as does Romney that I don't not  
to get that which it wants by labour & attention. I know my  
own weak side & will by labour supply what Genius refuses  
how it can be that I might stand in want in my work, while in  
my life & constitution I am too feeble & avarice is a Paradise  
only to be accounted for by the things of another world. Money  
flies from me I might never venture upon my treasures the way  
then more I am sure is worn down into the very earth by the  
folks of the friends of Commerce. Be it so as long as God  
promits what I desire is not long I give a single change  
You kind Genius will at length condescend for me this heavenly  
I will try to a little give him hints & I do know that  
then their friends will be vengued. Thanks for the

very beautiful verses you sent me they would furnish very  
beautiful designs but I dare not touch any thing but  
the ground for some time to come & they will no doubt fall  
to the lot of some happier Designer before that time

You have quite elevated my spirits & not a little  
made me remember my own unworthiness by your kind  
Klopstockian compliment to her. She desires me with  
her affectionate remembrance to give to Alfred you

that she thinks herself quite as happy in every respect. Wishes  
she was as worthy. This she makes me write & I beg  
her injunction merely because it is a wish regard to her  
husband to which every one allows a great deal of latitude  
with her accept my affectionate respects

I am Dear Sir

Yours sincerely

Willm Blake

7 August

1804

Th. M. H. H.

The "benevolent Lady of Lavant" is Henrietta Poole, also called Harriet, Paulina, and, in much of Blake's correspondence with Hayley, "Miss Poole."<sup>5</sup> In his letter of 23 October 1804, he refers to her again as the "Lady of Lavant" (E 756). She was the companion of Maria Holroyd, the eldest daughter of Edward Gibbon's friend and literary executor, John Baker-Holroyd, the first earl of Sheffield, and settled in the small Sussex village of Lavant, two miles north of Chichester and approximately seven miles northwest of Felpham.<sup>6</sup> Hayley frequently visited her there, and had his mail from the thrice-weekly London-Chichester coach delivered to her house, which he described as a "pleasant and hospitable villa."<sup>7</sup> He considered her a close friend and judicious critic and corrected the proof sheets of his *Life, and Posthumous Writings, of William Cowper* (1803-04) in her presence. Blake occasionally accompanied Hayley to Lavant, and after he returned to London often inquired about Poole's health.<sup>8</sup> The anthropomorphized landscape that anticipates her recovery—"hope she may soon be perfectly restored to the hills & valleys of beautiful Sussex which must sadly lament her sickness"—is analogous to similar tropes in Blake's poetry. For example, in *Jerusalem*, Los describes the landscape suffering "From Hill to Hill & the Thames laments along the Valleys" as the fallen world waits for the "Divine Saviour" to arise.<sup>9</sup> Blake had reasons to be grateful to Poole, not least because she, like Hayley, supported him during his 1804 trial for uttering seditious expressions and related offences.<sup>10</sup> She did not attend the trial due to ill health, but immediately afterwards Hayley took

Blake to see "their very kind and anxious friend, the Lady of Lavant" to celebrate the acquittal.<sup>11</sup>

In the same opening paragraph, Blake mentions a "Lady & her affectionately remembered Son." The word "Lady" could lead one to conclude that this is the "Lady of Lavant" mentioned three lines earlier, but this could not be the case. There is no record that Harriet Poole ever married or bore children. Blake had met this second lady's son in the past, or else he could not have "rememberd" him, but the adjective applies only to the son and not the lady. Thus, it seems probable that he had not yet met the lady, in London or anywhere else. If this is the case, we can rule out Poole as the "Good & Excellent Lady," since Blake had met her many times before August 1804.

While there is no internal evidence in the letter to identify the lady and her son, Hayley's aristocratic connections suggest a number of possible candidates, including Lady Elizabeth Wyndham, the wife of George O'Brien Wyndham, the third earl of Egremont. A close friend and neighbor of Hayley, Egremont entrusted the education of his first and third sons to him.<sup>12</sup> They would have been seventeen and fourteen respectively in 1804, and Blake may have met them during his three years in Felpham, which was less than fourteen miles from Petworth House, Egremont's Sussex estate. It is likely that Blake had not been introduced to Lady Egremont while in Felpham because she maintained a permanent residence in London.<sup>13</sup> At some point after he departed Sussex, however, Blake produced a tempera painting illustrating the first book of *Paradise Lost*, titled *Satan Calling Up His Legions*, which Lady Egremont purchased.<sup>14</sup> If Blake's reference to the "Good & Excellent Lady" is to Lady Egremont, then he had not yet met her by 7 August 1804.

Another candidate is Lady Caroline Stuart, Countess of Portarlington. Hayley drafted an undated note introducing Blake to the countess.<sup>15</sup> There is no postmark or seal. This

5. For Blake's references to "Miss Poole," see his letters of 16 Sept. 1800, 7 Oct. and 13 Dec. 1803, and 23 Feb., 12 Mar., 21 Mar., 2 Apr., 16 July, and 28 Sept. 1804 (E 709, 737, 739, 742, 743, 745, 746, 753, 755). Hayley's friend, the Oxford scholar Edward Garrard Marsh, refers to her as "Mrs Poole" in a letter of 8 Feb. 1802 (Essick collection). In the nineteenth century, "Mrs." was often used in reference to unmarried females as a term of respect, particularly when a younger person was referring to an older.

6. In Sept. 1794, Poole accompanied Sheffield and his daughter on a visit to Hayley at his Eartham estate in Sussex (see Hayley, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of William Hayley, Esq.*, ed. John Johnson, 2 vols. [London: Henry Colburn, 1823] 1: 461-63, and Morchard Bishop, *Blake's Hayley: The Life, Works, and Friendships of William Hayley* [London: Victor Gollancz, 1951] 187-88, 267).

7. Hayley, *Memoirs* 2: 39. For coaches between Chichester and London, see William Holden, *Holden's Annual List of Coaches, Waggon, Carts, Vessels, &c. from London ...* (London: Holden, 1800) 40. For Lavant, see [Alexander Hay], *The Chichester Guide: Containing an Account of the Antient and Present State of the City* (Chichester: n.p., [1800]) 34.

8. For example, 21 Mar. 1804: "We both [Blake and his wife Catherine] rejoice that Miss Poole is better but hope & pray for her intire recovery" (E 745).

9. E 193. Earlier in the poem, Albion configures the landscape as a complicit spectator of the fall: "These hills & valleys are accursed witnesses of Sin" (E 174).

10. Blake expresses his gratitude in his last extant letter to Hayley, 11 Dec. 1805, where he asks his patron to "Present My Sincerest Thanks to our Good Paulina [i.e., Poole] whose kindness to Me shall recieve recompense in the Presence of Jesus" (E 767).

11. Hayley, *Memoirs* 2: 47. According to John Marsh's journal, after the trial Hayley took "a hasty dinner with" Marsh before returning to Felpham; see John Marsh Journals, Huntington Library, MS 54457, 24: 27. This section is printed in Bentley, *Blake Records*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004) 185, hereafter cited as "BR(2)" followed by page number.

12. In a letter to Egremont of 1 Aug. 1795, Hayley reports on the progress of the elder, George Wyndham, and also discusses the delicate subject of remuneration (Princeton University Library, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Manuscripts Division, Hannay Collection, box 5, folder 9). For Hayley's role as a tutor, see Bishop 94-95.

13. While Egremont's mistress for fifteen years, bearing five surviving children before they married in 1801, Lady Egremont spent most of her time in London. After the premature death of a legitimate child in 1803, she permanently separated from her husband. See Christopher Rowell, "Wyndham, George O'Brien, Third Earl of Egremont (1751-1837)," *ODNB*.

14. Martin Butlin, *The Paintings and Drawings of William Blake*, 2 vols. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981) 1: 480, no. 662, cited hereafter as "Butlin" followed by the catalogue entry number.

15. Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, Chauncey Brewster Tinker Manuscript Collection, GEN MSS 310, box 8, folder 359. The note is printed in BR(2) 155-56.

