



No Cross, No Crown
PRINTS *by* JAMES BARRY

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from the Collection of William L. and Nancy Pressly

Catherine Bindman

with contributions by William L. Pressly and Armin Kunz

SNITE MUSEUM OF ART

UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME

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FOREWORD

With the acquisition of the William L. and Nancy Pressly Collection of James Barry Prints, the Snite Museum of Art has set a course for establishing a collection of Irish art at the University of Notre Dame, thereby strengthening and expanding our support of academic programs across campus. The twenty-eight prints in this portfolio represent more than half of the artist's print production. Most are rare, lifetime impressions produced on a grand scale; and in one case an impression is unique. Barry's sophisticated and nuanced approach to his subject, his connections to contemporary philosophers and politicians, and his technical acumen make these prints a rich source of primary material for faculty, students, and scholars of early American, Irish, and British history here and abroad. His role in the history of printmaking from both technical and social perspectives is equally noteworthy.

Curator of European Art Cheryl Snay has masterfully organized this exhibition featuring the entire portfolio, which includes a complete set of the prints made after the murals decorating the Royal Society of Arts in Adelphi, recognized as Barry's greatest accomplishment. Others of his prints are represented in multiple states and offer the visitor opportunities to delve a little deeper into the mind of this quixotic artist.

The acquisition of the Barry portfolio was no small feat, and we owe a debt of gratitude to the many people who participated in bringing it to Notre Dame. First, to William and Nancy Pressly for their foresight in gathering these works together over so many years, for sharing their knowledge and insights into these weighty images, and for their generosity in donating ten of the prints along with the letterpress that accompanied the first posthumous edition of the Royal Society suite in 1808.

I am deeply grateful to Terry and Margaret Stent, and to the entire Stent family, for recognizing the virtue of this investment in the University's resources and their magnanimous financial support of it.

Patrick Griffin, Madden-Hennebry Professor of History; Cheryl Snay, curator of European Art; and Bridget Hoyt, curator of education for academic programs, advocated ardently to improve the Museum's holdings in this area. Development officers Eileen Murdock and Maria di Pasquale were instrumental in the many logistics necessary for the acquisition. We commend Armin Kunz, Catherine Bindman, and the staff of C.G. Boerner in New York for all their efforts in producing this catalogue and for their endless patience and good humor as the project unfolded over many months. Michael Swoboda lent his skills and eminent good taste to the design of the catalogue. Finally, I am indebted to the entire staff of the Snite Museum of Art, too numerous to mention here, for meeting with enthusiasm and industry the increasing demands of a growing and engaged university art museum.

— Charles R. Loving
Director, Snite Museum of Art
Curator, George Rickey Sculpture Archive

P R E F A C E

When I was an undergraduate in the English Department at Princeton University (Class of 1966), I was introduced to James Barry by way of William Blake. After embarking on a senior thesis on an aspect of Blake's work, I soon realized the importance of Barry to Blake's oeuvre. At the same time, the Princeton University Art Museum's drawing by Barry, *Passive Obedience*, completely captivated and intrigued me. When I decided to pursue art history as a career, Barry was a major catalyst. Another extremely important influence was Charles Ryskamp, then an English professor at Princeton and my adviser. Charles, an important collector, was as interested in art as in literature; along with Robert Rosenblum, also a favorite professor of mine at Princeton and later my dissertation adviser at the Institute of Fine Arts, he inspired in me a passion for both art-historical research and collecting.

As a graduate student in London between 1971 and 1973, when I was completing my dissertation on Barry, I had the problem, common to most students, of a serious lack of funds. Later, as a professor, I was still hardly rolling in riches. But the main problem in collecting Barry prints lay less in a lack of finances than in their scarcity. The London dealer Christopher Mendez, who subsequently became a good friend, was particularly successful in finding works and I am indebted to him for many of the pieces in my collection. Occasionally, it also proved possible to uncover and rescue other prints, but sources are now few and far between. From the beginning, collecting the prints and research on them went hand in hand. My book, *The Life and Art of James Barry*, published by Yale University Press in 1981, provided catalogues of all of Barry's known works, including a comprehensive one devoted just to his prints. Since this time, new images and new states of known prints have come to light, and I have published a few of these on their reappearance. Most recently, I have completed a book titled *James Barry's Murals at the Royal Society of Arts: Envisioning a New Public Art*, published in 2015 by Cork University Press. It is, indeed, impossible to study Barry without becoming involved with his work as a printmaker: the artist's prints after the paintings, some of which are large-scale details, form an important part of this study.

A visceral response to Barry's art—his paintings, drawings, and prints—has always motivated my research and my interest as a collector. From the beginning I was attracted by his emotional intensity and intellectual profundity. As Samuel Johnson said on seeing the Royal Society of Arts murals, "Whatever the hand has done, the mind has done its part." In this regard, Barry can be seen as Blake's mentor, having pointed the way to the creation of heroic imagery imbued with a larger mythic dimension. He was simultaneously in the academic mainstream—a history painter par excellence—and a maverick, uncompromisingly pursuing his personal vision.

Barry was a master printmaker, and in his prints one can see easily what the hand as well as the mind has done. He owned his own press, which allowed him to experiment with scale and in a wide variety of techniques including etching and engraving, aquatint, lithography, and with the mezzotint rocker. His mastery of line and tone and the technical brilliance of his execution can be seen in works on a large scale as well as in much smaller, more intimate pieces. Over the years, as I looked and relooked at these prints, I was amazed at both the subtlety and richness of Barry's process, but I realized that he never pursued virtuosity for its own sake: all is in the service of his passion to transform his audience, a transformation, however, that places great demands on his viewer. Like Blake, the artist requires us to engage at a deep and fundamental level.

Along with Blake and George Stubbs, whom he also knew well, Barry ranks as one of the most original artist-printmakers of the late eighteenth century. I feel extremely privileged during my career to have had so many of his works around me. They have enriched both my scholarship and my life.

— William L. Pressly
Professor Emeritus, University of Maryland

INTRODUCTION

By the time he took up printmaking in 1776, James Barry (1741–1806) was already an established painter (a reversal of the more usual career trajectory of such contemporaries as William Blake (1757–1827) and William Hogarth (1697–1827), who began their careers as engravers and then moved on to painting). He had also just finished what was to be the most productive part of his career as a painter; between 1771 and 1776 he had exhibited twelve grand history paintings in the neoclassical manner and three portraits at the Royal Academy. In 1773 he had been elected a full academician. Barry's first book, *An Inquiry into the Real and Imaginary Obstructions to the Acquisition of the Arts in England*, had been published in 1775, a further effort to promote history painting in Britain (then largely dominated by portraiture and landscape). By this stage he had also developed a reputation as an impossible personality who rapidly alienated friends, contacts, and supporters. His sense of himself as a martyr to high art and higher ideals, subject to the envy and animosity of fellow members of the academy and most everyone else, was one that he was to nurture with impressive determination to the end of his life. Although Barry was made professor of painting at the Royal Academy in 1782, his endless confrontations with the art establishment (for both political and competitive reasons) formally ended in 1799 when Benjamin West (1738–1820), its president, and what Barry saw as his cabal, bestowed upon the artist the distinction of becoming the only member ever to be evicted from the institution. Barry remained defiantly in London, however, and continued to produce art in an environment of squalor that far exceeded the merely bohemian, even to the extent that it was noted by such artists and writers as Robert Southey (1774–1843) and William Blake.

In the early 1980s, Barry's prints, long neglected, were restored to attention by the scholar William L. Pressly in his book *The Life and Art of James Barry* (New Haven/London 1981) and the exhibition catalogue *James Barry: The Artist as Hero* (Tate Gallery, London, 1983). In 2001 Pressly added another three prints to the artist's oeuvre, bringing the total of documented prints to forty-six. He argued, not least, that printmaking provided the artist with an expanded realm for both technical experimentation and bold composition as well as for a more intimate and succinct representation of his political and artistic ideals.

Barry's youthful ambition to paint in the manner of the heroic figurative tradition of both the classical and renaissance masters led to an award in Dublin in 1763 for his painting *The Baptism of the King of Cashel by Saint Patrick* (Dublin Castle), subsequently purchased for the House of Commons; the statesman Edmund Burke (1729–1797) soon brought him to London to work for James "Athenian" Stuart, who was then working on volumes of *The Antiquities of Athens* with Nicholas Revett. From London, Barry embarked for Paris in October 1765, reaching Rome a year later. There, in the large circle of resident foreign painters, he pursued his interest in classical art, both the work of Raphael, Michelangelo, and Titian, the renaissance painters he held in highest regard, and, above all, ancient Greek painting. If the original works had barely survived, he believed that some of the innate qualities of this art might still be discerned through surviving writings and through Roman copies of Greek sculptures: "My thoughts, day and night, run on nothing else but the antique," he wrote to Burke during this period.¹

As Pressly has suggested, however, the young artist’s frequent assertion of the superiority of the ancients over the renaissance masters also points to a certain insecurity:

Unlike their classical counterparts, the works of the great Renaissance painters were very much in evidence, and he felt daunted by their all too visible excellence. By maintaining that the lost great works of antiquity had been superior to these modern masterpieces, there was no reason why he could not surpass these works in the present.²

Barry’s studies in Rome further persuaded him of the importance of grand history painting rooted in classical prototypes as a vehicle for promoting public virtue, a goal advocated with increasing intensity in his writings and lectures (and regardless of the public’s general indifference to this clearly prescribed path to national honor). As he told the Royal Academy, “Our art has the glory of being a moral art, with extensive means, peculiarly universal, and applicable to all ages and nations, to the improvement and deepest interests of society.”³

Barry also embarked from his earliest days in Rome on a lifelong program of self-sabotage, his arrogance and a perpetual sense of injustice effectively undermining the not-inconsiderable advantage of the connections open to him through Edmund Burke and his family (who were also financing his studies). Barry’s letters suggest that he was horribly competitive with his fellow artists and saw the guides and dealers whose help was essential to navigating commissions from British Grand Tourists as corrupt, greedy, and possibly even murderous. He whined to Burke in a letter of April 8, 1769, that “My enemies, you see, so contrived it as to make my profession of no profit to me in Rome, for which I will certainly strike a balance with them, if ever they suffer me to get to England.”⁴ Burke clearly had the measure of his protégé, wearily observing to him in reply that:

It will be the same at London as at Rome; and the same in Paris as in London; for the world is pretty nearly alike in all its parts: nay, though it would perhaps be a little inconvenient to me, I had a thousand times rather you should fix your residence in Rome than here, as I should not then have the mortification of seeing with my own eyes, a genius of the first rank, lost to the world, himself, and his friends...⁵

In spite of these injunctions, Barry returned to London in 1771; in five and a half years abroad he had produced only two major history paintings, *The Temptation of Adam*, and a picture of *Philocreates on the Island of Lemnos*, the latter for the Accademia Clementina in Bologna. However, shortly before his return, *The Temptation of Adam* was exhibited at the Royal Academy, newly installed at Somerset House, the first of fifteen paintings by Barry to be exhibited there during the following five years. At the end of this unusually successful period, Barry’s only painting on a contemporary event, *The Death of General Wolfe* (1776), was poorly received—and, with characteristic petulance, he never again exhibited at the academy.