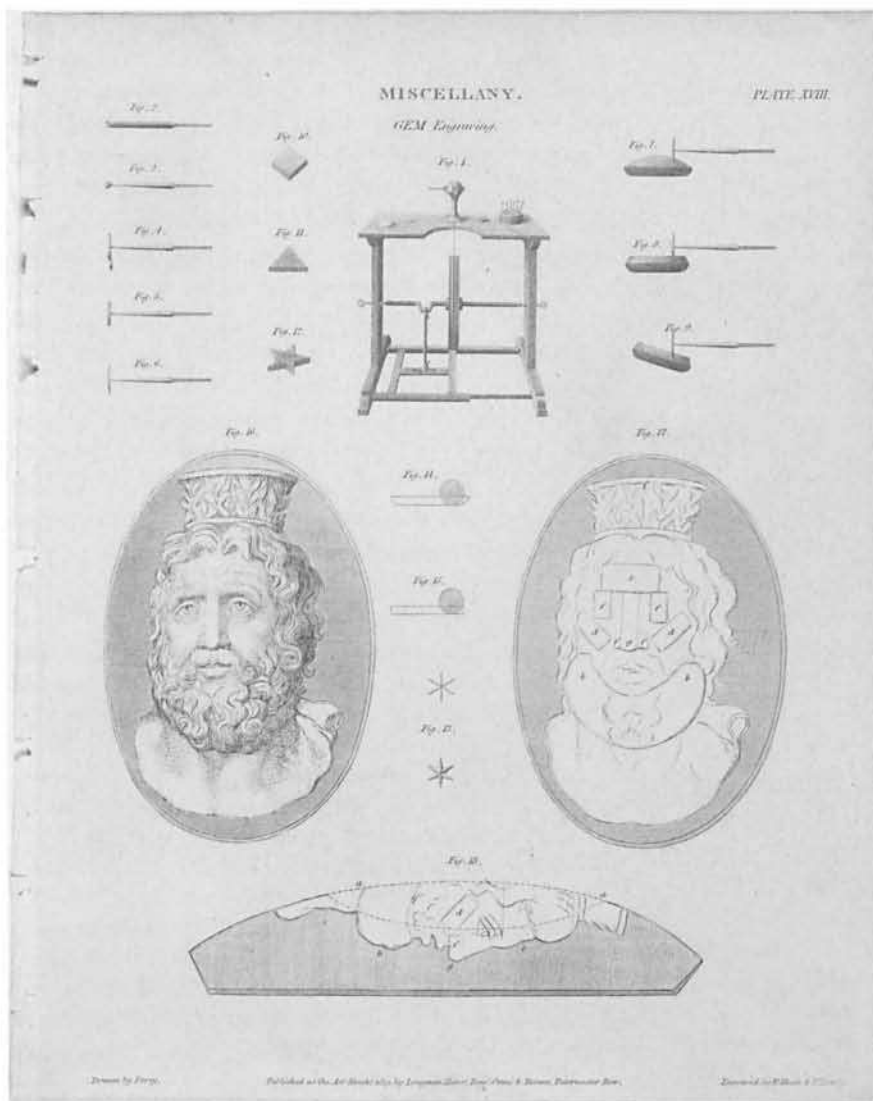


3. Blake's seal on his letter to Hayley of 7 August 1804. Red-orange wax in a now broken circle, diameter approximately 2.2 cm. Blake impressed the wax with a signet ring or sealing stamp bearing an incised pictorial image that created a bas-relief pattern. It pictures the head and shoulder of a man in right profile. He has a mustache and beard. He may be wearing a helmet and his head is clearly surmounted with a crown or finial. His right shoulder appears to be draped with cloth extending diagonally across his chest. This portrait looks vaguely classical and may have been copied from an antique cameo, coin, or carved gem of the sort that was popular in the early nineteenth century. Blake was interested in such objects. He refers to "enlarged copies from Antique Gems" in Daniel Braithwaite's collection (letter to Hayley, 23 February 1804, E 742) and, in his c. 1801-09 annotations to Joshua Reynolds's *Discourses*, remarks that "The Greek Gems are in the Same Style as the Greek Statues" (E 651). He claims that "What we call Antique Gems are the Gems of Aarons Breast Plate" in his *Laocoön* inscriptions of c. 1826 (E 274).

One of Blake's engravings for Abraham Rees, *The Cyclopædia*, is inscribed "Gem Engraving" (see illus. 4). This plate, executed

at least ten years after the August 1804 letter, contains three views of a carved gem of Jupiter Serapis at different stages of its production; the lowest shows the figure in right profile. In all three the man wears a small basket on his head (for the emblematic representation of Serapis "with a flasket or bushel on his head," see *Bell's New Pantheon*, 2 vols. [London: J. Bell, 1790] 2: 231). The similarity between the basket in the *Cyclopædia* illustration and the crown or finial in Blake's wax seal—both are wider at the top and bottom than in the middle—suggests that the latter may also portray Serapis or Jupiter Serapis. A different profile of a bearded man, but one possibly also based on a classical model, appears in the wax seal on Blake's letter to Hayley of 22 June 1804, now in the Morgan Library and Museum, New York. The image in the seal on the letter to Flaxman of 19 October 1801 (Morgan Library) may be a perching owl. Bentley, *Blake's Writings* 2: 1756, reports a "classical head" in the seal on the letter to Hayley of 27 January 1804 (Harvard University).





4. "Miscellany. Plate XVIII. Gem Engraving." Etching/engraving by William Blake and Wilson Lowry after a drawing by "Farey" (see inscription, lower left), image 21.6 x 17.1 cm., dated 1819 in the imprint. First published in fascicle F, September 1819, of Abraham Rees, *The Cyclopædia*, and later included in plates vol. 3 (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, & Brown et al., 1820). Essick collection. A proof of the plate in the Morgan Library indicates that Blake engraved the three views of the gem depicted in the lower portion; Lowry was probably responsible for the tools in the upper portion. The head is identified as Jupiter Serapis at the end of the article on "Gems," vol. 15. All three views derive from Lorenz Natter, *A Treatise on the Ancient Method of Engraving on Precious Stones* (London: for the author, 1754), pl. 2. See the caption to illus. 3 for discussion.

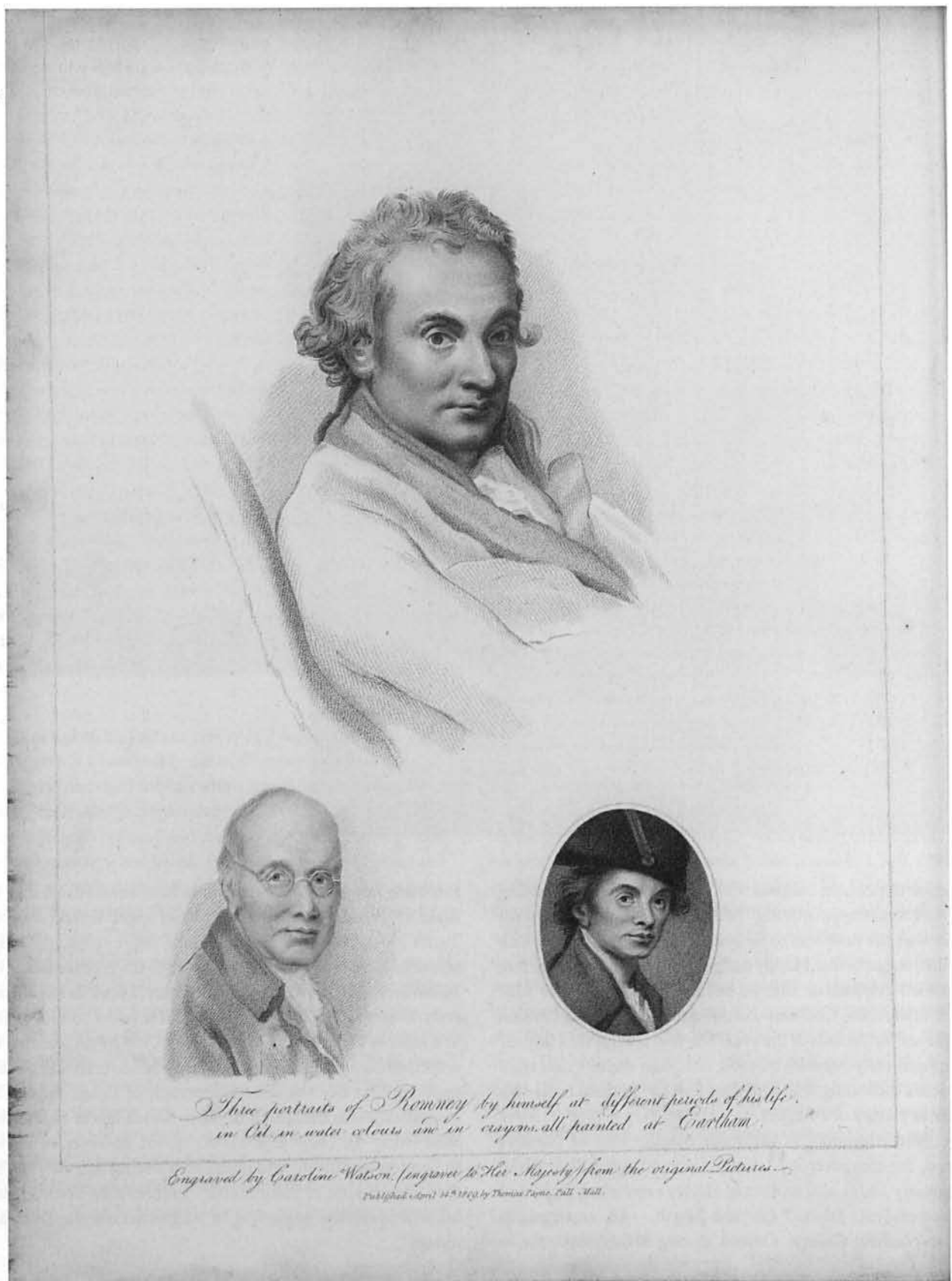
absence of postage, coupled with the first sentence thanking the countess for permitting "M<sup>r</sup>. Blake to wait on her," indicates that the note was to be presented by the bearer, which further suggests that Hayley composed it either shortly before Blake left Felpham or after he had returned to London. Like most aristocrats, Countess Portarlington occupied a London residence for periods of the year. She had several sons in their teens and early twenties in 1804, although there is no extant evidence indicating that Blake had met any of them before his letter to Hayley of 7 August.<sup>16</sup>

A third candidate is Elizabeth Marsh, wife of Hayley's friend, the composer John Marsh (who attended Blake's trial in January 1804), and mother of Hayley's sometime pupil and correspondent, Edward Garrard Marsh. An undergraduate at Wadham College, Oxford, during Blake's residence in

Felpham, Edward Marsh appears to have been introduced to Blake in February 1802, when Marsh spent several days at Turret House studying Greek, among other subjects. Blake seems to have him in mind in a letter to his brother James of 30 January 1803, in which he claims that "I read Greek as fluently as an Oxford scholar" (E 727). He refers to him again in a letter to Hayley of 27 January 1804: "my much admired & respected Edward the Bard of Oxford whose verses still sound upon my Ear like the distant approach of things mighty & magnificent like the sound of harps which I hear before the Suns rising" (E 741). There is no record, however, of a visit to London by Edward and his mother during August 1804 in the journals kept by John Marsh. Indeed, John records that his wife spent the beginning of August recovering from an illness.<sup>17</sup>

16. Information regarding Portarlington and her children is from *Burke's Peerage, Baronetage and Knightage*, 107th ed., ed. Charles Mosely, 3 vols. (Wilmington: Burke's Peerage [Genealogical Books] Ltd., 2003) 1: 608.

17. John Marsh Journals, 24: 85-88. In a letter to Hayley of 14 July 1804, Edward Marsh adds a postscript referring to his mother's illness and her gradual recovery: "she rose yesterday and was much easier in her feet" (Essick collection).



5. Frontispiece to William Hayley, *The Life of George Romney, Esq.* (Chichester: for T. Payne, London, 1809). Engraved by Caroline Watson after three of Romney's self-portraits. Image approximately 20.2 x 13.1 cm. Essick collection. See our discussion of the possibility that the lower-right portrait was based on a miniature by Blake.

Blake's reference to "Miss. W." is to the engraver Caroline Watson (1761-1814), appointed engraver to the queen in 1785, whose delicate stipple technique appealed to fashionable tastes. Despite John Flaxman's initial opposition, Hayley commissioned her to execute seven of the twelve engravings published in his *Life of Romney* (1809).

Much of the rediscovered letter concerns Blake's struggles to secure commercial engraving commissions, particularly the illustrations for Hayley's biography of Romney. A close friend of Hayley and fellow member of the Unincreasable Club, Romney died in November 1802.<sup>18</sup> Inspired by the success of his biography of Cowper, and also in response to what he considered a mendacious account of Romney by Richard Cumberland in the *European Magazine*, Hayley set himself the task of writing "a Life of our lost Romney."<sup>19</sup> According to his *Memoirs*, he began "about the middle of December, 1803" (2: 45). Blake and Catherine had returned to London three months earlier, settling in a two-room flat at 17 South Molton Street.<sup>20</sup> A return to London did not, however, constitute the end of Hayley's patronage. In a letter to Butts of 6 July 1803, Blake anticipates commissions from Hayley:

There is all the appearance in the world of our being fully employ'd in Engraving for his projected Works Particularly Cowpers Milton. a Work now on foot by Subscription & I understand that the Subscription goes on briskly. This work is to be a very Elegant one & to consist of All Miltons Poems with Cowpers Notes and translations by Cowper from Miltons Latin & Italian Poems. These works will be ornamented with Engravings from Designs from Romney. Flaxman & Y<sup>e</sup> hble Serv<sup>t</sup> & to be Engrav'd also by the last mention'd. (E 730)

While Hayley did supervise *Latin and Italian Poems of Milton Translated ... by the Late William Cowper* (1808) through the press, its three plates based on designs by Flaxman (none by Romney) were engraved by Abraham Raimbach.<sup>21</sup> Neverthe-

less, despite receiving criticism from his circle about Blake's engravings for the twelfth edition of *The Triumphs of Temper* (1803) and the first two volumes of the first edition of the *Life of Cowper* (1803), Hayley included two plates by Blake in the third volume of the Cowper biography, published in March 1804.<sup>22</sup> In addition, he commissioned Blake to provide engravings for the biography of Romney. In the rediscovered letter, Blake refers to two he is preparing—"the Plate goes on with Spirit & neatness as does Romneys Head"—and to the possibility of Watson's engraving "your Sons [Thomas Alphonso Hayley's] Medallion of Romney." Before situating these plates in the context of the biography, it is helpful to establish the models that Blake had available for his reproductive engravings.

Between 1780 and 1799, Hayley solicited Romney for three self-portraits; Watson engraved these on a single plate for the frontispiece of Hayley's *Life of Romney* (see illus. 5).<sup>23</sup> Blake had access to at least two of these in 1801 when he produced two miniature portraits (Butlin 348, both untraced). In a letter to Romney of 21 April 1801, Hayley reveals that Blake was copying "the two infinitely best Resemblances of yrself, that I am so happy as to possess.—one, you may recollect, is in watercolours, with a Hat on—this He will copy exactly,—the Head from the large unfinish'd sketch He shall reduce to the same size as its companion" (BR[2] 107). Using Watson's frontispiece engraving as a guide, it is possible to identify Blake's models for these untraced miniatures. Hayley describes the first portrait as "in watercolours, with a Hat on," which corresponds to the lower-right likeness in the frontispiece with Romney wearing what appears to be a bicorne;<sup>24</sup> he describes

engraving, which is less finished than the other eleven, appears to follow Flaxman's recommendation to Hayley in May 1804 that some of the plates should be rendered in outline; see our discussion below and BR(2) 193.

22. In a letter of 7 Aug. 1803, Hayley informs Flaxman that "the Engravings of Cowper have been also heavily censur'd" (BR[2] 157). He may have commissioned the plates for the third volume as early as 1802; see Essick, *William Blake's Commercial Book Illustrations* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991) 89-90, illus. 204-05. Hayley wanted these engravings by Mar. 1804 so that he could include them with the third volume that he was distributing to Cowper's relatives (BR[2] 192). For a discussion of Blake's engravings for *The Triumphs of Temper* and the criticism they received from Hayley's circle, see Crosby, "'a Ladys Book': Blake's Engravings for Hayley's *The Triumphs of Temper*," *Blake in Our Time*, ed. Karen Mulhollen (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010) 105-30.

23. For references to Romney's self-portraits, see Hayley, *Life of Romney* 86, 96, 253-55, and *Memoirs* 2: 450-52 (in a section titled "Memoirs of Thomas Alphonso Hayley"). See also Humphry Ward and W. Roberts, *Romney: A Biographical and Critical Essay with a Catalogue Raisonné of His Works*, 2 vols. (London: Agnew & Sons; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1904) 2: 134. Hayley indicates that Romney's final self-portrait was composed in 1799 (*Life of Romney* 293, *Memoirs* 2: 450), but Ward and Roberts date this portrait to 1795 (possibly confusing it with another work).

24. Ward and Roberts describe this self-portrait as "executed at Earham, when Romney was about 42; dark coat, white neckerchief, looking at the spectator, wearing a hat" (2: 134). Romney was forty-two in late 1776, the year that he was introduced to Hayley (Hayley, *Memoirs* 1: 160). Hayley, however, dates Romney's first self-portrait from Earham to 1780,

18. Between 1776 and 1799, Romney spent his summers with Hayley in Sussex. All biographical information derives from Hayley, *The Life of George Romney, Esq.* (Chichester: for T. Payne, London, 1809), Hayley, *Memoirs*, and John Romney, *Memoirs of the Life and Works of George Romney* (London: Baldwin and Cradock, 1830).

19. See his letter to Flaxman, 7 Aug. 1803 (BR[2] 157), and *Life of Romney* 4-5. For Cumberland's "Memoirs of Mr. George Romney," see the *European Magazine*, and *London Review* 43 (June 1803): 417-23.

20. See BR(2) 748-50 and Angus Whitehead, "'I write in South Molton Street, what I both see and hear': Reconstructing William and Catherine Blake's Residence and Studio at 17 South Molton Street, Oxford Street," *British Art Journal* 11.2 (autumn 2010).

21. On 15 Jan. 1803, Hayley sent a copy of the *Life of Cowper* to Cowper's cousin with a letter thanking her for the loan of a portrait of Cowper's mother, which Blake had engraved for the biography, and also with a request to borrow a portrait by Lemuel Abbot for Blake to engrave. As the letter makes clear, Hayley wanted Blake's projected engraving to illustrate the edition of Milton's Latin and Italian poetry; see BR(2) 148. This supports Blake's claim in his letter to Butts of 6 July 1803 that he would gain engraving commissions for "Cowpers Milton." There is no extant evidence that he engraved Cowper's portrait after Abbot.

Raimbach also engraved "Head of Our Saviour from a Large Unfinished Picture" after Romney for Hayley's *Life of Romney*. The style of this



the second as "the Head from the large unfinish'd sketch," which is Romney's unfinished self-portrait painted at Earham in 1784, when the artist was forty-nine.<sup>25</sup> The main, upper engraving in the frontispiece derives from this self-portrait, which according to Hayley "represents him [Romney] as he appeared in the most active season of his existence."<sup>26</sup> Hayley's reference to "the two infinitely best Resemblances" also points to this self-portrait as the model for Blake's second miniature, rather than the portrait on the lower left of the frontispiece depicting a much older, balding Romney wearing spectacles.

In a letter to Flaxman of 7 August 1803, Hayley provides important information about Blake's execution of additional portrait drawings:

Blake has made two excellent drawings of Romney one from his own large picture the other from our dear disciples Medallion—I thought of having both engraved for a single quarto volume of his [Romney's] Life—but Blake surprised me a little in saying (after we had settled the price of 30 Guineas for the first the price which He had for the Cowper) that Romneys head would require much Labor & he must have 40 for it—startled as I was I replied I will not stint you in behalf of Romney—you shall have 40—but soon after while we were looking at the smaller & slighter drawing of the Medallion He astonished me by saying I must have 30G for this—I then replied—of this point I must consider because you will observe Romneys Life can hardly [sell *del*] circulate like Cowpers & I shall perhaps print it entirely at my own risk—So the matter rests between us at present—yet I certainly wish to have both the portraits engraved[.] (BR[2] 157)

This indicates that, by August 1803, Blake had produced two drawings in addition to his two miniature portraits, one based on Thomas Alphonso's medallion and a second "from his own large picture." The pronoun creates a possible ambiguity; Hayley could be referring to a "large" self-portrait by Romney or to Blake's "own large picture" of Romney. The adjective "large" suggests that the reference is to Romney's self-portrait aged forty-nine, in oils, 125.5 x 99.5 cm., not to a large picture by Blake. We know that during 1804 Blake showed his drawing of Romney to some of the painter's friends and patrons, and it is unlikely that he would be carrying a "large picture" about town.<sup>27</sup> This drawing by Blake is presumably

the "Portrait of Romney" offered as one of eight items in lot 178 of Sotheby's auction catalogue of 29 April 1862. The lot sold for thirteen shillings to "Ford," probably a dealer.<sup>28</sup> This same drawing was very probably the basis for Blake's engraving of Romney to which Hayley refers as costing forty guineas. Blake took over eleven months before sending Hayley a proof of this plate, which required "much Labor." At the end of October 1803, he informed Hayley that he was "finishing Romney with spirit" (E 738). By December, he reported that "M<sup>r</sup> Romney[s] Portrait goes on with spirit. I do not send a proof because I cannot get one the Printers [*being*] unable or unwilling & my Press not yet being put up" (E 739).

Blake again refers to his engraving of Romney in a letter to Hayley of 16 March 1804 and includes important details to identify the model used for both this engraving and the untraced drawing of Romney preliminary to the plate. Further, this letter also directs us toward a hitherto unrecognized engraving after one of Blake's miniatures of Romney. Blake enclosed two prints, neither from his own hand, with his letter of 16 March. These were a copy of Romney's portrait of "M<sup>rs</sup> Siddons" and "a copy from that Miniature; you kindly sufferd me to make, from the Picture of Romney which I am now Engraving: & which was lent by M<sup>r</sup> Long for the purpose of being Engraved for the European Mag<sup>ne</sup>" (E 744). Blake's statement indicates that the portrait engraving that he was working on during 1804, and thus the drawing preliminary to the engraving, were based on Romney's self-portrait that Blake had first copied in one of the two miniatures of 1801. This same miniature, which Hayley evidently had given to his friend William Long, the notable surgeon and fellow member of the Unincreasable Club, was then engraved for publication in the *European Magazine*. The frontispiece for the April 1803 issue is an engraving of Romney by William Ridley (see illus. 6). This engraving, one of the two prints that Blake sent to Hayley, clearly derives ultimately from the same Romney self-portrait aged forty-nine that Watson reproduced in the upper portion of the frontispiece for Hayley's *Life of Romney* (illus. 5). Therefore, we can identify the model for Blake's untraced portrait drawing and for his engraving as Romney's large unfinished self-portrait. Further, the relevant statements in Blake's letter of 16 March 1804 confirm our tentative identi-

when the painter was forty-five until he turned forty-six in Dec. (*Life of Romney* 86, where Hayley states that the engraving of this Romney portrait was "marked with the year of his age, forty-six"). See the discussion below of this portrait engraving.