On one level, it was unfortunate for Barry that this same year, 1776, witnessed the extraordinary success of William Wollett’s engraving of Benjamin West’s lauded painting of *The Death of General Wolfe* (exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1771), the first in which a contemporary event was elevated to the level of history painting. However, it was ultimately enormously to his advantage that West’s print both reanimated public interest in history painting and considerably expanded the market for reproductive prints of them. By this time, several of Barry’s paintings had also been reproduced in mezzotint by highly regarded engravers, among them *Venus Rising from the Sea* by Valentine Green in 1772 and *Mercury Inventing the Lyre* by John Raphael Smith in 1775. In 1776, the obscure engraver William Smith, most likely at Barry’s own behest, also produced three additional engravings after his paintings. Their notably poor quality may have been a factor in the artist’s decision to attempt to reproduce his own paintings. Like many of his contemporaries he also saw it as a source of revenue that might subsidize his work as a history painter.

At this time, the British print market was dominated by the tonal processes of mezzotint and stipple engraving, both, like etching in the crayon manner and soft-ground etching, reflecting efforts among printmakers to reproduce more accurately the effects of painting, watercolor, and drawing. In addition to the finest mezzotints of this period by printers like Valentine Green and John Raphael Smith, there was also a flood of popular mezzotints and stipple engravings featuring charming cottages and winsome milkmaids, often hand-colored or printed in pastel tones to match their sentimental subjects, and sold in great quantities to the French. For as Richard Godfrey noted, “The inventors of eighteenth-century print techniques were almost exclusively men whose technical ingenuity was not linked to any creative powers; they sought merely to reproduce the work of others.”⁶ Among the notable exceptions was George Stubbs (1724–1806), best known as a sporting painter and especially for his anatomically accurate images of horses; in them he combined elements of a range of printing techniques, including stipple, mezzotint, etching, and engraving to produce works of exceptional refinement that also defy standard technical classification. While his primary interest was in reproducing his own paintings, prints like his 1788 version of his famous painting *A Horse Frightened by a Lion* are, as Godfrey suggested, “reproductive only in the sense of a great composer rescoring a composition for a different ensemble of instruments.”⁷ William Blake shared Barry’s celebration of both American and French revolutionary republicanism (in its earliest period, at least) as well as his general hostility to the academy. His great color prints and illuminated books of the late 1780s and the 1790s allowed the artist, who had spent much of his career as a reproductive engraver, to experiment with printmaking techniques to extraordinary aesthetic effect, if little of the financial reward he had hoped for. The famous illuminated books like *Songs of Innocence* (1789) and *Songs of Experience* (1794) married verse and text in scenes made by the process of relief printing on copper that Blake had invented. Another exceptional printmaker was Thomas Bewick (1753–1828), the first artist to perfect the technique of wood engraving in tiny, carefully carved vignettes, chiefly of

birds and animals drawn from the English countryside—works that could hardly stand in starker contrast to Barry’s bravura efforts in print.

While Barry initially took up printmaking primarily as a means of reproducing his own paintings, and had none of Blake’s formal training as a printmaker, the reproductions themselves nonetheless soon became the site of new opportunities for technical experiment and artistic expression. The highly skilled work and intense concentration required by mezzotint, the roughening of the surface of the copperplate with a rocker and scraping to create areas of light, were hardly feasible for Barry. He thus took up etching and aquatint, vastly more fluid and forgiving techniques, as a means of boldly describing his unusually large classical figures and motifs. The artist set up his studio and printmaking workshop in his home at 29 Suffolk Street, Haymarket, and, as Michael Phillips describes it “in a matter of twenty months, between December 1776 and 1st September 1778, Barry produced ten of the most original and striking prints of the eighteenth century, exulting in the freedom from dot and lozenge, roulette and scraper, that pure etching had made possible.”⁸ The monumental manner of these works, produced with the very largest copperplates and papers then available, was ideally suited to Barry’s heroic figure subjects and to his grand ambitions for them. And they could hardly provide a more striking juxtaposition to the muted imagery in this technique produced by most of his contemporaries.

Aquatint was a new etching technique, used primarily to reproduce the texture and luminosity of wash drawings; like pure etching it allowed Barry considerable freedom to work in his characteristically intrepid manner. Originating in France and Italy, it had been introduced into England only in 1772 when aquatints by Peter Perez Burdett were exhibited at the Society of Artists. The process was popularized, especially for landscapes, by Paul Sandby’s *Twelve Views in Aquatinta from Drawings taken on the Spot in South Wales*, published in 1775. Barry’s use of aquatint for his historical and biblical subjects was unusual, as was his intense method of working with it. He often allowed some areas of the plate to be bitten up to five

times after the application of aquatint and others hardly at all in order to create dramatic contrasts of tone. However, the areas that had been so rigorously etched became increasingly fragile as the plate was printed and this was presumably one reason why he took up all of the major prints from the 1770s again in the late 1780s and early 1790s. At this point he either replaced the aquatint or worked over its vestiges in bold areas of etching and engraving, abandoning the sepia ink he had used to print the earlier works and inking the plates more heavily in darker inks.

A number of the earliest aquatint prints bear the odd name of “Archibald MacDuff” in various versions but Barry scratched out these inscriptions in later states along with the aquatint. Some scholars have suggested that this was a pseudonym for Barry himself; Pressly, however, argues that this is the name of a real etcher, possibly a pseudonym for the engraver Archibald Robertson: “His participation can only be a matter of speculation, but it seems fair to conclude that the early prints are by Barry and that he was assisted in the use of aquatint by either a knowledgeable amateur or a moonlighting professional.”⁹

In 1777 Barry had also begun work on a series of six paintings representing “The Progress of Human Knowledge” for the Great Room of the Royal Society of Arts in its new building at the Adelphi designed by Robert and James Adam (1728–1792 and 1732–1794, respectively), works essentially completed seven years later but which he was commissioned to retouch between 1799 and 1801. In 1783 Barry announced a subscription for six prints after the paintings; due to problems with printers, they were not issued until 1792 (with an additional plate with portraits of George III and Queen Charlotte; see cat. no. 10). At this time he also referred to “an improved Renovation of some other Engravings, by the private Sale of which, he was enabled to devote almost Seven Years Application in carrying out that very extensive and laborious Work of Painting at the Adelphi.”¹⁰

For Barry, printmaking “not only opened up new stylistic possibilities,” as Pressly points out, but “also unlocked an entirely new range of subject matter, enabling him to tackle genres that would have been considered inappropriate to history painting.” Further, a broader audience of the kind that could afford prints allowed him to “assume a different set of expectations.”¹¹ Working in print enabled Barry to incorporate social messages within otherwise traditional biblical or classical scenes in such images as *Job Reproved by his Friends* of 1777 (cat. no. 22); *The Conversion of Polemon* of 1778 (Pressly 13); and the small print *Minerva Turning from Scenes of Destruction and Violence to Religion and the Arts* of 1805 (cat. no. 21)—none of which were based on the artist’s paintings. It also made it possible for him to address topical and political subjects of a kind that would have been unfathomable in oil, among them his etching and aquatint of *William Pitt, Earl of Chatham* of 1778 (cat. no. 24), one that incorporated a long text on a pyramid in the background extolling the statesman’s virtues. (One of the other advantages of prints over oil paintings was that they could more easily accommodate such literary expansiveness.) Indeed, Barry’s first and boldest politically inspired print was *The Phoenix* or *The Resurrection of Freedom* (cat. no. 23), an aquatint celebrating the American republic, published in December 1776, and featuring a description in the margin of the flight of Liberty from England to the more hospitable realm of America.

Barry’s legacy and reputation were shaped as much by the conditions of his life during his last decades as by his artistic output, not least because they were commented upon by some significant contemporaries. He lived from 1788 until his death in 1806 at 36 Castle Street East in conditions of such abject squalor that, decades after his visits there around 1802, the poet Robert Southey still retained a clear memory of the state of the man and his house:

I knew Barry, and have been admitted into his den in his worst (that is to say, his maddest) days, when he was employed upon his *Pandora* ... He lived alone, in a house which was never

cleaned; and he slept on a bedstead with no other furniture than a blanket nailed on the one side. I wanted him to visit me. ‘No,’ he said, ‘he would not go out by day, because he could not spare time from his great picture; and if he went out in the evening the Academicians would waylay him and murder him.’¹²

Between 1784 and his death twenty-two years later, Barry’s delusions and genuine lack of significant patronage meant that he produced only four history paintings. But he continued to make some exceptional etchings and engravings and even began experimenting with other techniques in his last years. In about 1802 he began a mezzotint self-portrait and also produced a single lithograph, *King Lear* (cat. no. 19) for Phillip André’s *Specimens of Polyautography*, published in 1803. Moreover, the etchings and engravings of the 1790s, among them the prints relating to the Adelphi project and those illustrating *Paradise Lost*, show the artist working at the height of his powers. His last and probably never-completed print, *Pandora*, of ca. 1804–05 (Pressly 41) was also his largest at more than two feet in height and three feet in width. In February 1805, Lord Buchanan asked for an impression but was informed ten days later that it was “too large to take off any good proof from it in my own press.”¹³ Barry, at this stage, was increasingly derelict in mind and body, a condition mirroring that of his residence to an uncanny degree: broken windows rendered the front of the house uninhabitable because of the cold and much of the rest was so full of painting and printmaking detritus as well as the vast canvas of *The Birth of Pandora* as to

restrict the artist, by his own account, to a “small back room on the second floor.”¹⁴ But with typical, even heroic determination, Barry intended to see the *Pandora* printed—and delivered the huge metal plate to the printer T. Barnett, whose Oxford Street premises housed a press equal to the task.

Richard Godfrey observed, with characteristic eloquence, that

the massive etchings of James Barry ... in their attempt to apply the monumental scale and handling of Piranesi to heroic figure subjects, have no parallel in English printmaking. He had no patience for the polite small talk of the etcher’s art, and the primitive strength of his prints did not endear them to collectors who desired more finish.¹⁵

Today, however, Barry’s heroic figure types, savagely gouged from the plate, seen in cinematic close-up or almost bursting from the picture plane, have a very contemporary immediacy. On view in this exhibition is the extraordinarily rare and representative collection of William Pressly, a scholar who has not only restored Barry’s artistic reputation and expanded our understanding of his work in general—but who seems never to have required of the artist’s sometimes peculiar and often fiercely executed prints even the tiniest bit more finish.

— Catherine Bindman

¹ *Works*, vol. 2, p. 561.

² cat. London, pp. 10–11.

³ *Works*, vol. 2, p. 500.

⁴ *Works*, vol. 1, p. 160.

⁵ Edmund Burke to James Barry, September 16, 1769, *Works*, vol. 1, pp. 155–156.

⁶ Godfrey, p. 67.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

⁸ “James Barry: Artist-Printmaker” in cat. Cork, p. 142.

⁹ Pressly, *Life and Art*, p. 125.

¹⁰ Quoted by Pressly, *Life and Art*, p. 129.

¹¹ *Life and Art*, p. 132.