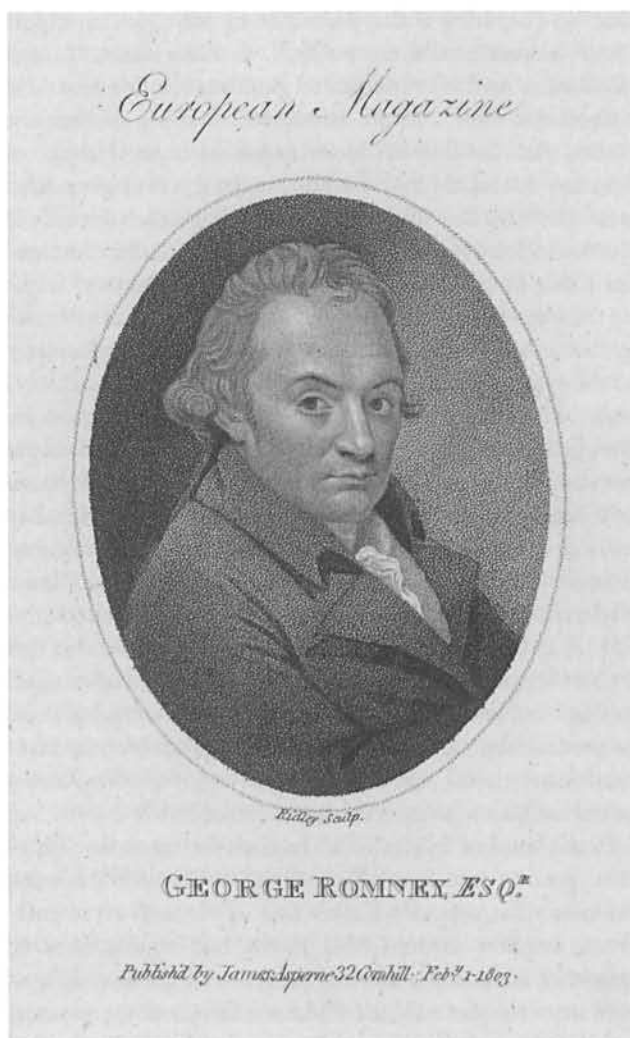
25. Hayley, *Life of Romney* 96. Also see Alex Kidson, *George Romney 1734-1802* (London: National Portrait Gallery Publications, 2002) 180-81. Romney's original is now in the National Portrait Gallery, London.

26. *Life of Romney* 254.

27. He showed it to, among others, Anna Flaxman and her sisters, and to one of Romney's oldest patrons, Daniel Braithwaite (letter to Hayley of 23 Feb. 1804, E 742). He also took it to Adam Walker at the beginning of 1804, but Walker was out of London at the time (letter to Hayley of 27 Jan. 1804, E 740). In a postscript to his letter to Hayley of 28 Dec. 1804, Blake notes that he had shown "a very high finish'd Drawing <of Romney>" to Flaxman (E 760).

28. Butlin 349, untraced. This lot, in a section of "Original Drawings and Sketches, By W. Blake," also contained a "Portrait of [Thomas Alphonso] Hayley, the sculptor" (Butlin 345, now Yale Center for British Art) and "Sketch of a Shipwreck, in indian ink &c" (Butlin 350, now British Museum; see illus. 8). See *Catalogue of a Valuable Collection of Engravings, Drawings and Pictures Chiefly from the Cabinet of an Amateur; ... Which Will Be Sold by Auction, by Messrs. S. Leigh Sotheby and John Wilkinson, ... on Tuesday, the 29th Day of April, 1862*. The purchaser and price are derived from the manuscript inscriptions in Sotheby's file copy. Butlin 349 states that Blake's portrait drawing was sold in this auction from Frederick Tatham's collection, like all the other works by Blake in this sale. Tatham may be the "Amateur" named on the title page of the catalogue.





6. Portrait of George Romney engraved by William Ridley. Published as the frontispiece to the April 1803 issue of the *European Magazine, and London Review*, vol. 43. Oval portrait 8.6 x 6.8 cm. Essick collection. See our discussion of the probability that this portrait was based on a miniature by Blake, in turn copied after a self-portrait by Romney aged forty-nine.

It is tempting to include this work in the category of plates designed by Blake and engraved by other craftsmen, but this would not be quite correct. Blake did not design the image, but copied it; he thus served as an intermediary between the designer (Romney) and the engraver (Ridley). The situation is the same as for "The Giant Polypheme," copied by Blake after a painting by Nicolas Poussin, engraved on wood by John Byfield, and published in R. J. Thornton's edition of *The Pastorals of Virgil* (1821).

fication of the model for Blake's miniature—the one without the hat—as the large self-portrait of Romney aged forty-nine.

Blake continued to work on his own engraving of Romney and by the beginning of May had pulled a proof impression, which he had shown to Walker, telling Hayley in a letter of 4 May that "[Walker] knew and admired without any preface my print of Romney, and when his daughter came in he gave the print into her hand without a word, and she immediately said, 'Ah! Romney! younger than I have known him, but very like indeed'" (E 748). Despite these positive responses, the engraving was not ready to be sent to Hayley, although on 22 June Blake describes the plate as "in very great forwardness" (E 753). On 16 July, he sent a proof, "still an unfinished state" (E 753) and, as we have seen in the rediscovered letter of 7 August, he reports that he was continuing to work on "Romney's Head." Blake was still finishing the plate at the end of December 1804. Despite agreeing to pay (and possibly paying) forty guineas for this engraving, Hayley did not include it in the biography, using Watson's engraving instead.

We now know the model for Blake's engraved portrait of Romney, but no impression from the plate is traceable. The catalogue for the great Blake exhibition in Philadelphia in 1939 lists an impression of a "Portrait of Romney," a "Line engraving. Executed by Blake for Hayley's *Life of Romney*, but rejected."<sup>29</sup> This was "Lent by Lessing J. Rosenwald," but no such print has been located in the Rosenwald Collection, now divided between the Library of Congress and the National Gallery of Art, Washington. Ruthven Todd, in his 1942 edition of Gilchrist's *Life*, also refers to an impression in the Rosenwald Collection, but his statement may be based only on the entry in the Philadelphia catalogue.<sup>30</sup>

Hayley's comments on the frontispiece in his *Life of Romney* offer one further possible clue about Blake's rejected engraving. Hayley mentions a portrait of Romney at age "forty-six" in Watson's "trio" on the frontispiece (86); this is probably the portrait with the hat. He later refers to the portrait at age "forty-nine"—that is, the large self-portrait at the top of Watson's engraving—and states that this "striking resemblance" is "marked in the frontispiece to this volume with the year of his age" (96). None of the portraits in Watson's engraving is marked with the sitter's age; Hayley's comment must refer either to a pre-publication state of her plate or to Blake's rejected engraving. The possibility that Hayley is referring to the latter is buttressed by his final reference to "the portrait, that forms

29. William Blake 1757-1827: A Descriptive Catalogue of an Exhibition of the Works of William Blake Selected from Collections in the United States (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1939) 59, no. 104.

30. Alexander Gilchrist, *Life of William Blake*, ed. Todd (London: J. M. Dent & Sons; New York: E. P. Dutton, 1942) 380. The reference to "a copy of Blake's engraving of Romney ... in the collection of Mr Lessing J. Rosenwald" is retained, with some rewording, in the revised edition of 1945 (381). Todd also refers to "a copy of this rejected plate ... in the collection of Mr. Lessing J. Rosenwald ... shewn at Philadelphia in 1939" in his typescript catalogue of Blake's drawings and paintings now in the Rosenwald Collection, Library of Congress (278, no. 503).

a frontispiece to this volume" (254). His wording suggests a single portrait, as in Blake's untraced version, rather than the "trio" of portraits in Watson's. If indeed the reference to the "marked" plate (96) is also to Blake's, then it might bear the inscribed number forty-nine.

As noted, when Blake's drawing of Romney was sold in 1862, it was included in a lot that also contained a portrait of Thomas Alphonso Hayley and Blake's drawing of *The Shipwreck* in India ink (see note 28). Blake sent Hayley the *Shipwreck* drawing, "the size the Print is to be," with his letter of 16 July 1804 (E 753). The presence of all three drawings in the same lot suggests that they were in Hayley's possession at some point.<sup>31</sup> Blake's drawing of Romney, preliminary to his engraving, would therefore have been available to Watson via Hayley. It seems probable, however, that Watson copied Romney's original self-portrait, in Hayley's possession until 1820, rather than Blake's drawing. As an inscription near the bottom of Watson's plate states, the portraits were copied "from the original Pictures."<sup>32</sup> In spite of this statement, it seems likely that Watson copied Blake's miniature of Romney "with a Hat on" for the engraving on the lower right; the oval format and diminutive size suggest that a miniature was used as a model.<sup>33</sup>

As Hayley makes clear in his letter to Flaxman of 7 August 1803, he had initially wanted Blake to engrave the medallion of Romney, but due to an unexpected rise in Blake's fees the commission was not forthcoming. Nevertheless, Blake appears to have harbored some hopes. In a letter to Hayley of 23 February 1804, he reports that Braithwaite had recommended

that "an Engraving of that Medallion by your Sons matchless hand" be presented to the public.<sup>34</sup> As Blake states, Thomas Alphonso's medallion decorated Braithwaite's fireplace. He follows this with a report on his own drawing of Romney, stating that Braithwaite "knew immediately my Portrait of Romney & assured me that he thought it a very great likeness" (E 742). This might be a reference to Blake's drawing of the medallion made for Hayley by August 1803, but the comment that Braithwaite "knew immediately my Portrait" (rather than comparing it to the medallion itself) makes it more probable that Blake is referring to his drawing, preliminary to the engraving, based on Romney's self-portrait aged forty-nine. Six months later, Hayley was considering Watson for the medallion commission with—it would appear from the rediscovered letter—Blake's approbation: "This I think is certain Miss. W. would Engrave your Sons Medallion of Romney most delicately." Blake is here responding to Flaxman's concern that Watson would not be a suitable engraver of book illustrations because she "engraves in the dotted manner only" (BR[2] 194). Instead of Watson, Flaxman recommended that Robert Hartley Cromek undertake the Romney engravings.<sup>35</sup> Perhaps influenced by Blake, Hayley commissioned Watson to produce the engraving, which is after a drawing by Flaxman's sister-in-law, Maria Denman, instead of Blake's drawing of the medallion, or even the actual medallion.<sup>36</sup>

In the letter of 7 August, Blake does not name the "Plate" that "goes on with Spirit & neatness." To identify this work we must first consider Blake's role as Hayley's representative in London. By mid-1803, Hayley had begun compiling materials, including letters and journals, for his biography of Romney. He also solicited Flaxman's advice about selecting suitable Romney paintings to be engraved for the book. Operating as a kind of intermediary, Blake liaised with various London art dealers to compile a list of works that might be reproduced; the list was then shown to Flaxman. It was in this capacity that Blake visited Walker's London residence at the beginning of 1804, although he did not actually meet the man until May (Blake's letters of 27 January and 4 May 1804, E 740-41 and 748-49). Walker gave Hayley access to a number of early Romney letters and paintings, including "two designs from our great dramatic poet: The scene, in which Cordelia is attending Lear on his couch, and that of the old

31. It is possible that this group was sold at the auction of Hayley's art collection in 1821; see *A Catalogue of an Interesting Assemblage of Pictures, Drawings, Prints and Oriental China, the Property of W. Hayley, Esq. Deceased ... Sold by Auction by Mr. Christie, Thursday, February 15, 1821*. Unfortunately, we have only a fragmentary record of the sale, and while there are works listed by Romney, and one drawing by Blake, there is no mention of these drawings. Butlin 345 suggests that all three passed from Catherine Blake to Frederick Tatham before being sold in 1862. There is no record of Hayley's returning the *Shipwreck* drawing after receiving it from Blake in July 1804, although it is possible that he did so soon after because at the end of Sept. Blake sent "a Proof of the Shipwreck which I hope will please" (E 755). It is unlikely that Blake kept his portrait of Thomas Alphonso, since it was executed for Hayley. The only drawing that we can reliably identify as being in Blake's possession during 1804 is his portrait of Romney (see note 27). For an identification of Blake's only drawing in the 1821 Hayley sale catalogue, see Morton D. Paley, "And the sun dial by Blake," *Blake* 43.3 (winter 2009-10): 105-06.

32. In his *Memoirs*, Hayley reveals that in 1806 "he despatched [a poetical epistle] to cheer the tender spirits of his amiable friend Caroline Watson, the engraver, who had resided some weeks in Felpham, and worked with great diligence and skill, in preparing the various drawings from which she intended to finish, in London, the several prints that were to decorate the *Life of Romney*" (2: 59). These drawings may have included the three Romney self-portraits engraved for the frontispiece.

33. In the letter to Romney of 21 Apr. 1801 (BR[2] 106-07), Hayley states his intention of forwarding Blake's two miniatures to the artist's wife. We have seen, however, that the miniature after the self-portrait aged forty-nine was with William Long in 1803. It is also likely that Hayley did not send the miniature "with a Hat on" to Romney's wife.

34. E 742. Hayley dedicated the *Life of Romney* to Braithwaite.

35. BR(2) 195n. For discussions of Blake's later dealings with Cromek, see note 61 and BR(2) 207-45. Also see J. B. Mertz, "Blake v. Cromek: A Contemporary Ruling," *Modern Philology* 99.1 (Aug. 2001): 66-77, and Dennis M. Read, "The Rival *Canterbury Pilgrims* of Blake and Cromek: Herculean Figures in the Carpet," *Modern Philology* 86.2 (Nov. 1988): 171-90.

36. Hayley, *Life of Romney*, pl. 11, inscribed in the plate "Drawn by Maria Denman." For a discussion of Blake and Watson, see Essick, "William Blake's 'Female Will' and Its Biographical Context," *Studies in English Literature* 31.4 (autumn 1991): 615-30.

king in the midnight storm.”<sup>37</sup> At the start of the rediscovered letter, Blake mentions his delivering a letter from Hayley to Walker, presumably relating to Romney materials in Walker’s possession. Prior to contacting Walker, Blake visited the framemaker and occasional art dealer William Saunders to inquire about Romney’s paintings.<sup>38</sup> In his letter to Hayley of 13 December 1803, Blake reports the visit and also includes a suggestion from Flaxman: “M<sup>r</sup> Flaxman supposes that if some of the most distinguishd designs of M<sup>r</sup> Romney of which M<sup>r</sup> Saunders has a good many were Engravd they would be an appropriate accompaniment to the Life of Romney” (E 739). On 2 January of the next year, Flaxman reiterated this observation to Hayley, suggesting that Romney’s chalk drawings after subjects originally recommended by Hayley “are all well worth etching in a bold manner which I think Blake is likely to do with great success & perhaps at an expence that will not be burthensome—but at any rate give him one to do first for a tryal” (BR[2] 177). Hayley concurred, writing to Romney’s son, John, on 16 January to request access: “as Flaxman thinks that two of these might be engraved in a rapid free & bold manner to decorate [Romney’s] Life as pleasing specimens of his Talent for original design I wish you would allow Mr Blake to copy two of them.”<sup>39</sup> Thus it appears that, in addition to the more finished engraving of Romney aged forty-nine that he had commissioned Blake to produce in August 1803, Hayley initially envisaged illustrating the biography with less finished engravings after Romney’s chalk drawings.

In the letter to John Romney, Hayley also requests that Blake be allowed to “make a drawing from a sketch in oil now I hear at Saunders’ of the man & Horse rescuing females from the perils of Shipwreck.” On 21 March Blake wrote that he had been to Saunders’s and seen “the Picture of the Man on horseback rescuing the drowning people,” adding that it was “a beautiful Performance” (E 744-45). By 2 April he had

37. Hayley, *Life of Romney* 30; see also Hayley’s reference to Walker’s loan of an “original manuscript” (34). Romney’s now untraced *King Lear Awakened by His Daughter Cordelia* (c. 1762), which Blake saw at Walker’s (E 748, 753), may be related to two pen and watercolor drawings by Blake of the same subject. Between 1806 and 1808, Thomas Butts, Jr., engraved a plate entitled “Lear and Cordelia” after a drawing by Blake, which depicts Cordelia listening intently to her father. This is part of a group of seven drawings depicting scenes from Shakespeare, including *Cordelia and the Sleeping Lear*, that have been dated to c. 1780 (Butlin 84). For the engraving by Thomas Butts, Jr., see Essick, *The Separate Plates of William Blake: A Catalogue* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983) 220-23. Romney’s painting was sold by lottery in Mar. 1762 (Kidson 49).

38. For Romney’s relationship with Saunders, see Jacob Simon, “A Note on George Romney and Picture Framing,” <<http://www.npg.org.uk/research/programmes/the-art-of-the-picture-frame/artist-romney.php>>, accessed 5 Mar. 2010.

39. BR(2) 188. The designs that Hayley wanted Blake to copy were “the Lapland Witch raising a Storm ... & Pliny the younger with his Mother in the scene of the Earthquake.” For a discussion of the influence of Romney’s large, early drawings on Blake, see Jean H. Hagstrum, “Romney and Blake: Gifts of Grace and Terror,” *Blake in His Time*, ed. Essick and Donald Pearce (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978) 201-12.



7. Portrait of Euler engraved by Blake after a medallion by Ruchotte. Published as the frontispiece to vol. 1 of Euler’s *Elements of Algebra* ... Translated from the French, 2 vols. (London: J. Johnson, 1797). Image 10.6 x 6.4 cm. Essick collection.

completed the two plates for the third volume of the *Life of Cowper* and was ready to start on other engravings for the Romney biography, telling Hayley that “I have now cleared the way to Romney, in whose service I now enter again with great pleasure, and hope soon to show you my zeal with good effect” (E 746). Hayley did not immediately respond, for on 27 April Blake wrote again, requesting “the earliest possible notice of what Engraving is to be done for. The Life of Romney” (E 747). After not hearing, he contacted Flaxman about the illustrations and, on 4 May, offered a revised proposal to Hayley: “Mr. Flaxman agrees with me that somewhat more than outline is necessary to the execution of Romney’s designs, because his merit is eminent in the art of massing his lights and shades. I should propose to etch them in a rapid but firm manner, somewhat, perhaps, as I did the *Head of Euler*” (E 749). Blake produced a stipple and line frontispiece





8. Blake, *The Shipwreck*. India ink reinforced with pencil, 13.5 x 17.9 cm. on leaf 16.0 x 19.8 cm. Butlin 350. Copied after a painting by Romney, now lost. The drawing has been squared, probably as part of Blake's reduction of the size of the painting to the smaller size of his drawing. British Museum, 1936,0613.1, reproduced with permission.

for Leonard Euler's *Elements of Algebra* (1797) after a medalion of the author by Ruchotte (illus. 7). While Blake's Euler engraving provides a more detailed rendering of surfaces and tones than the engravings of "Pericles" and "The Death of Demosthenes" in Hayley's *Essay on Sculpture* (1800), it is not as highly finished as, for example, his frontispiece for the first volume of the *Life of Cowper*.

A return to the graphic style represented by the portrait of Euler may have been a deliberate attempt to avoid criticism from Hayley's circle. In the 7 August 1804 letter, Blake appears to admit the validity of criticisms of his previous engravings for Hayley, perhaps including the six plates for *The Triumphs of Temper* (1803),<sup>40</sup> as being too dark or heavy: "I

know my own weak side & will by labour supply what Genius Refuses how it can be that lightness should be wanting in my Works, while in my life & constitution I am too light & aerial is a Paradox only to be accounted for by the things of another World." His emphasis on labor correcting this deficiency is oddly contradictory, if indeed his plates were criticized for being overworked, but corresponds to Hayley's association of engraving with industriousness. In his correspondence Hayley often remarks on the patience and skill required for engraving and equates quality with industry.<sup>41</sup> At this juncture, pleasing his patron may have been more important to Blake than an honest assessment of his engraving techniques.

40. In a letter to Hayley of 24 Aug. 1803, Flaxman comments that "the prints for Serena [*The Triumphs of Temper*] seem ... to be worse than the drawings" (BR[2] 167).

41. For example, in a letter of 1 Nov. 1801 to Lady Hesketh, Hayley claims that Blake's engravings for the *Life of Cowper* will be "excellent ... if they prove equal to the industry ... of the artist" (BR[2] 112).





*Sketch of a Shipwreck after Romney.*

*Engraved by Blake.*

Published April 24<sup>th</sup> 1809 by Thomas Payne, Pall Mall

9. "Sketch of a Shipwreck after Romney," engraved by Blake after his drawing (illus. 8) and published in William Hayley, *The Life of George Romney, Esq.* (Chichester: for T. Payne, London, 1809), facing page 84. Image 13.3 x 17.8 cm. Essick collection.