¹² Robert Southey to Allan Cunningham, July 23, 1829, quoted in cat. London, p. 18.

¹³ Quoted by Pressly in cat. London, p. 134.

¹⁴ Letter to David Stuart Erskine, Lord Buchan, December 21, 1804; quoted by Michael Phillips in cat. Cork, p. 145.

¹⁵ Godfrey, p. 64.

It has been a great pleasure to work on this exceptional collection of prints by James Barry, judiciously acquired during the course of his long career by William L. Pressly, the preeminent scholar of the artist's work. I have relied enormously here, needless to say, on Bill's published works. But he has also been unfailingly generous in supplying me with unpublished materials and addressing specific questions. (Any errors in the text are, of course, my own.)

Gillian Forrester and Scott Wilcox at the Yale Center for British Art, Evelyn Watson at the Royal Society of Arts, and Nicholas Stogdon are also owed a considerable debt of gratitude. And, as always, love and thanks are due to Armin Kunz for his wisdom and kindness (also for fearlessly tackling the technical issues).

— Catherine Bindman



The Thames (cat. no. 3), detail

NOTES ON THE CATALOGUE

The catalogue entries are organized to correspond with the order of the works as they appear in the exhibition, beginning with the complete set of prints made after the Royal Society of Arts murals.

Census

As anyone who has ever been interested in James Barry as a printmaker will know, contemporary impressions of all of his prints are extremely rare; scarcer still are examples of his early experiments with the fairly new technique of aquatint, one for which the print-collecting public in England at the time was evidently not ready. We thought it helpful, therefore, to provide a census of known lifetime impressions of Barry's prints. While we do not claim that this census is by any means comprehensive, it nevertheless confirms the overall rarity of the prints, a situation also indicated by the marketplace. The census is based on Pressly's catalogue but we have added impressions that appeared after its publication, among them acquisitions by such museums as the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, and the Art Institute of Chicago,¹ as well as impressions in an extraordinary private collection in England.² That further holdings may yet be unearthed—especially from historic collections assembled during Barry's lifetime—is suggested by Christiane Wiebel's exemplary study of 2007 on the art of the aquatint, one based solely on the rich holdings of the Veste Coburg; this collection, begun in 1775 by Duke Franz Friedrich Anton von Sachsen-Coburg-Saalfeld, included an aquatint impression of Barry's *Birth of Venus* (cat. no. 25a) and one of the monumental *Conversion of Polemon* (Pressly 13), the latter known previously in only three other impressions.

Paper

Barry's use of paper is fairly straightforward and consistent. The laid papers found in his early works mostly show the IV countermark that originated with the famous French papermaking firm of Jean Villedary in the late seventeenth century (fig. 3). However, Peter Bower has recently pointed out that many English manufacturers appropriated the Villedary countmark in the eighteenth century.³ The question of whether the "Villedary papers" found here are of French or English origin must therefore remain open. Barry continued to use these types of laid paper for the lifetime pulls of the Adelphi prints. The other two watermarks found in the laid papers are very similar, if not identical (figs. 1 and 2). Both show a fairly elaborate dovecote with door, dove, and a small superstructure at the top with another bird inside. Related dovecote watermarks are recorded by Heawood as originating in the Auvergne and produced in the second half of the eighteenth century⁴ yet he also documents its use in London in the 1780s.⁵

It is not surprising that proper paper and its supply was clearly of concern for the printmaker Barry. In his 1783 book on the murals depicting *The Progress of Human Culture at the Society of Arts* he even commented on the lack of appropriate paper stock in the British Isles, writing in the description of *The Distribution of Premiums at the Society of Arts* (cf. cat. no. 4):

In the corners of the pictures are specimens of cotton, indigo ... English carpets, and large paper of a loose and spongy quality, proper for copperplate printing, which is, and has long been a very great desideratum, as our engravers (whose works are now a considerable article of commerce) are for the most part obliged to make use of French grand aigle and colombiez, at six times the price of what paper of the same quality might be manufactured in England.⁶

During the 1790s wove paper became more widely available. It can be found in such reworked early plates as the *Phoenix* (cat. no. 23) and the *Job* (cat. no. 22) as well as in prints that were not created until the 1790s like *The Discovery of Adam and Eve* (cat. no. 16) and the *Milton* (cat. no. 17), the latter a double-sided progress proof and therefore undoubtedly printed by the artist himself. These early wove papers are all of medium weight and structured. Among the examples in this collection, the papers used for the *Phoenix* and the *Milton* are indeed very closely comparable.

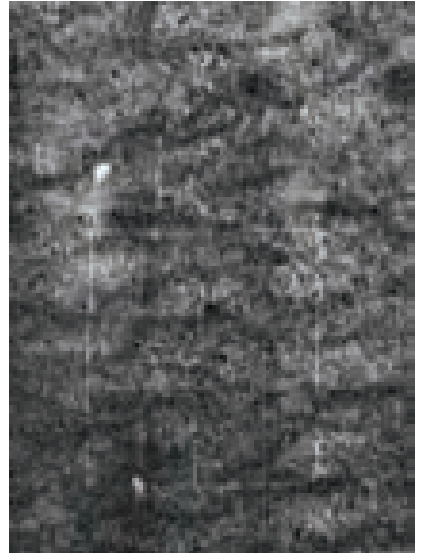


Fig. 1 (cat. no. 25)



Fig. 2 (cat. no. 24)

Plates and Reprints

Many of Barry's original printing plates were dispersed during the sale of the artist's estate, held by Mr. Christie in London on April 10–11, 1807, including the fourteen plates after the pictures at the Adelphi.⁷ Most of the plates sold in the estate sale came with a large number of impressions. In the following year, *A Series of Etchings by James Barry, Esq. from his Original and Justly Celebrated Paintings, in the Great Room of the Society of Art, Manufactures, and Commerce, Adelphi* was offered to the public. The title-page, which bears the date 1808, mentions W. Blumer and Co. as printers and Colnaghi as sellers (publishers?). The portfolio, offered for "Five Guineas stitched, and Six Guineas neatly Bound," includes a dedication to the Society by Mary Anne Bulkley, Barry's sister, who, as Pressly suggests, "was probably responsible for having it printed in an attempt to profit from her inheritance."⁸

We do not know with certainty if this portfolio, when initially offered, included a new printing of all the plates or contained some of the lifetime impressions that accompanied them. One might speculate that the letterpress sheets that were set for the portfolio could have been mixed and matched with those impressions printed in 1808. The examination of two copies of this publication at the Yale Center for British Art demonstrated to us that the impressions, in these two copies at least, were printed on distinctly different papers: one on textured, medium-heavy wove paper that would be congruent with a printing at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the other on very smooth, somewhat brittle paper that clearly dates to a much later point, perhaps even to the second half of the century. Furthermore, they all seem to be well inked but cleanly wiped and might be described as professionally printed, perfectly executed pulls done by a professional plate printer rather than the artist himself, indicating that they were posthumous.

So far, the exact sequence and date of reprints of Barry's plates has not been fully explored. We know that eventually the Royal Society of Arts recorded in its possession the fourteen plates after its paintings and the plate for *King Lear* (cat. no. 19) and that at some point it printed an edition on slightly later sheets without altering the title page but dropping the now inappropriate dedication. Based on the different kinds of wove papers found in these reprints, there must have been at least three different printing campaigns over the course of the nineteenth century (this count includes the first of 1808 and further assumes that these were indeed "campaigns" and that the plates were not printed "on demand" over a longer time period by the Royal Society of Arts)—all of them apparently still using the original letterpress sheets with the date 1808.

The Royal Society of Arts received sixteen more plates from a Miss Barnett in 1851.⁹ In 1872, instigated by a request to exhibit Barry's etchings at the Exhibition of Art and Industry in Ireland, it printed "a limited number of sets ... upon elephant and double elephant sheets" of the twenty-nine plates in its possession, including all from the 1808 book.¹⁰ Today, only two plates survive; illustrated here (fig. 4) is the mark of the London platemaker Benjamin Whittow on the verso of one of them (*The Distribution of Premiums*, cat. no. 4).

With the exception of cat. nos. 4, 9, and 11, the impressions from the Adelphi set presented here are contemporary proofs, all in states *before* those last ones described by Pressly. (These final states have so far only been found in impressions that belong to the reissue of the plates in 1808.) The three later impressions are all on structured wove paper not dissimilar to that used by Barry during his lifetime. They are, therefore, likely to originate from the first reprinting in 1808.

— Armin Kunz



Fig. 3 (cat. no. 10)



Fig. 4

¹ All three acquired what little there was on offer since 2002.

² Some of them published for the first time in the Cork catalogue.

³ Bower, p. 94.

⁴ Heawood 1232ff.

⁵ Heawood 1234 and 1237.

⁶ *Works*, vol. 2, p. 348; I am grateful to Bill Pressly for providing me with this intriguing quote.

⁷ Lots 60 and 77 of the sale.

⁸ *Life and Work*, p. 263.

⁹ Listed by Pressly, *ibid.*, p. 264.

¹⁰ According to the *Journal of the Society of Arts* of March 15, 1872, quoted in *ibid.*

The Progress of Human Culture: Prints after the Murals at the Royal Society of Arts

In 1777 Barry was commissioned to begin work on a series of six murals for the Great Room of the Royal Society of Arts (still extant), a project that was not exhibited until 1783 and that was to preoccupy him in one way or another for much of the rest of his career. This ambitious scheme was intended to illustrate what he described in an accompanying book as

[O]ne great maxim of moral truth, viz. that the obtaining of moral happiness, individual as well as public, depends upon cultivating the human faculties. We begin with man in a savage state, full of inconvenience, imperfection and misery; and we follow him through several gradations of culture and happiness, which, after our probationary state here, are finally attended with beatitude or misery.¹

The artist worked in situ on the twelve-foot high canvases already positioned on the walls in the manner of a renaissance fresco painter.

Barry's program here is typically complex, combining poetic and allegorical subjects with portraiture and contemporary allusions in an apparently loosely connected series of images that are nonetheless connected by his sometimes idiosyncratic but passionately held convictions about the important role of art in the advancement both of society and of individual happiness. In his most recent study, William Pressly argues that each scene of the series, featuring popes, ecclesiastics, and other distinguished figures, among them politicians, scientists, philosophers, patrons, and artists, further encodes Barry's notion of Catholicism as the only true basis for just governance, one that supports man's progress towards liberty and the arts. To this end, in certain scenes the artist exalts Catholic monarchs like Mary Queen of Scots and Isabella of Spain while lamenting Britain's break from Catholicism under the Tudors.²

This monumental project, for all its official status, did not supply Barry with a living wage, however; the Society only agreed to pay for his supplies. He was thus forced to rely upon the sale of his own etchings, produced after hours. As a result, according to one account "He had tea boiled in a quart pot, and a penny roll for breakfast, dined in porridge Island, & had milk for supper..."³

Barry not only retouched the paintings over the subsequent years, but also made fifteen prints relating to them, two sets of seven works and a late reworking of a detail. He had intended to publish the first series of etchings with the assistance of outside printers but, presumably for economic reasons, he ultimately executed the works himself. Like many of his reproductive prints, the first series (bearing the publication date May 1, 1791, but not, in fact, distributed until April 23, 1792, according to Pressly) incorporates variations on the original oil paintings; it also included a seventh print of *King George and Queen Charlotte* (cat. no. 10) that he hoped to use as the basis for two further paintings in the Great Room.