Further correspondence between Hayley and his associates indicates the complex arrangements surrounding the illustrations for the Romney biography. On 16 June 1804 Saunders writes that he had lent to Blake "three pictures" (BR[2] 194). A few days later, on 22 June, Blake informs Hayley that this group included "the Shipwreck with the Man on Horseback &c" (E 753). Even as Blake borrowed these works, Hayley was soliciting Flaxman's advice on hiring other engravers; in a letter of 18 June, he reveals that he had considered Flaxman's recommendation to commission Cromek: "I should like to employ your Freand Cromak on the Ship wreck you mention." There was, however, a problem: "but as I learn by a Letter from Saunders ... that Blake has just got in his own apartments the three designs of Romney ... I should be sorry

to risque wounding the Feelings of our quick-spirited Freand by sending the oil sketch from his possassion to the House of any other Engraver" (BR[2] 196).<sup>42</sup> Ever the man of sentiment, and displaying an understanding of Blake's sensitivity regarding criticisms of his work, Hayley commissioned the engraving of *The Shipwreck* at some point between Blake's letters of 22 June and 16 July 1804, when with the latter Blake sent "a Sketch of the Heroic Horseman as you wishd me to do—the size the Print is to be" (E 753; see illus. 8). The epistolary evidence indicates that the unnamed plate mentioned in the rediscovered letter of 7 August, the one Blake was de-

42. The entire letter is printed in Keynes, *Letters* 94-95.

veloping "with Spirit & neatness," was "Sketch of a Shipwreck after Romney," the only engraving by him published in Hayley's *Life of Romney* (illus. 9).<sup>43</sup>

Blake's dilatoriness in completing the portrait engraving of Romney may have been due to his work on other projects. In addition to Hayley's commissions, he executed a plate for Prince Hoare's *Academic Correspondence* (1804), two for Alexander Chalmers's edition of *The Plays of William Shakspeare* (1805), and at least two of his three plates for Flaxman's *The Iliad of Homer* (1805) during 1804.<sup>44</sup> He also began composing *Milton* and *Jerusalem* in 1804, according to the dates on their title pages, and may have also completed a number of biblical watercolors for Butts during this period.<sup>45</sup> One of the reasons that Blake gave to Butts for returning to London in 1803 was to "carry on my visionary studies ... unannoyd" (E 728). Feeling overwhelmed by Hayley's patronage, he believed that he was ignoring "the dictates of [his] Angels" (E 724).

In spite of his hopes for artistic freedom, after returning to London Blake continued to experience difficulties reconciling his financial dependence upon commercial copy engraving and the desire for original composition as an artist and poet. Less than a month after leaving Sussex, he told Hayley of his difficulties in securing commercial work:

Art in London flourishes. Engravers in particular are wanted. Every Engraver turns away work that he cannot Execute from his superabundant Employment. Yet no one brings work to me. I am content that it shall be so as long as God pleases I know that many works of a lucrative nature are in want of hands other Engravers are courted. I suppose that I must go a Courting which I shall do awkwardly .... (7 October 1803, E 736)

Ten months later he was still struggling, informing Hayley in the letter of 7 August 1804 that "Money flies from me Profit never ventures upon my threshold tho every other mans door stone is worn down into the very Earth by the footsteps of the fiends of Commerce." In a manuscript Notebook poem written some years later, he also uses the phrase "fiends of Commerce" in a couplet that reflects on the dominance of commercially orientated patronage over British art: "Spirit who lovst Brittannias Isle / Round which the Fiends of Commerce smile" (E 479). Blake's admission of not handling his "Money Matters so well" echoes Hayley's observation to the bookseller R. H. Evans on 3 April 1803: "He is an excellent creature, but

not very fit to manage pecuniary Concerns to his own advantage" (BR[2] 151).

After Blake refers to his poor management of "Money Matters," he thanks Hayley for his offer of "a Supply of ten Pounds," apparently made in some earlier correspondence, now lost, either voluntarily or in response to a request or a complaint about limited funds. Blake had hoped to avoid the need for money from Hayley prior to sending him "a Proof" of "Sketch of a Shipwreck after Romney." In his letter of 28 September 1804, Blake comments that "I am already paid" for the "Head of Romney" but requests "the favor of ten Pounds more" (E 755). On 18 December, he states that he is "again in want of ten pounds" (E 758-59). In all three cases, he raises his need or gratitude for ten pounds in connection with his work on the two engravings intended for Hayley's *Life of Romney*, and thus the funds were probably advance payments rather than outright gifts. The ten pounds for which Blake thanks Hayley in the letter of 7 August may have completed payment for the portrait engraving or, like the funds sent after 28 September, begun payment for "Sketch of a Shipwreck after Romney."

Blake's need for patronage can be detected throughout his late 1803 and 1804 correspondence with Hayley in a number of ways, including offers to produce engravings in a less finished manner at a lower cost. During the first half of 1804, he was hopeful that Hayley would follow Flaxman's advice at the start of the year to commission him to execute engravings "in a bold manner" after Romney's "Chalk Cartoons" (BR[2] 177). At the beginning of May, Flaxman recommended to Hayley that "it might perhaps be advantageous to Romney's life, to adorn the book with two or three bold etchings shadowed on a small scale, in which Blake has succeeded admirably sometimes & to engrave some of the other compositions in outline only for head & tail pieces to the Chapters or divisions of the work" (BR[2] 193). Perhaps to reinforce his artistic and economic suitability for this commission, Blake informed Hayley on 4 May that his price "for engraving Flaxman's outlines of *Homer* is five guineas each."<sup>46</sup> By the following month, however, Blake's expectations had changed. In a letter of 22 June, he eschews "Outline" in favor of "nothing less than some Finished Engravings" (E 752). Following the recommendation of his former partner, James Parker, he suggests that four "highly finished" engravings and four "less Finished" be executed for the biography. To achieve this by Hayley's November 1804 deadline, to which he refers in this letter, Blake again cites Parker to imply that even "Eight different Engravers" would not be sufficient to execute the eight designs Blake lists (E 752-53). He also suggests prices, following Parker's lead once more: "30 Guineas the finishd. & half the sum for the less finishd," based on engravings to fit "a Quarto printed Page" (E 752). As we have seen, Blake requested forty guineas for the

43. An aquatint of the same scene by Thomas Medland, based on a drawing of Romney's now untraced painting by his pupil Isaac Pocock, was published in the *Naval Chronicle* 3 (Jan.-July 1800): pl. 32, facing 296. See also Morton D. Paley, "William Blake, George Romney, and William Hayley's *The Life of George Romney, Esq.*," Blake (forthcoming).

44. In his letter to Hayley of 26 Oct. 1803, Blake states that he has "work after Fuseli for a little Shakespeare" (E 738). He states that he has begun engraving two plates for "a new edition of Flaxman's *Homer*" in a letter to Hayley of 2 Apr. 1804 (E 746).

45. At least twenty Bible watercolors have been dated c. 1803-05; see Butlin 435, 437, 439, 457, 460, 461, 468, 470, 474, 476, 482, 483, 488, 489, 491, 505, 510, 515, 519, and 521.

46. E 749. In the letter to Hayley of 1 May, Flaxman reports that "Blake is to have from 5 to 6 Guineas each from Mess<sup>rs</sup> Longman & Rees for the plates of the *Homer* according to the labor, but what the proper recompense for more finished engraving might be I cannot tell" (BR[2] 193).

portrait engraving of Romney, initially intended to decorate the biography, and proposed thirty for the medallion after Thomas Alphonso (BR[2] 157). It seems that he was hoping for at least one plate from his list of eight and was willing to cut his fee either by ten guineas if it was a highly finished engraving, or in half if it was less finished. The one plate Hayley commissioned from Blake was number "4" on the list, "The Shipwreck" (E 753) (illus. 9).

The rediscovered letter indicates that Blake hoped for further commissions from Hayley once the two Romney engravings were completed. For example, he implicitly offers to illustrate the "very beautiful Verses" he had received when he comments that they "would furnish"—that is, be the basis for—"very beautiful Designs."<sup>47</sup> According to his *Memoirs*, beginning in April 1804 Hayley was working alternately on the Romney biography and "a poem on Music and Love" (2: 48). This was *The Triumph of Music*, completed in September and published in December 1804. It is likely that the "beautiful Verses" Blake received in August were a manuscript version of some part of Hayley's poem, or possibly the completed cantos.<sup>48</sup> Blake's implication that he could be the person to provide designs for Hayley's "beautiful Verses" prefaces a plaintive remark that suggests his struggle to reconcile commercial copy engraving and original design. After pointing out that he "dare not touch any thing but the Graver for some time to come," Blake opines that the role of illustrator for Hayley's verses "will no doubt fall to the Lot of some happier Designer before that time." He no doubt hoped that he would be that designer, but believed that an expression of dedication to his duties as a reproductive engraver would be more appealing to Hayley than an explicit request for a commission to illustrate *The Triumph of Music*.

Blake's hope for more work is also implied in his rhetorical flourishes. Appropriating a type of decorative discourse often deployed by the recipient of the letter, he refers to Hayley's authorial labors at the end of the first paragraph: "I also par-

ticularly rejoice to hear that your Muse is rocking the Cradle Pray take care of both Mother & Child & suffer not the wicked harlot Prose to ingross too much of your precious time." If Hayley followed Blake's urging to be more productive as a poet, this would provide the latter with more opportunities to illustrate (or at least engrave others' illustrations for) his patron's verses.

Blake's maternal metaphor to describe the composition of *The Triumph of Music* echoes Hayley's use of the same rhetorical convention; for example, in a letter to Walter Scott, he describes the production of commemorative poetry as a form of parturition: "I feel an indescribable mixture of pain & of pleasure in the idea that the composition to which your grief & your love regard for him will in time give birth will surpass the salutary effects of Amplia's Lyre & build your projected mansion."<sup>49</sup> Blake refers to *The Triumph of Music* again in his letter of 4 December, describing it as an "elegant & pathetic Poem" and, quoting Shakespeare's *Henry VIII* or *All Is True*, comparing the heroine Venusia with Serena, the heroine of *The Triumphs of Temper*: "To say that Venusia is as beautiful as Serena is only expressing private opinion ..., but to say that she is Your Daughter & is like You, to say 'tis a Girl. promising Boys hereafter' & to say God bless her for she is a peerless Jewel for a Prince to wear ... I could not longer omit to say."<sup>50</sup> He invokes Shakespeare to anticipate the economic productivity of the poem and predict that it will produce as many financial heirs as its very successful predecessor, *The Triumphs of Temper*, which had gone through twelve editions by 1804. As the letter of 7 August indicates, Blake entertained the idea that he could provide illustrations, and by implication engravings after his own designs, for future editions of *The Triumph of Music*. In his letter of 18 December, Blake once again praises Hayley's "beautiful and elegant daughter Venusea" (E 759) and may still have been hopeful of receiving a commission once he had completed the engravings for the Romney biography.<sup>51</sup> The poem, however, was a critical and commercial failure, and there is no extant evidence that Blake ever produced any designs for it.<sup>52</sup> In light of *The Triumph of Music*'s negative reception, Blake's quotation from Shakespeare becomes ironically prophetic: the lines from

47. Hayley frequently included poetry in or with his letters; on 4 May 1804, Blake thanks him for "your very beautiful little poem on the King's recovery" (E 749). This was *The Loyal Prayer*, which appears to have been composed in the first few months of 1804. Hayley describes it as "a serious song on the health of the King" set to music "by Mr. Bennet, the organist of Chichester" (*Memoirs* 2: 48).