This first series, what Barry called "the small set" was not much admired by contemporaries who felt that their execution lacked professional polish, a criticism frequently directed at Barry's prints both during and long after his lifetime (cat. nos. 1–5, 7, and 10). In February 1793, he began a new set of seven prints that showed only details from some of the paintings (cat. nos. 6, 8, 9, and 11–14). He described those plates himself as "the large set"—a reference not only to their size but to his belief that "less is lost, and a much more dignified and adequate idea of the work is communicated."⁴

¹ *An Account of a Series of Pictures, in the Great Room of the Society of Arts, Manufactures, and Commerce, at the Adelphi*, in *Works*, vol. 2, p. 323; quoted in Pressly, *Life and Art*, p. 79.

² William Pressly, *James Barry's Murals at the Royal Society of Arts: Envisioning a New Public Art*, Cork 2014.

³ Miss Corkings, daughter of the Society's registrar to Benjamin Robert Haydon; *The Diary of Benjamin Robert Haydon*, ed. Willard Bissell Pope, Cambridge, MA 1963, vol. 5, p. 116; quoted by Pressly in *Life and Art*, p. 87.

⁴ Barry to the Society of Arts, March 31, 1801; quoted by Pressly in cat. London, p. 87.

1.

Orpheus Instructing the Savage People in the Art of Social Life 1792

etching and engraving in black; 416 x 506 mm (16 3/8 x 19 15/16 inches)

PAPER

laid with countermark iv

IMPRESSIONS

I – 4 [now 5]; II – 3 [now 7]

Pressly 17 state II (of III); cat. London 29; cat. Cork PR25

The William and Nancy Pressly Collection acquired with funds made available by the F. T. Stent Family

2015.001.001

The print is fairly close to the first painting in the series and shows Orpheus from Barry's perspective, not "as a man with so many fingers operating on an instrument with so many strings, and surrounded with such auditors as trees, birds, and wild beasts; it has been my wish rather to represent him as he really was, the founder of Grecian theology, uniting in the same character, the legislator, the divine, the philosopher, and the poet, as well as the musician" (*Works*, vol. 2, p. 234). Quite a few details here vary from those in the painting: Orpheus's long hair has been replaced by a shock of strands at the front and the figures around him have been enlarged in closer proportion to his outsize figure in the painting. Most notably, however, the ethereal two-dimensionality of the painted scenes are transformed in this and in the other prints in the series by closely sculpted forms and dark areas of hatching.



2.

A Grecian Harvest Home 1792

etching and engraving in black; 448 x 530 mm (17 5/8 x 20 15/16 inches)

PAPER

laid with fragment of watermark

IMPRESSIONS

I – 1; II – 2 [now 4]; III – 2 [now 3]

Pressly 18 state II (of IV); cat. London 30; cat. Cork PR26

The William and Nancy Pressly Collection acquired with funds made available by the F. T. Stent Family

2015.001.014

The second scene of the series shows a harvest festival celebrating the rustic gods; in the background, wrestling men point to the period of violence and strife that will inevitably replace this simple agrarian idyll. While such competition will produce an even richer form of civilization, suggests Barry, the mournful face of the dancer in the center also indicates a sense of loss. A number of small changes in the composition of the print include the shifting to the left of the group of dancers to allow more space for the elderly master of the feast and his wife, seen at the far right of the sheet.



3.

The Thames 1792 / ca. 1801–02

etching and engraving in black; 419 x 502 mm (16 ½ x 19 ¾ inches)

PAPER

wove

Pressly 20 state VI (of VI); cat. London 32; cat. Cork PR29

Gift of William and Nancy Pressly in honor of the Stent Family

2014.052.002

This print was first published in 1792 after the allegorical painting in the Royal Society of Arts series titled *Commerce or the Triumph of Navigation*. In a scene combining historical, contemporary, and allegorical figures, Barry championed the notion that improvements in manufactured goods and in branches of commerce imprinted the idea of excellence in the minds of Englishmen, thus counteracting what he saw as the prevailing evil of government corruption.

The figure of Mercury or Commerce flies lower over the enthroned personification of the Thames than in the painting, reflecting the overall compression of the scene in the print. It has the advantage, however, of projecting the figures in this somewhat bizarre composition further into the foreground where they are more clearly identifiable. In the river, the seafaring heroes Sir Francis Drake, Sir Walter Raleigh, and Captain James Cooke, surrounded by nymphs, lead Father Thames out into the sea as he disperses British manufactured goods to the four principal trading continents.

The faces of the three explorers are based on existing portraits but they are at least partly dressed in loose, timeless garments as they bob in the water among the allegorical figures of antiquity. Perhaps the oddest character in this retinue, however, is the music historian Charles Burney (1726–1814), seen playing an instrument in the middle of the chain of nereids. Strangely, Barry installed his friend in the water as a reminder of the need for a national school of music. But as Pressly notes, “The closer each of these four individuals approximates his actual appearance the more ridiculously unsuitable is his presence amongst these ideal figures, and because Dr. Burney’s portrait, copied from Reynolds’s painting of 1781 ... makes the least concessions to its surroundings, it appears as the most absurd” (*Life and Art*, p. 103).

Barry added the naval pillar to the painting in 1801 in response to a competition to design a monument to England’s naval victories. The pillar was also added to the third state of the plate and appears in all of its later states.



4.

The Distribution of Premiums at the Society of Arts 1792 / 1808

etching and engraving in black; 445 x 545 mm (17 ½ x 21 ½ inches)

PAPER

wove

PROVENANCE

P. & D. Colnaghi & Co., London (their stock no. on verso in pencil C 38716)

IMPRESSIONS

I – 3; II – 1; III – 1 [now 3]

Pressly 21 state IV (of IV); cat. London 33; cat. Cork PR30

The William and Nancy Pressly Collection acquired with funds made available by the F. T. Stent Family
2015.001.015

The Distribution of Premiums in the Society of Arts was the fifth print in the series. In it, Barry shows members of the Society, attired in sometimes peculiar approximations of classical dress, distributing awards promoting the arts, agriculture, manufacture, and commerce. The distinguished figures here are divided into four main groups, dominated from the left by the Society's president, Lord Romney, and the Prince of Wales in cloak, short tunic, and dagger but with a contemporary wig; Elizabeth Montagu presenting a young girl to the Duchess of Northumberland; and, to their right, Samuel Johnson, who alerts the Duchesses of Rutland and Devonshire to the latter's beneficence. On the far right, members of the Society examine works by a young candidate (see Pressly in cat. London, p. 84). Barry champions not only the Society's patronage of the arts but also represents in the background his version of Somerset House, home of the Royal Academy, and St. Paul's Cathedral, an institution seen as having the potential to encourage religious art.



5.

Crowning the Victors at Olympia 1792

etching and engraving in black; 420 x 934 mm (16 ½ x 36 ¾ inches)

PAPER

wove

Pressly 19 state IV (of IV); cat. London 31; cat. Cork PR27

Gift of William and Nancy Pressly in honor of the Stent Family

2014.052.001

Here Barry “depicts the culmination of man’s slow progress toward physical and mental perfection” (Pressly, *Life and Art*, p. 96). The finest athletes and thinkers of several generations are gathered at one of the Olympic Games of the Greek golden age of the fifth century BCE. As with *Elysium and Tartarus*, the limitations imposed by his materials meant that Barry had to change the proportions he had used in the original painted mural. While the resulting upward expansion of the composition is not entirely successful, much of the detail in the original painting has been retained and the temple of Jupiter Olympius in the background is much more prominent. A statue of Hercules on the left symbolizes physical strength while a statue of Minerva on the right represents wisdom. Barry seats himself, in the guise of the Greek painter Timanthes, at the foot of the Hercules sculpture where he is shown holding one of that artist’s famous paintings. (Given that Timanthes had been praised by Pliny for his genius, Barry’s own estimation of his artistic stature is not in doubt here.)

The main group of victors includes Diagoras of Rhodes, a former champion, who is carried on the shoulders of his two sons. In the chariot to the far left rides Hiero of Syracuse, the winner of the chariot race, with Pindar walking beside him playing his lyre. The victor of the horse race appears next on his rearing steed; in the first group of spectators to the right of the horse can be seen Pericles (his head modelled on that of Barry’s own printed portrait of William Pitt of 1778; cat. no. 24), his hand raised as he disputes Cimon, his political opponent. A second group of spectators, consisting of scientists and philosophers, is just visible next to the three principal judges enthroned at the far right of the scene (see Pressly in cat. London, pp. 81f.).



6.

Detail of the Diagorides Victors 1795

etching and engraving in black; 755 x 476 mm (29 ¾ x 18 ¾ inches)

PAPER

wove

Pressly 28 state IV (of IV); cat. Cork PR28

Gift of William and Nancy Pressly in honor of the Stent Family

2014.052.005

On 1 May, 1795, Barry published three details from the two largest paintings in the Royal Society of Arts series. This one is from *The Crowning of the Victors* (the other two are *Reserved Knowledge* and *The Glorious Sextumvirate* from *Elysium* and *Tartarus*, see cat. nos. 8 and 9). He felt that these vast scenes could not be adequately reproduced in a single print. Furthermore, the details allowed him to make revisions in their design and content without altering the actual paintings. The figure group here is not only foregrounded, almost filling the entire sheet, but the figures themselves are more boldly defined than those in the main composition; sharper lines and additional areas of shading more closely describe both their musculature and their draperies. The artist's Catholic interests are represented in a small inscription in Italian in which he dedicates the print to the papal government.



7.

Elysium and Tartarus or the State of Final Retribution 1792

etching and engraving in black; 420 x 934 mm (16 ½ x 36 ¾ inches)

PAPER

wove

Pressly 22 state VI (of VI); cat. London 34; cat. Cork

Gift of William and Nancy Pressly in honor of the Stent Family

2014.052.003

This print is a variation on Barry's last painting in the series for the Royal Society of Arts. Pressly notes that this classical scene is entwined with a distinctively Christian narrative: "The artist's reverence for ancient Greece and Rome and his devotion to the Roman Catholic Church were, for him, part of the same religious impulse, the latter being the natural heir to the former, and in this work, which groups together virtuous pagans and Christians, he was at pains to emphasize the continuity between these two worlds" (*Life and Art*, p. 113).

While the print is a condensed and compressed version of the painting, it nonetheless incorporates most of the 125 identifiable notables found in Elysium or Heaven, among them scientists, philosophers, statesmen, defenders of liberty, patrons, and theologians, who will provide the basis for a civilized society conducive to the flourishing of the arts. Barry wrote that "it was my wish to bring together in Elysium, those great and good men of all ages and nations, who were cultivators and benefactors of mankind; it forms a kind of apotheosis, or more properly a beatification of those useful qualities which were pursued through the whole work" (*An Account of a Series of Pictures, in the Great Room of the Society of Arts ... in Works*, vol. 2, p. 383, quoted by Pressly in *Life and Art*, p. 113). In the foreground, the Quaker

William Penn presents a scroll with his code of laws establishing religious toleration in the Colony of Pennsylvania, another essential prerequisite for this creative utopia. And indeed, Barry represents this notion very literally, showing Homer and other writers, poets, and artists ranged on a hill in the distance, apparently waiting for the mortals to sort things out so they can get to work.