48. From his letter to George Cumberland of 1 Sept. 1800 we know that Blake considered himself a "Musician." There are as well a few accounts of Blake's singing, such as Edward Marsh's wish to hear "M<sup>r</sup> Blake's devotional air" (letter to Hayley, 21 Feb. 1802, Essick collection), which suggests that Blake may have sung for Hayley. In an autograph copy of a letter to Lady Hesketh dated 25 Feb. 1802, Hayley describes how important musicians and singers were "to a perpetual writer of songs" such as himself (Princeton University Library, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Manuscripts Division, Hannay Collection, box 5, folder 19). A manuscript or possibly a proof copy of the first canto of Hayley's poem on music would certainly have piqued Blake's interest. For Blake's reference to himself as "Poet Painter & Musician" and references by others to his musical activities, see Essick and Morton D. Paley, "Dear Generous Cumberland: A Newly Discovered Letter and Poem by William Blake," *Blake* 32.1 (summer 1998): 4, 5, 10.

49. Morgan Library, Misc English MA 2513 (6).

50. E 757. Shakespeare, *The Famous History of the Life of King Henry the Eighth or All Is True* 5.1.166-67 (*The Complete Works*, ed. Stanley Wells and Gary Taylor [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986] 1373).

51. Blake spells the name of the poem's heroine in two ways; "Venusia" is correct (see Hayley, *The Triumph of Music* [Chichester: J. Seagrave; London: J. Johnson, R. H. Evans, and Longman and Co., 1804] 3).

52. In a letter to Walter Scott, Anna Seward acerbically refers to it as "a chaos of ludicrous absurdities" (*Letters of Anna Seward*, 6 vols. [Edinburgh: Archibald Constable et al., 1811] 6: 217-18). Byron satirized it in *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* (1809): "Of Music's Triumphs' all who read may swear / That luckless Music never triumph'd there" (*The Complete Poetical Works*, ed. Jerome J. McGann, 7 vols. [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980-93] 1: 238).



Henry VIII refer to Anne Boleyn, executed for failing to produce a male heir.

Other indications in the 7 August 1804 letter of Blake's need to cultivate Hayley's patronage are his expressions of gratitude and indebtedness. Patronage during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was predicated on a socially and economically unbalanced relationship, with the patron regulating the client's activities for the benefit of both parties.<sup>53</sup> Implicit in this relationship was the notion of obligation. In response to receiving patronal assistance, the client was expected to reciprocate with obligatory gestures of loyalty and gratitude. Blake articulates these expected responses: referring to his failure to secure commercial engraving commissions, he tells Hayley that "Your kind Genius will at length conquer for me this heaviness I will obey to a tittle your kind hints & I do know that Soon these fiends will be vanquishd." The use of "tittle" is only the second instance in his extant writings; the first occurs in *An Island in the Moon* when Inflammable Gass describes his experiments: "Here ladies & gentlemen said he Ill shew you a louse or a flea or a butterfly or a cock chafer the blade bone of a tittle back" (E 462). "Tittle back" in this context is childish slang for "stickleback," a small fish.<sup>54</sup> In the letter, however, the expression is "to a tittle," which the *OED* defines as "with minute exactness, to the smallest particular" (a first instance is from 1607). By explicitly stating that he will follow Hayley's "kind hints" exactly, Blake is demonstrating loyalty and deference.

The "kind hints" may be a reference to the engravings by James Fittler in a copy of the 1804 edition of William Falconer's *The Shipwreck* that Hayley sent Blake earlier that year.<sup>55</sup> Upon receipt, Blake thanked him "sincerely for Falconer, an admirable poet, and the admirable prints to it by Fittler. Whether you intended it or not, they have given me some excellent hints in engraving; his manner of working is what I shall endeavour to adopt in many points."<sup>56</sup> Blake's declaration of fidelity to Hayley's advice also highlights the reciprocity inherent in patronal relationships; by promising to "obey" Hayley, he is concomitantly transferring the responsibility of securing work onto his patron. For Blake, it is a causal relationship: if he follows Hayley's suggestions exactly, his patron

will be obligated to provide him with employment that will vanquish "the fiends of Commerce."

Blake's use of "vanquishd" to anticipate the impact of Hayley's commissions suggests that he does not see his work for Hayley in the same register as "the fiends of Commerce." Blake flatters Hayley, at times extravagantly, in his letter of 7 August. What is his motivation for such a performance? We believe that he is trying to secure further work from his patron. Hayley's commissions would make it unnecessary for Blake to continue "Courting" publishers and artists for commercial work, as he had done with little success in October 1803 (E 736). This view of Hayley seems a complete volte-face from his complaints about his patron's engraving commissions, or what he calls "the meer drudgery of business" (E 724), in the letter to Butts of 10 January 1803. Blake's altered perspective is, however, consistent with his view of Hayley expressed in his letters of 1804 and 1805, which is certainly more positive than during the final year of his residence in Felpham. This changed attitude was probably due in large measure to his patron's unwavering support after the incident with Privates Scolfield and Cock and the subsequent trial for sedition (BR[2] 158-72, 178-85), as well as the need for sufficient commercial work to support his more visionary activities such as composing and etching *Milton* and *Jerusalem*. The 7 August 1804 letter indicates that Blake hoped that Hayley would provide this support.

The Hayley that Blake addresses in the rediscovered letter, as in much of his post-Felpham correspondence, is also very different from the subject of a number of satirical verses in the Notebook (E 504-06). Based on internal evidence, these verses have been dated to 1808 or later by all authorities.<sup>57</sup> They may have been prompted by the publication of Hayley's *Life of Romney* in 1809. As we have seen, at the beginning of 1804 Blake had expected to secure some, if not all, of the engravings for the biography. Of the two plates he engraved, only one ("Sketch of a Shipwreck after Romney") was included, although he may have been paid for both. When the volume was published, Blake may have been reminded of his exertions for Hayley during 1804 to locate paintings for engraving, the subsequent loss of these commissions, the commercial and critical failure of the 1805 edition of Hayley's *Ballads* with Blake's illustrations, as well as Hayley's failure to fulfill his intention to commission Blake to produce an engraving for *Latin and Italian Poems of Milton* (1808)—and promptly jotted down the satirical verses.<sup>58</sup> The printed spine labels for the bi-

53. See Paul J. Korshin, "Types of Eighteenth-Century Literary Patronage," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 7 (1974): 453-73.

54. See the gloss in Bentley, *Blake's Writings* 2: 894n2.

55. They may also refer to comments in an untraced letter. We know that Hayley exercised critical judgment over the illustrations to his works, as well as frequently dictating their content. For example, he instructed his publisher to amend the faces of a number of figures and omit at least one "less manly face" in the engravings for the third edition of *Essay on Old Maids*, 3 vols. (London: T. Cadell, 1793). See Princeton University Library, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Manuscripts Division, Hannay Collection, box 4, folder 42.

56. Letter of 4 May 1804, E 748. Fittler also engraved the frontispiece after Thomas Stothard for the third volume of the third edition of Hayley's *Essay on Old Maids* (see note 55).

57. See *The Complete Writings of William Blake*, ed. Geoffrey Keynes (London: Oxford University Press, 1966) 910 ("1808-11"), and Bentley, *Blake's Writings* 2: 1705 ("1810-11"). The verses are dated before the *Public Address* of c. 1810 (but apparently only just before) in *The Notebook of William Blake*, ed. David V. Erdman with the assistance of Donald K. Moore, rev. ed. ([New York]: Readex Books, 1977) 56-57.

58. Blake envisaged that the 1805 *Ballads* would run to a second edition, which would include more engravings; see his letter to Hayley of 22 Jan. 1805 (E 762-63). For Robert Southey's review of the *Ballads*, which described them as "incomparably absurd," see BR(2) 223-24.



ography of Romney reinforce the connection between its publication and Blake's satirical verses. In large-paper copies, the label reads: "HAYLEY'S / LIFE / OF / ROMNEY / Illustrated / WITH / TWELVE PLATES / BY / CAROLINE WATSON."<sup>59</sup> While Watson engraved seven of the twelve plates, she is credited on the label with all of the engravings, including Blake's.<sup>60</sup> Seeing his work attributed to another engraver must have rankled Blake; that it was the engraver that Hayley ultimately favored for a commission which Blake had, at one point, hoped to make his own may have inspired the composition of the satirical epigrams. These verses come immediately before verses attacking Flaxman, which suggests that Blake may have become aware that by June 1804 Flaxman was recommending Cromeck to engrave the plates for the Romney biography. Looking back from 1809, Blake would have considered Flaxman's attachment to Cromeck in mid-1804 as a betrayal.<sup>61</sup> All of his efforts to retain Hayley's confidence, gain commissions, and follow his example in publishing endeavors had produced little more than disappointment and, by 1809, anger.