God is represented by a burst of light from the left while on the far right is the gloomy abyss of Tartarus, separated from Elysium by a rocky barrier guarded by angels. In it, a partially visible figure with a raised pitchfork drags a nude woman by the hair into the depths. The palms and sculpture at the far left and the guard seated on the ledge of Tartarus at the right with his vertical spear serve to stabilize the realm in between.

Pressly suggests that "evolving, in part, out of concerns that earlier had been largely confined to sculptural programs, Elysium becomes in its own right one of the major monuments to the Enlightenment cult of men of genius that is so much part of modern intellectual history. Thinkers and creative heroes take precedence over active ones, and the criterion for admission to this Christian Elysium is a highly secular one" (*Life and Art*, p. 115).



8.

Reserved Knowledge 1795

etching and engraving in black; 736 x 470 mm (29 x 18 ½ inches)

PAPER

wove

Pressly 29 state III (of III); cat. London 37; cat. Cork PR34

Gift of William and Nancy Pressly in honor of the Stent Family

2014.052.006

In the upper part of this print showing a detail from *Elysium and Tartarus*, an archangel explains the laws of the solar system, unveiled before them, to the scientists Copernicus, Sir Isaac Newton, Galileo, and Sir Francis Bacon. The scientists and philosophers Thales, René Descartes, and Archimedes sit in the row below while to the right are seen the reclining figures of the Franciscan Roger Bacon and his supporter Bishop Grosseteste. Barry suggests that in Elysium or Heaven, the mysteries of the world will be made comprehensible.



9.

The Glorious Sextumvirate 1795 / 1800 / 1808

etching and engraving in black; plate 745 x 480 mm (29 ¼ x 18 ¾ inches), sheet 997 x 695 mm (39 ½ x 27 ½ inches)

PAPER

wove

IMPRESSIONS

I (proof before letters) – 1

Pressly 30 only state (recte state II [of II]); cat. London 38; cat. Cork PR35

The William and Nancy Pressly Collection acquired with funds made available by the F. T. Stent Family

2015.001.015

The foreground of *The Glorious Sextumvirate* shows a select group of men who died in the defense of liberty, among them Epaminondas, Socrates, and Sir Thomas More, with various philosophers in the background; in the clouds, angels intercede on behalf of several pious pagans including Brahma and Confucius. This jumble of disparate historical figures was suggested by a passage from Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726). It is one of three prints that together reproduce the entire left-hand side of the painting in the series for the Royal Society of Arts titled *Elysium and Tartarus*, a work incorporating 125 identifiable men of genius and intended, as Barry wrote "to bring together ... those great and good men of all ages and nations, who were cultivators and benefactors of mankind; it forms a kind of apotheosis, or more properly a beatification of those useful qualities which were

pursued through the whole work" (*An Account in Works*, vol. 2, p. 362). Like *Diagorides Victors* (cat. no. 6) and *Reserved Knowledge* (cat. no. 8) from this set, *The Glorious Sextumvirate* bears the publication date of May 1, 1795; however, Barry did not submit a complete set with inscriptions to the Society until June 1800. By this time, as Pressly notes, Barry had met the famous revolutionary, General Miranda of Venezuela, who, according to the artist, inspired him to inscribe on Epaminondas's shield (in the foreground) his winning tactics at the Battle of Leuctra in commemoration of the Thebians' defense of their liberty against the Spartans (see cat. London, p. 93). He also radically altered the right-hand side of the image in the lettered version so that it dovetailed with the adjoining print showing *Lord Baltimore and the Group of Legislators* (cat. no. 14).



10.

King George and Queen Charlotte 1792

etching and engraving with open-bite acid applied directly to the plate with a brush in black; 458 x 557 mm (18 x 22 inches)

PAPER

laid with countermark iv (fig. 3)

IMPRESSIONS

I – 1; II – 1; III – 1; IV – 2 [now 4]

Pressly 23 state IV (of V); cat. London 35; cat. Cork PR32

The William and Nancy Pressly Collection acquired with funds made available by the F. T. Stent Family

2015.001.016

King George and Queen Charlotte shows on one sheet Barry's ideas for individual portraits of the king and queen engaged in enlightened practices (the king ensuring the independence of the judiciary and the queen promoting domestic education). He had hoped at one point that these paintings would replace two portraits already in the Great Room at the Royal Society of Arts: Reynolds's portrait of Lord Romney, the Society's second president, and Gainsborough's portrait of Lord Folkestone, its first. However, the artist was never permitted to supplant these portraits with those of the royal couple or with two other designs that he created for the Great Room in 1801.



11.

Queen Isabella, Las Casas, and Magellan 1800 / 1808

etching and engraving in black; plate 715 x 125 mm (28 ¼ x 5 inches), sheet 997 x 695 mm (39 ½ x 27 ½ inches)

PAPER

wove

IMPRESSIONS

I – 1

Pressly 31 state II (of II); cat. London 39; cat. Cork 36

The William and Nancy Pressly Collection acquired with funds made available by the F. T. Stent Family

2015.001.018

Charles James Fox, the Whig statesman to whom Barry dedicated *Queen Isabella, Las Casas, and Magellan*, was mystified by the impression of this curious thin strip of a print sent to him by the artist: “The figures in the print appear to be in the grandest style, but I confess I do not yet perfectly comprehend the whole of the plan” (*Works*, vol. 1, p. 288). Its format can be explained by the fact that it was designed primarily to link *The Glorious Sextumvirate* (cat. no. 9) and *Reserved Knowledge* (cat. no. 8) from this series. Thematically it is most closely related to the first of these, showing Christopher Columbus conversing with his sponsor, Queen Isabella.

Magellan (standing behind her) was to profit from Columbus’s discovery of the New World, ultimately circumnavigating the globe. In addition to representing enlightened patronage, Barry also saw Isabella as “the Christian protector of the Indians, a cause to which the saintly Las Casas, who sits at her feet, devoted his entire career” (cat. London, p. 94). In associating Las Casas with Queen Isabella, Barry distances her from the atrocities of the “Black Legend,” the horrific evils the Spaniards inflicted on the subjected natives. Isabella’s devotion to the Catholic faith earned her the surname “La Catolica” (The Catholic).



12.

Divine Justice ca. 1802

etching and engraving in black; 744 x 508 mm (29 ¼ x 20 inches)

PAPER

wove

Pressly 33 only state; cat. London 40; cat. Cork PR37

The William and Nancy Pressly Collection acquired with funds made available by the F. T. Stent Family

2014.052.007

This was one of two prints that Barry produced around 1802 showing details from the lower ranks of the figures in *Elysium and Tartarus* (cat. no. 7). The other was *The Angelic Guards* (cat. no. 13) and the two were closely linked. In fact, Barry intended to supply an inscription for the rocks that extended through both plates but never found a suitable quotation. Among other new characters, Barry added the bald head of the Roman general Scipio Africanus, seen frowning at the upper right of the scene. Scipio was meant to reflect the artist's increasing discouragement with state patronage for the arts. Scipio was known not only as a great soldier who even defeated Hannibal but also as a champion of the role of Rome as protector of Greek culture. He was ultimately defeated by personal and political rivalries. The year after this print was published, Barry declared to the Society of Arts that in his view "British Statesmen & politicians ... seem to have had hardly any ideas of these Arts, than from their perversions in gratifying folly, profligacy or malignity" (Barry to the Society of Arts, January 6, 1803; quoted in Pressly, *Life and Art*, p. 183).



13.

The Angelic Guards ca. 1802

etching and engraving in black; 743 x 502 mm (29 ¼ x 19 ¾ inches)

PAPER

wove

Pressly 34 state IV (of IV); cat. London 42; cat. Cork PR38

The William and Nancy Pressly Collection acquired with funds made available by the F. T. Stent Family

2014.052.008

Here Barry added the figure of Marcus Agrippa, the hatted man seen in profile on the right in the group of illustrious patrons, to this detail from *Elysium and Tartarus* (cat. no. 7). He probably took this portrait from a Roman coin, and indeed, most of the notable figures in the scenes for the Royal Society of Arts were based on existing portraits. Pressly suggests that Agrippa “can be seen as yet another of [Barry’s] many personas.” Agrippa is shown holding his famous oration, described by Pliny as advocating the public display and ownership of art as opposed to the prevailing practice of placing them in private collections. Barry compared Agrippa’s views to those expressed in his own book, *A Letter to the Dilettanti Society*, and his addition here is—like the addition of the head of Scipio Africanus in the previous print—a further reflection of the artist’s disappointment with state patronage for the arts.

Barry also reinforced the drama of this section, adding two other angelic guards: one sits behind the original guard while the other, his muscular body awkwardly secured under the bent leg of the first guard, lies at the edge of the abyss and reaches into the darkness.



14.

Lord Baltimore and the Group of Legislators 1793

etching and engraving in black; 750 x 470 mm (29 ½ x 18 ½ inches)

PAPER

wove

Pressly 24 state II (of II); cat. London 36; cat. Cork PR33

Gift of William and Nancy Pressly in honor of the Stent Family

2014.052.004

On February 23, 1793, within a year of publishing his first set of etchings after the Royal Society of Arts paintings, Barry issued this print showing the detail of the group of legislators seen at the center of *Elysium and Tartarus* (cat. no. 7). This allowed him to replace the figure of William Penn with that of Cecilius Calvert, second Lord Baltimore, as the first man to establish a free society in North America. For as the artist noted at the beginning of his lengthy inscription in the margin of the print, "In the Elysium ... a mistake was committed owing to the delusion which has been so generally spread of considering Wm. Penn as the first Colonizer who established equal laws of Religious and Civil Liberty..." Most significantly, as Pressly points out, "this substitution enabled the artist to install a Roman Catholic instead of a Quaker as the founder of his ideal political system based on civil and religious equality." Barry further anticipated the reunion of all Christian sects under a papacy devoid of corrupting temporal ambitions (see *Life and Art*, pp. 173f.).

In support of this idiosyncratic ideology, Barry shows Pope Adrian reclining in the clouds at the upper left of the scene as he lectures the various figures, all opponents of ecclesiastical and political tyranny, on how this might be achieved. The angel at the far right strewing flowers above the legislators in a tartan costume is an idealized Mary Queen of Scots; the presence of the Catholic queen implies the artist's condemnation of the Protestant regime

of her cousin Queen Elizabeth I. The Spartan legislator Lycurgus reads Baltimore's code for Maryland while Numa Pompilius, William Penn, and Marcus Aurelius look on. And Lord Baltimore himself looks back to King Alfred who stands at his left shoulder, suggesting a long line of descent from the Anglo-Saxon monarch traditionally seen as the founder of the nation and its essential institutions, a defender of constitutional liberties and the ideal Christian king (although Protestant).

While all this seems somewhat contradictory and more than a little contrived, it reflects Barry's attempts to address key developments in the status of Catholics in England and Ireland during the very year the print was published. In February, having beheaded Louis XVI the previous month, the French had declared war on England; in April, in order to avert any threat of revolt, the Irish parliament instituted the Irish Relief Act, thus extending parliamentary franchise to Catholics. Barry himself made explicit his ambitions for the print: "I have no small satisfaction in reflecting, that the business transacted in the group of legislators in the Elysium, goes all the length of the remedy for the disorders of Ireland, the application of which remedy has been so long desired, prayed for, and hoped for" (*A Letter to the Dilettanti Society*, 1st ed. London, 1798 pp. 57f., quoted in Pressly, *Life and Art*, p. 174).



15.

The Temptation of Adam 1776 / ca. 1790

etching with engraving in black; 667 x 404 mm (26 ¼ x 15 ⅞ inches)

PAPER

laid with countermark iv

IMPRESSIONS

I – 2; II – 1; III – 1 [now 2]; IV – 2; [intermediate state IV/V – 1]; V – 2; VI – 1; VII – 1; VIII – 2 [now 3]; [intermediate state VIII/IX – 1]; IX – 1; X – 1; XI – 1; XII – 1; XIII – 1

Pressly 6 state VIII (of XIV); cat. Cork PR1

The William and Nancy Pressly Collection acquired with funds made available by the F. T. Stent Family

2015.001.002

This print reproduces Barry's painting *The Temptation of Adam* (National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin), based on Milton's presentation of the scene in book nine of *Paradise Lost*. Barry made this painting in Italy and had it shipped home to London shortly before his departure from Rome in 1770; it was exhibited at the Royal Academy the following year. The aquatint of the earliest states allowed him to capture some of the strong tonal contrasts of the painting, especially the almost sculptural paleness of the figures set against a dark landscape. As Barry stated of Milton's epic poem: "His Adam and Eve are figures in the truly Grecian style; they are undecked, save with their own naked majesty" (*An Inquiry into the Real and Imaginary Obstructions to the Acquisition of the Arts in England*, London 1775, in *Works*, vol. 2, p.

235). In these early impressions, Adam and Eve are bathed in a soft and all-revealing light in a dark forest that is very much pushed to the edge of the composition. A bright vista onto a fertile valley opens in the background. When Barry reissued the print in the 1790s, he gradually all but obliterated these contrasts in a series of states described by a dense web of etched and engraved lines that reinforce a sense of volumetric form, redefining the original two-dimensional abstraction of the figures. In this, one of the later states of the print after the artist's reworking of the plate, the sky has been blackened by dark cloud formations and the gloomy forest has almost entirely encroached on the scene.



16.

The Discovery of Adam and Eve ca. 1792–95

etching with traces of aquatint; 575 x 422 mm (22 5/8 x 16 5/8 inches)

inscribed by a later hand in pencil below Barry Pinxit & Sculpsit and (erroneously) First trial of the Plate

PAPER

wove

PROVENANCE

Reverend J. Burleigh James, Knowbury Park, Shropshire (Lugt 1425)

IMPRESSIONS

I – 1; II – 1; III – 1 (printed on the verso of a state II impression); IV – 1; V – 1 [now 3]

Pressly 27 state V (of V); cat. London 55; cat. Cork PR13

The William and Nancy Pressly Collection acquired with funds made available by the F. T. Stent Family

2015.001.008

Barry's *Temptation of Adam* was the first painting on a Miltonic subject to be shown at the Royal Academy. The artist revisited Milton's *Paradise Lost* from about 1792 when he began work on an ambitious program of related paintings. None of these were ever completed, but several drawings and major etchings survive. Barry's return to Milton reflected a renewed interest in *Paradise Lost* among his contemporaries. In 1790, Henry Fuesli (1741–1825) began work on his Milton Gallery, a series of forty pictures completed nine years later; William Blake, Thomas Stothard, George Romney, and Richard Westall also illustrated scenes from *Paradise Lost*. In spite of its complex imagery, the text, like Shakespeare's plays, offered both a nationalistic sense of pride in the country's literary heroes, one that might bolster the image of its artists, and subject matter even better suited to the grand style of history painting. And as Pressly further notes: "It is also of interest that this work should have enjoyed such a resurgence in popularity at the time of the French Revolution. At this moment of crisis the figure of Satan as the embodiment of spirited revolt took on an added lustre" (cat. London, p. 105). He also points to Barry's championing of Milton's epic as the Christian counterpart to the

Old Testament; Barry felt that Milton "was the first man of genius who was able to make any poetical use ... of the great personages and imagery of our religion: as it came to us from the Jews, who were never remarkable for art or picturesque ideas, it had the character of that metaphysical, abstracted, gloomy people, strongly impressed upon it" (*Works*, vol. 2, p. 238).

In *The Discovery of Adam and Eve*, Barry shows a scene described by Milton (Book X, lines 85–208) in which, after the Fall of Man, Christ descends to earth as intercessor. There he finds Adam and Eve hiding in a grove. Adam points accusingly at Eve while she indicates the serpent as the cause of the problem. Like many of the other subjects in Milton's epic, *The Discovery of Adam and Eve* allowed Barry to depict the heroic nudes that are at the core of both the classical academic tradition as well as much of his own work. However, it is worth noting that the beneficent Christ, arriving on a bank of clouds with the annoying serenity of a professional interlocutor, is no match for the Satan who enlivens Barry's earlier prints and drawings in the series with his defiant posturing and hair aflame.



17.

Milton Dictating to Ellwood the Quaker ca. 1804–05

etching and engraving with aquatint in black; 580 x 431 mm (22 7/8 x 17 inches)

PAPER

wove

IMPRESSIONS

I – 1 [now 2]; II – 1; III – 3 (one printed on the verso of a state II impression)

Pressly 43 states II [recto] and III [verso] (of IV); cat. London 57; cat. Cork PR20

The William and Nancy Pressly Collection acquired with funds made available by the F. T. Stent Family

2015.001.010

Milton's role in seventeenth-century English radicalism meant that he had long been one of Barry's heroes (see, for example, *The Phoenix*, cat. no. 23). Barry also seems to have identified with Milton as a man of untouchable integrity and superior intellect who nonetheless faced penury and persecution at the hands of his enemies in the establishment. The print, showing the blind author of *Paradise Lost* dictating some of his epic to his Quaker friend, Thomas Ellwood, as his daughter organizes volumes in the background, can be seen as the last of the artist's series of five Miltonic etchings: the other four are *The Temptation of Adam* (cat. no. 15) of 1776; *Satan Summoning his Legions* (Pressly 25); *Satan, Sin and Death* (Pressly 26); and *The Discovery of Adam and Eve* (cat. no. 16), with the last three all created ca. 1792–95. (Posthumous impressions of the *Milton* bear the title "John Milton Composing *Paradise Lost*.")

Barry made a significant departure here from the standard iconography of the subject in which Milton is shown dictating to his daughter rather than to Thomas Ellwood, who is known to have been employed by the poet only as a reader. This promotion of Ellwood to a central role in the scene may well reflect Barry's specific sense of a connection to Quakerism. While in his writings (*Works*, vol. 2, pp. 439–447) and in his large print series, Barry championed

a Catholic (Lord Baltimore in Maryland) over the Quaker William Penn of Pennsylvania as establishing the founding cornerstones of civil and religious liberty in the English-speaking New World (the argument is muddy), he ultimately conflated these branches of Christianity: "if Christianity can be supposed to predispose men to a predilection for any particular mode of government, it must be that of the greatest conceivable freedom, like that of the Quakers, and the difference between the Quakers and the other religious orders of St. Benedict, St. Francis, &c. is less than is vulgarly imagined; a very slight alteration in one or two particulars, and they are the same..." (ibid., pp. 577–578).

When the Earl of Buchan visited Barry's squalid den in 1805, upon seeing a sketch of this subject he requested a painting (never executed), remarking that it showed "A great man in circumstances similar to your own" (ibid., vol. 1, p. 296). Indeed, while Milton's features in the print are based on those in a contemporary portrait by William Faithorne, in the drawing they were much closer to Barry's own. In the print, he boldly describes an atmosphere of gloom from which Milton's mournful blind eyes, perhaps expressive of Barry's own malaise, seemingly stare out at the viewer.



RECTO



VERSO

18.

King Lear and Cordelia 1776 / ca. 1790

etching with engraving in black; 494 x 565 mm (19 7/8 x 22 1/4 inches)

PAPER

laid with countermark iv

IMPRESSIONS

I – 1; II – 1; III – 1; IV – 1; V – 1; VI – 1

Pressly 5 state V (of VII); cat. London 64; cat. Cork PR16

The William and Nancy Pressly Collection acquired with funds made available by the F. T. Stent Family

2015.001.001

Barry addressed this subject in an oil painting of 1774, *King Lear Weeping over the Body of Cordelia* (John Jefferson Smurfit Foundation, Dublin), reproduced in an aquatint of 1776 (the three different states of the early aquatint version of this print survive in merely three unique impressions). In this later impression from ca. 1790, the aquatint has been reworked with etching and engraving. The painting, exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1774 and on which this print was based, was extraordinary not least for its subject matter. George Romney in about 1761 had painted the storm scene from the play, as had John Runciman in 1767, but Barry was the first—in any medium—to show Lear’s final moments. Further, in the eighteenth century, productions of *King Lear* reflected Nahum Tate’s 1681 version of the play, almost entirely rewritten; the tragic ending was replaced by a romantic one in which Lear survives and Cordelia marries Edgar. Shakespeare’s final scene, represented here by Barry, was not restored until William Charles Macready’s production of 1838, many years after the artist’s death. As in the

painting, here Barry fortifies the emotional impact of the image, cropping the frame to force the figures close up against the picture plane. Lear’s agony is extravagantly represented in his wild flowing locks, the hand against his forehead, and the contorted features that contrast with the passive serenity of the dead Cordelia. An inscription at the bottom of the plate (partially trimmed off during the reworking of the plate in the fourth state), was taken from act 5, scene 10 of *King Lear*, describing the moment of pain so viscerally represented here by Barry: “King Lear—/Howl, howl, howl, howl, —O, you are men of Stone/Had I your tongues and eyes, I’d use them so,/ That heaven’s vault should crack, She’s gone for ever.”

Barry returned to the subject of Lear in another painting of the same name in 1786–87 (but with a very different composition), and again in the late lithograph, *King Lear* (1803; cat. no. 19).



19.

King Lear ca. 1803

pen lithograph in black; 235 x 322 mm (9 ³/₁₆ x 12 ³/₄ inches)

PAPER

wove

Pressly 38; cat. London 74

The William and Nancy Pressly Collection acquired with funds made available by the F. T. Stent Family

2015.001.009

This print represents Barry's only foray into the newly invented technique of lithography. It was published on April 30, 1803, by Phillip André in *Specimens of Polyautography*, a collection of twelve prints that represents one of the pioneering uses of lithography in an artistic context. Barry was joined in this project by such distinguished colleagues as Benjamin West, Henry Fuseli, Richard Westall, and Thomas Stothard. Like etching and aquatint, lithography was a relatively easy technique for an artist like Barry who had no formal training as a printmaker. In this case, he simply had to draw directly onto the stone with pen and the greasy lithographic ink before turning it over to the printer. As he experimented, Barry chose a familiar motif from his existing work, in this case the head of Lear from his print *King Lear and Cordelia* (cat. no. 18), describing it even in this much more fluid, painterly technique with the cross-hatchings, parallel lines, and stipple effects that he knew from etching and that he had also incorporated into his late drawing style.