The rediscovered letter concludes with an intriguing reference to what initially appears to be the German poet Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock. Hayley owned four editions of Klopstock's epic poem *Der Messias* (1748-73) and, according to his diary, read the beginning of the third canto to Blake in 1803.<sup>62</sup> At some point between late 1800 and early 1803, Blake executed a tempera portrait of Klopstock to decorate Hayley's

library.<sup>63</sup> He later drafted a satirical poem in his Notebook which begins "When Klopstock England defied / Uprose terrible Blake in his pride" and, in a cancelled couplet, wrote "If thus Blake could Shite / What Klopstock did write."<sup>64</sup> While these comments suggest that Blake was less than sympathetic to Klopstock's poetry, Frederick E. Pierce has shown that there are a number of thematic and stylistic parallels between Joseph Collyer's English translation of *Der Messias* and passages in *The Four Zoas*, *Milton*, and *Jerusalem*.<sup>65</sup> Blake's use of the term "Klopstockian" to describe Hayley's compliment to Catherine appears to suggest a more positive relationship to the German poet than the satirical verses would allow. As we shall see, however, Blake is referring to Klopstock's first wife, Margaret, rather than the author of *Der Messias*.<sup>66</sup>

On 13 July 1804, in response to Hayley's request, Blake collected a copy of the newly published six-volume edition of *The Correspondence of Samuel Richardson* from the bookseller Richard Phillips. Three days later, he informed Hayley that he had not only managed to "get Richardson" but also "to skim it." He then makes a specific reference to Margaret Klopstock: "[I] cannot restrain myself from speaking of M<sup>rs</sup> Klopstocks Letters Vol 3—which to my feelings are the purest image of Conjugal affection honesty & Innocence I ever saw on paper" (E 754). These four letters subsequently achieved a degree of fame due to Margaret's depiction of herself as a devoted wife and able critic of her husband's work.<sup>67</sup> The "Conjugal affection honesty & Innocence" that Blake detects and that proved so popular with many readers can be seen in her description to Richardson of the composition of *Der Messias*:

It will be a delightful occupation for me, to make you more acquainted with my husband's poem. Nobody can do it better than I, beeing the person who knows the most of that

59. The original spine label in small-paper copies reads "LIFE / OF / G. ROMNEY / [rule] / HAYLEY." The labels on both large- and small-paper copies are present in uncut examples in original boards in Essick's collection. The last two letters of "Illustrated" have rubbed off the large-paper label, but we are confident in our reading of that word.

60. The use of italics to emphasize Watson's name indicates her significance as a selling point, and her status is further indicated in the title "engraver to Her Majesty" added to the signature in her engravings.

61. In 1805 Cromeck commissioned Blake to produce designs for Robert Blair's *The Grave*, but took from him the more lucrative commission to engrave them and hired Louis Schiavonetti. In his letter to Flaxman of 18 June 1804, Hayley refers to Cromeck as "your favourite Engraver" (Keynes, *Letters* 95, BR[2] 196n). Flaxman's letter to Hayley of 17 December 1805 suggests that his relationship with Blake was strained: "When You have occasion to write to M<sup>r</sup>. Blake pray inquire if he has sufficient time to spare from his present undertaking to engrave, my drawings of Hero & Leander, & the orphan family, if he has not I shall look out for another engraver, I would rather this question should be proposed by you then me because I would not have either his good nature or convenience strained to work after my designs" (BR[2] 221). It appears that, from Flaxman's perspective, Hayley was on better terms with Blake than he was, which further suggests that the date of Blake's last extant letter to Hayley, 11 Dec. 1805, should not be taken to signify the end of their relationship. See also Bishop 306.

62. On 26 and 27 Mar. 1803, he noted in his diary that he "read the death of Klopstock in the newspaper of the day, and looked into his *Messiah*, both the original, & the Translation.—read Klopstock into English to Blake; & translated the opening of his third Canto, where he speaks of his own death" (BR[2] 150). For the editions that Hayley owned, see *A Catalogue of the Very Valuable and Extensive Library of the Late William Hayley, Esq., Removed from His Seat at Felpham, ... Which Will Be Sold by Auction, by Mr. Evans, at His House, No. 93, Pall-Mall, on Tuesday February 13th, and Twelve Following Days* (London, 1821), lots 1164-66, 1828.

63. Butlin 343.16 (part of a series of "Eighteen Heads of Poets"). The portrait may have been based on a mezzotint of 1800 by Johann Gerhard Huck reproducing a portrait by Anton Hickel. William Meyer sent Hayley a "recent print" of Klopstock, probably the Huck mezzotint, on 14 Oct. 1800. See William Wells and Elizabeth Johnston, *William Blake's "Heads of the Poets"* (Manchester: [Manchester City Art Galleries], 1969) 26.

64. E 500, 863. Erdman suggests that Blake was reacting to Klopstock's declaration to "English visitors that their language was incapable of the epic grandeur of hexameters" (E 863). Blake replaced the cancelled couplet with "If Blake could do this when he rose up from shite / What might he not do if he sat down to write" (E 501).

65. Klopstock, *The Messiah*, trans. Joseph Collyer (London: R. and J. Dodsley et al., 1763). No copy is listed in the sale catalogue of Hayley's library. For the correspondences between Blake's later prophecies and the translation, see Pierce, "Blake and Klopstock," *Studies in Philology* 25.1 (Jan. 1928): 11-26.

66. Margaret Klopstock died in Nov. 1758. See *Memoirs of Frederick and Margaret Klopstock*, [comp. Elizabeth Smith] (London: Cadell and Davies et al., 1808) 160-61.

67. Echoing Blake's remarks, the preface to the *Memoirs of Frederick and Margaret Klopstock* begins: "The Letters of Margaret Klopstock, printed in the Correspondence of Mr. Richardson, have been so much admired, that I flatter myself the volume now offered to the public will want no other recommendation, than an assurance that it contains the genuine writings of that most amiable woman ..." (v).

which is not yet published; being always present at the birth of the young verses, which begin always by fragments here and there, of a subject of which his soul is just then filled. He has many great fragments of the whole work ready. You may think that persons who love as we do, have no need of two chambers; we are always in the same. I, with my little work, still, still, only regarding sometimes my husband's sweet face, which is so venerable at that time! with tears of devotion and all the sublimity of the subject. My husband reading me his young verses and suffering my criticisms.<sup>68</sup>

Blake's comment in the 7 August 1804 letter—"You have quite Elated my Wife & not a little made me remember my own unworthiness. by your kind Klopstockian Compliment to her"—suggests that the compliment in a now untraced letter had been to compare Catherine (at least implicitly) with Mrs. Klopstock. Such a comparison corresponds to Hayley's other references to Blake's wife. He first mentions Catherine in a letter to Lady Hesketh of 22 July 1800, describing her as "an excellent Wife, to whom he [Blake] has been married 17 years, & who shares his Labours and his Talents" (BR[2] 94). On 10 June 1802 to the same correspondent, Hayley refers to Catherine as Blake's "excellent Wife (a true Helpmate!)" (BR[2] 131).

The comparison is strengthened when we examine Blake's claim, presumably in response to a question in Hayley's untraced letter, that Catherine "thinks herself Quite as happy in every respect." This corresponds with Mrs. Klopstock's declaration of happiness in her letter to Richardson of 6 May 1758:

Though I love my friends dearly, and though they are good, I have however much to pardon, except in the single Klopstock alone. He is good, really good, good at the bottom, in all his actions, in all the foldings of his heart. I know him; and sometimes I think if we knew others in the same manner, the better we should find them. ... No one of my friends is so happy as I am; but no one has had courage to marry as I did.<sup>69</sup>

Blake's allusion to Hayley's comparison indicates Catherine's practical, emotional, and creative importance to her husband. Furthermore, as Blake suggests with the comment about his "own unworthiness," it was a role that he believed he did not fully deserve.

Gilchrist's frequently cited anecdote about Catherine's placing an empty platter before her husband, as a gentle hint for

him to undertake commercial work when they had run short of funds, suggests that she was more aware than Blake of the necessity of balancing their household economic needs and his creative endeavors.<sup>70</sup> Blake's struggles to reconcile the "fiends of Commerce" with "the dictates of [his] Angels" (E 724) can be seen in, and may have prompted, much of his correspondence with Hayley after he returned to London in September 1803. The letter of 7 August clearly demonstrates that Blake was increasingly in need of Hayley's patronage during this period. His deployment of Hayleyan discourse, exemplified by the imagery of "rocking the Cradle," his obligatory gestures of gratitude and loyalty, and his claim to obey his patron's advice in every minute particular indicate the extent of his dependence on Hayley's patronage to vanquish the "fiends" of commerce. Blake foresees "a mighty Change" in his fortunes, a prediction based upon (and implicitly requesting) further commissions from Hayley. This was a vain hope. Apart from five plates for the 1805 edition of Hayley's *Ballads*, no other commissions were forthcoming.<sup>71</sup> Indeed, Blake never completely resolved his struggle between material concerns and spiritual work. In his final years, he may have realized the impossibility of balancing the two. As he wrote in one of his *Laocoön* inscriptions of c. 1826, "Where any view of Money exists Art cannot be carried on" (E 275).

The rediscovery of Blake's letter to Hayley of 7 August 1804 does not radically alter the understanding of Blake's life that we can garner from previously known letters. It does, however, contribute a few glimmers of light into Blake's commercial life and its corresponding tensions within his mind. He regrets that "Profit never ventures upon" his "threshold," yet the bearers of such profit are "fiends" who must be "vanquishd" rather than welcomed. Commercial endeavors are both a necessity and a curse. Blake's admission that a dichotomy existed between his commercial work and his vision, between the want of "lightness" in the former and the "light & aerial" nature of his "constitution," shows both insight into himself and consternation over that "Paradox." This conflict is compounded by the "heaviness" that Hayley's "kind Genius will at length conquer," a heaviness that Hayley found in Blake's engravings but perhaps also a melancholic heaviness that Blake found within himself. Yet there was ample recompense for these troubles. Blake's struggles with his fiends, those within and those without, were essential for his creation of two of the greatest epics in the English language, *Milton* and *Jerusalem*.

68. *The Correspondence of Samuel Richardson ... Selected ... by Anna Laetitia Barbauld*, 6 vols. (London: Richard Phillips, 1804) 3: 151. Note her use of a birth metaphor for poetic composition, similar to Blake's "Mother & Child" imagery discussed above. The frontispiece portrait of Richardson in vol. 1 and that of Lady Bradshaigh in vol. 6 were engraved by Watson. In his letter to Hayley of 16 July 1804, Blake comments: "I admire Miss Watsons head of Richardson it is truly delicate 'The patient touches of unwearid Art'" (E 754). Perhaps these plates contributed to Hayley's decision to hire Watson as the principal engraver for his *Life of Romney*. Blake's complimentary quotation is from Alexander Pope's *Temple of Fame*, line 199; he was no doubt aware that Pope was one of Hayley's favorite poets.

69. *Correspondence of Samuel Richardson* 3: 154.

70. *Life of William Blake, "Pictor Ignotus,"* 2 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1863) 1: 313. Gilchrist prefaces this anecdote with the observation that Blake "had often an aversion to resuming his graver, or to being troubled about money matters."

71. At the end of 1805, there was the possibility that Blake would be commissioned to engrave designs by Flaxman to illustrate Hayley's translation of "The Poem of Musaeus on Hero and Leander" (BR[2] 221; see also note 61). The translation was not published and there are no extant engravings by Blake.