20.

Jupiter and Juno on Mount Ida ca. 1804–05

etching and engraving with use of mezzotint rocker in black; 313 x 364 mm (12 ¹⁵/₁₆ x 14 ⁵/₁₆ inches)

PAPER

wove

IMPRESSIONS

I – 1; II – 1; III – 7 [now 8, probably all posthumous]

Pressly 39 state III (of III); cat. London 75; cat. Cork PR24

The William and Nancy Pressly Collection acquired with funds made available by the F. T. Stent Family

2015.001.011

In about 1804, Barry revisited the subject of *Jupiter and Juno on Mount Ida* that he had first represented in an oil painting, exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1773 (since lost), and in a print of 1777 (Pressly 11). His second version of the painting (Sheffield City Art Galleries), like the first, shows a scene described in the *Iliad* in which Juno seduces her husband, Jupiter, with the aim of lulling him to sleep so that she might sneak off to assist the Greeks in their siege of Troy. In the print seen here, reproducing the second painting, the standing gods of the first version have been replaced by lounging figures in half-length; Juno's superior position to Jupiter and her determined expression as she bares her breast suggest her certain victory. The compression of the divine pair, interlocked in almost cinematic close-up in a constricted space, reinforces a sense of erotic intensity.

This was almost certainly one of the artist's latest works, as evidenced by the use of mezzotint, a technique with which he only began to experiment at the end of his career. Further, with the exception of unique impressions that survive of the first and second states, the eight known impressions of the third and final state were most likely pulled only after the artist's death.



21.

Minerva Turning from Scenes of Destruction and Violence to Religion and the Arts ca. 1805

etching on chine appliqué on a wove paper support sheet; plate 196 x 120 mm (7 5/8 x 4 3/4 inches)

IMPRESSIONS

I – frontispiece to a published book; II – 3 (posthumous)

Pressly 42 state II (of II)

The William and Nancy Pressly Collection acquired with funds made available by the F. T. Stent Family

2015.001.012

This late etching was published as the frontispiece to Francis Borroughs's *A Poetical Epistle to James Barry, Esq.* (London, 1805). Here Barry shows the figure of Minerva, goddess of wisdom, in a pose based on Raphael's cartoon *Feed My Sheep*, in her role as protector of the arts. She indicates with a downturned hand scenes on her right of violence, depravity, and destruction under an ominous, heavily cross-hatched sky; with an open left hand she gestures to scenes of virtue, epitomized by agriculture and the arts—music, books, painting, and the Three Graces dancing in the shadow of St. Paul's Cathedral. Pressly notes that in the print Barry carelessly reversed the scene in the original drawing in which, more appropriately, the scenes of horror appear on Minerva's left and those of virtue on her right (*Life and Art*, p. 184). He also observes that while Minerva traditionally had the power to protect virtue from vice and corruption, Barry here presents her as offering a choice "and one senses that Barry is again specifically referring to the contemporary situation. The figure singing and playing the harp ... is surely not only a second Orpheus flourishing in a peaceful age but also a hopeful Ireland singing of a harmonious future" (*ibid.*, 185).



22.

Job Reproved by his Friends 1777 / ca. 1790

etching, engraving, and roulette work with traces of aquatint in black; 570 x 762 mm (22 7/16 x 30 inches)

PAPER

wove

IMPRESSIONS

I – 3; II – 1; III – 1; IV – 2; V – 3

Pressly 10 state V (of V); cat. London 24; cat. Cork PR4

The William and Nancy Pressly Collection acquired with funds made available by the F. T. Stent Family

2015.002.002

This print should, like its companion piece, *The Conversion of Polemon*, of 1778 (Pressly 13), be read as a political allegory. While in the later print Polemon is intended to represent Charles James Fox, and the philosopher Zenocrates stands in for Edmund Burke, in this image the features of Job's wife, pointing heavenward with a hand on the shoulder of the dejected Job, "unmistakably resemble those of William Pitt the Elder" (Pressly in cat. London, p. 76; for the portrait of Pitt see cat. no. 24). Pressly also suggests that Burke should be identified with the seated friend gesticulating to the left of the slumped figure of Job since he closely resembles Burke as Zenocrates in the Polemon print. Together Pitt and Burke are seen as ministering to a nation subjected by the sovereign and his government to an immoral war; its

terrible consequences are indicated by the ruinous landscape and the distraught figures supporting a dead body in the background. Characteristically, in such prints Barry champions the political message over a consistent rendition of the biblical or mythological story from which it is taken.

The artist's dedication of the print to Edmund Burke further links the scene to the Sublime in its depiction of noble suffering and primal violence against a dramatic and savage scenery; Burke was the author of *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757), a work that expanded this classical concept, especially in relation to landscape, and in which he frequently referred to passages from the Book of Job.



The Phoenix or The Resurrection of Freedom 1776 / ca. 1790

etching and engraving with traces of aquatint in black; 440 x 625 mm (17 ¼ x 24 ⅝ inches)

PAPER

wove

IMPRESSIONS

I – 1; II – 2 [now 3]; [intermediate state II/III – 1; Pressly’s state III is posthumous]

Pressly 8 intermediate state II/III (of III); cat. London 21; cat. Cork PR2

The William and Nancy Pressly Collection acquired with funds made available by the F. T. Stent Family

2015.002.001

The Phoenix or The Resurrection of Freedom was Barry’s first and bravest political statement in print, a championing of the American cause to which this democratic medium was well suited. In this image, crammed with classical allegories, heroic figure types, and inscriptions, Barry appears to be experimenting with a monumental style of printmaking that boldly proclaims the significance of his message—one that owes much to his contemporary, Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1720–1778). While Barry’s prints tend to lack the dark humor and irony of William Hogarth’s merciless satires of the social and political mores of the time, they were also surely influenced by Hogarth’s crowded scenes, and, not least, by his belief “that prints could be a democratic art, not confined to mere amusement or the portfolio of the collector, but composed of images that reached thousands of people, and could be used as a blunt instrument in the hands of the reformer or moralist” (Godfrey, p. 36).

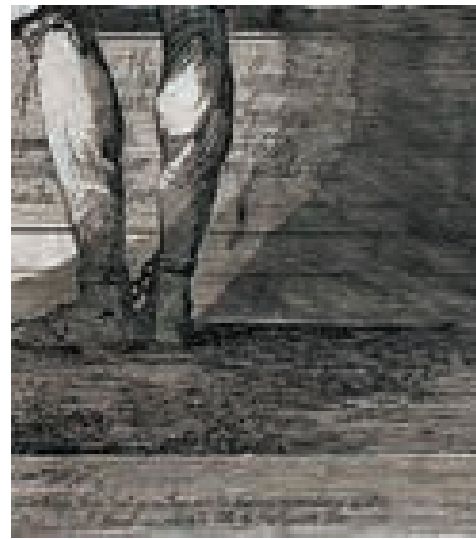
And if prints were less subject to the formal conventions of oil painting, providing a more flexible format that allowed Barry to represent contemporary portraits within a historical or allegorical framework in order to comment on current politics, they could also more easily accommodate lengthy didactic texts of the kind he seems to have especially enjoyed. In the margin of *The Phoenix*, for example, a text describes Liberty’s abandonment of “Greece, Italy & thy more favor’d England when they grew Corrupt and Worthless, thou hast given them over to chains & despondency & taken thy flight to a new people of manners simple and untainted.” Characteristically, the artist incorporates a disparate range of favored subjects in the service of his wider message. As Father Time scatters flowers upon the ruins of classical Athens, ancient Rome, and Renaissance Florence in the middle ground, the Three Graces frolic on American shores before the Temple of Liberty in the distance. Apart from the incongruous contrivance of the rococo

vignette of the shepherd piping to a shepherdess at the right of the temple (Pressly, *Life and Art*, p. 77), the open vistas behind them suggest boundless freedoms. The scene in the right foreground, however, is the main focus of the print: some of the artist’s most revered seventeenth-century thinkers—Sidney, Milton, Marvell, and Locke—all republicans of sorts, are shown in the guise of solemn mourners surrounding the bier of Britannia (with Barry’s self-portrait included on the far right). From the back of the coat of the chained figure standing in front of the bier, possibly Edmund Burke (also sympathetic to the American cause; see Pressly in cat. London, p. 75), emerges a paper marked “Habs Corps,” a reference to the government’s attacks on the Habeas Corpus Act. Various further inscriptions, including one on the tombstone at the left consisting of a chillingly autocratic message from the king, and one on Britannia’s bier, “a Monument to the Memory of British Freedom a Corrupt degenerate Nobility & Gentry, dissipated poor rapacious & dependent upon the Court” serve as further indictments of the British establishment.

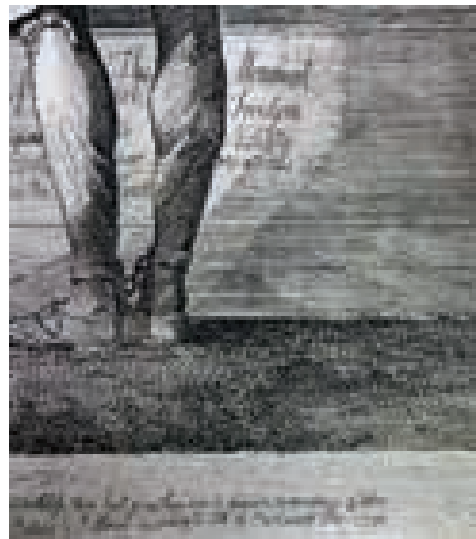
Barry did not actually sign this inflammatory work, instead inscribing it with the phrase “U & C fecit” below the tombstone. Pressly suggests that this may refer to *Ulysses and a Companion* (cat. London, p. 75), a history painting Barry exhibited the same year at the Royal Academy and in which the artist and his former patron, Edmund Burke, are represented as Ulysses and a companion fleeing from the cave of Polyphemus, or, in this case, some kind of institutional retribution for their support of the American Revolutionary cause. The artist returned to this print, as he did with many of his early aquatints, in ca. 1790, removing much of the aquatint and

adding numerous engraved lines. The golden sepia tones of the 1776 printing have been eliminated here in favor of darker, more heavily worked passages, creating an ominous mood.

Only four impressions are known of this print in the first two states with aquatint. In his catalogue raisonné, Pressly lists his impression as a third state together with posthumous impressions at the National Gallery of Victoria in Melbourne and the Royal Society of Arts in London. While most of the aquatint here has indeed been burnished out, it is still printing noticeably in the darker areas of the foreground, especially on the sarcophagus on the right. Comparison with the later, possibly posthumous impressions further shows that many areas of shading added in etching and engraving to the calves of the mourning man in the right foreground and on the sarcophagus itself are absent here. These impressions must, therefore, be described as representing a later fourth state. Further, the Pressly impression does not show the clean handling of the plate characteristic of the impressions pulled in 1808 and thereafter by professional printers. There can thus be no doubt that this is a contemporaneous impression, pulled by the artist on the same kind of wove paper he used during the 1790s for other reworked plates from the 1770s (examples within this collection are the later states of the *Birth of Venus* [cat. no. 25b] and the *Job* [cat. no. 22] as well as such later prints as *The Discovery of Adam and Eve* [cat. no. 16] and the *Milton* [cat. no. 17]). The similarity of the structured, slightly bumpy wove paper in the *Phoenix* and the *Milton* is especially helpful since the latter was used to print two progressive proofs on the recto and verso of the same sheet; its contemporary status is, therefore, beyond any doubt.



intermediate state II/III (this impression)



state III [recte IV] (impression at the RSA)



24.

William Pitt, Earl of Chatham 1778 / ca. 1790

recto state I: etching and aquatint in brown ink

verso state V: etching and engraving with traces of aquatint

475 x 396 mm (18 ¹¹/₁₆ x 15 ⁹/₁₆ inches)

PAPER

laid with watermark dovecote (fig. 2)

IMPRESSIONS

I – 4 [now 9]; II – 2; III – 1; IV – 1; V – 1 [now 2, one printed on verso of a state I impression]

Pressly 14 states I and V (of V); cat. London 27; cat. Cork PR17

The William and Nancy Pressly Collection acquired with funds made available by the F. T. Stent Family

2015.001.005

Barry issued this commemorative print four months after the death of William Pitt the Elder on May 11, 1778, representing the politician, with his distinctive nose, in the form of a classical bust. Indeed, the lengthy tribute to Pitt's moral superiority in the face of the "state chicanery," "vicious Politics," and "idle contest for ministerial victories" that, according to Barry, characterized the regime of the day, was carved by Britannia with the point of her spear on the pyramid behind the bust; the inscription further states that "The Secretary stood alone, modern degeneracy had not reached him, Original, and/unaccommodating; the features of his character had the hardihood of Antiquity..." (Britannia herself is a curiously lumpen figure here: her face pudgy and her robust left arm apparently bursting from the sleeve of her robe, she is depicted with none of the antique grace afforded the

statesman's elegant profile.) The glimpse of the dome of St. Paul's Cathedral in the background, a motif frequently deployed by Barry in various moral capacities, is intended here as a reminder of Pitt's loyal service to the City of London, one more assiduous, the artist believed, than that of the king. In the first version of this print, seen on the recto of this sheet, Barry also included a diatribe against George III and his dismissal of Pitt in 1761, stating of the Secretary of State that: "his august mind over-awed Majesty, and one of his Sovereigns thought Majesty so impaired in his presence, that he conspired to remove him, in order to be relieved from his superiority." However, he erred on the side of political caution when he reissued the print in ca. 1790 (seen in an impression on the recto of the sheet), and scratched out this reference to the king's machinations.

The rare survival of impressions of two distinctly different states of the same plate on one sheet of paper is revealing in several respects. After all, more than a decade had passed by the time Barry returned to his large aquatints of the late 1770s in order to laboriously remove the subtle tones that so much appeal to us in the early impressions of *The Birth of Venus* (cat. no. 25a) and the portrait of *William Pitt*. However, one reason for the virtual unobtainability of his prints today is undoubtedly the artist's oft-noted lack of success with the print collectors of his own time. Further proof of this might be found in the very existence of such double-sided impressions: piles of his elaborately executed large-size aquatints must still have been lying around in his workshop years after they were pulled, and one cannot help feeling that Barry's use of the versos of these sheets was not merely instigated

by an inability to afford new paper stock. There might well have been an element of his notorious defiance in the gesture, a sort of challenge to the collector to choose whichever side he preferred—and to take the etching if he could not appreciate the delicate aquatint of the artist's first endeavor.



RECTO



VERSO

25 a & b.

Birth of Venus 1776

a: etching and aquatint in brown; 407 x 585 mm (16 x 23 inches)

PAPER

laid with watermark dovecote (fig. 1)

IMPRESSIONS

I – 2 [now 3]; II – 3 [now 4]; III – 1; IV – 1; V – 2; VI – 4

Pressly 7 state II (of VII); cat. London 65; cat. Cork PR3

Pressly has distinguished three different states for the aquatint version of the plate; all together they survive in no more than seven known impressions.

The William and Nancy Pressly Collection acquired with funds made available by the F. T. Stent Family

2015.001.003

Birth of Venus 1791

b: etching and engraving with traces of aquatint in black; 435 x 624 mm (17 1/8 x 24 3/8 inches)

PAPER

laid

Pressly 7 state VII (of VII); cat. London 66; cat. Cork PR3

The William and Nancy Pressly Collection acquired with funds made available by the F. T. Stent Family

2015.001.004

In 1772 Barry had successfully exhibited his painting, *Venus Rising from the Sea*, at the Royal Academy. The rounded proportions of the standing figure were modelled on those of the statue of the Venus de' Medici, and her gesture as she wrings out her wet hair was based on descriptions of the famous picture of Venus Anadyomene by Apelles. Valentine Green had published a mezzotint version of the painting the same year and numerous reproductive prints of his image were to follow. By contrast, Barry's 1776 print of the subject depicts the goddess reclining in a large shell cradled in the arms of Neptune. Strange sea creatures appear in the water below,

and, to the right, a group of three tritons with pointy ears and a variety of distinctive hairstyles pays homage to the goddess. The artist creates a rhythmic series of curves and counter-curves between these individual elements and establishes dramatic contrasts of scale. Most notably, the figure of Neptune is partially cut off at the left edge of this vast sheet as if to suggest he cannot be contained within its confines. As Pressly notes, the 1776 impression is one of Barry's most successful aquatints, coming "closest to the style of his wash drawings with their sensuous tonal qualities and emphasis on abstract surface rhythms" (cat. London, p. 122).

This early impression is dedicated "humbly inscribed to," an inscription that was followed in the third state by "our unparalleled [sic] females;" this last was deleted in the fifth state of 1790 and in subsequent impressions replaced by "Her Grace the [blank]." In the sixth state, after the date "Dec. 1776" Barry added "PPRA [Professor of Painting to the Royal Academy] 1791" (also seen on our seventh-state impression), indicating that it belongs to a later period (see Pressly, *Life and Art*, pp. 267–268).

The contrast between the two impressions is instructive. In the later version, the artist has transitioned from the etching and delicate aquatint of the earlier one to a web of densely engraved and etched lines to describe the scene. While this alteration obscured much of the tonal variation and subtle luminosity of the original image, the later impressions nonetheless have a darkly compelling quality in their own right.



25 a



25 b

26 a & b.

Ticket of Admission for Horace's "Carmen Seculare" 1779

a: etching in reddish brown; 178 x 133 mm (7 x 5 ³/₁₆ inches)

PAPER
laid

The William and Nancy Pressly Collection acquired with funds made available by the F. T. Stent Family
2015.001.006

Ticket of Admission for Horace's "Carmen Seculare" 1779

b: etching in black; 198 x 150 mm (7 ³/₄ x 5 ¹⁵/₁₆ inches)

annotated below in pen and brown ink *friday 5th. march ADPhilidor*

PAPER
laid

IMPRESSIONS
I – 5 [now 9]; II – 2

both impressions: Pressly 15 state I (of II); cat. Cork PR23

The William and Nancy Pressly Collection acquired with funds made available by the F. T. Stent Family
2015.001.007

Barry designed the tickets for Francois-André Danican Philidor's oratorio, *Carmen Seculare*, first performed in 1779 in London. In it, the French composer set to music Horace's poems celebrating Rome's sacred games held by Emperor Augustus in 17 BCE. Three performances were given—on February 26, March 5, and March 12. The pen-and-ink annotation of the second impression presented here shows that the print was used for the performance on March 5.



26 a



26 b

27.

Two of Elysium's Pensive Sages ca. 1800

etching; plate 80 x 124 mm (3 3/16 x 4 7/8 inches), sheet 152 x 184 mm (6 x 7 1/4 inches)

PAPER
laid

IMPRESSIONS
only state – 2

Pressly (2001) 44; cat. Cork PR6

The William and Nancy Pressly Collection acquired with funds made available by the F. T. Stent Family

2015.001.019

This and *Blessed Exegesis* (cat. no. 28) are Barry's two smallest prints and can be identified with the copperplates sold in the 1807 sale of the artist's effects as "two Studies of Heads." They are also clearly related to the contemplative philosophers depicted in *Elysium and Tartarus* (cat. no. 7), although neither reproduces a specific detail of that composition.

The predominant figure in *Pensive Sages* suggests a heroic nude, although those in *Elysium* are fully clothed; however, the sage's nudity can be related to that of Thales in *Scientists and Philosophers* (Pressly 40), a small personal image Barry made from a detail of *Elysium*. If the maturity of the figures here initially suggests that they are philosophers rather than the vigorous fallen followers of Satan, their reflective manner reinforces the notion: their brooding seriousness could hardly stand in greater contrast to the

flamboyant posturing of Satan and his gang. As Pressly suggests, this inwardness and isolation are characteristics "associated with Barry's vision of eternity. Heaven offers the opportunity for fully understanding that which formerly had only been dimly discerned, but divine revelation is an arduous business, an occasion for intense, even mournful, reflection" (*James Barry and the Print Market*, p. 145). It is also notable that Barry places what may be a self-portrait (similar to the pen-and-ink self-portrait of ca. 1800–05 in the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford) in the form of the modest presence at the shoulder of the philosopher here, much as he represented himself at the shoulder of Andrew Marvell in *The Phoenix* (cat. no. 23).



28.

Blessed Exegesis ca. 1800

etching and mezzotint rocker with traces of aquatint; plate 63 x 89 mm (2 ½ x 3 ½ inches), sheet 118 x 164 mm (4 ⅝ x 6 ⅞ inches)

PAPER

laid

IMPRESSIONS

unique

Pressly (2001) 45; cat. Cork PR5

The William and Nancy Pressly Collection acquired with funds made available by the F. T. Stent Family

2015.001.020

While the philosopher in *Pensive Sages* (cat. no. 27) is positioned to contemplate the artist's initials for all eternity (so much for the modesty of the artist's presence), *Blessed Exegesis* is unsigned and may have been intended simply as an experimental work. The bearded philosopher wearing a monk's cowl reads a book on the left of the image, securing its pages with his right hand; on the right are seen the heads of young beardless soldiers, distinguished as such by their helmets. Their instructive poses, one with an open mouth as if speaking and the other with a raised finger, suggest those of the Angelic Guards in the *Elysium* (cat. no. 7). While both small prints have the quality of early black-and-white snapshots, *Blessed Exegesis* is much more tightly compressed. The artist applied the aquatint unevenly and in a single biting to this dense configuration of etched lines, creating flickers of light across the surface of the image. More than a photographic print, this curious work achieves something of the effect of a photographic negative: the features of the soldiers are readable only intermittently through the apparently oscillating surface of the picture plane.



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