

FLAXMAN'S HOMER ILLUSTRATIONS

by

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ABSTRACT

Since their appearance in 1793 John Flaxman's illustrations to Homer's Iliad and Odyssey have been associated with the ancient art that inspired their commission. In this thesis they are examined from a standpoint other than that adopted in the major literature. Besides sustaining Flaxman's own assertion that the designs were to be used for sculpture, their conception is related to outline designs submitted to his former employer of 12 years, industrialist Josiah Wedgwood. More significantly, their most conspicuous characteristics--their two-dimensional space, absence of colour, texture, and detail and most noticeably their rendering in simple outline--are, for the first time, placed in another context of considerable importance in the 18th Century. Line drawing and its multiple-production counterpart, line engraving, were the representational modes of choice in the transmission of essential ideas in a wide variety of disciplines including his own designs for Wedgwood. Exclusive of the connection with ancient art, simple line would have been regarded as the most suitable form of illustration for the epic poems which were being studied at the time as models of the essential human society. This thesis treats Flaxman's designs as one aspect of the effort to define universal truths and the related need to create conceptual models of them in the 18th Century.

To establish the designs in this broader context, the first four chapters set out in succession: the search for, and representation of, the essential in the 18th Century; Flaxman's

relationship to it with special reference to his education and 12 year association with Wedgwood; the production of the Homer designs themselves from his studies of art works he had seen and, the critical reviews of the illustrations and their subsequent adoption by other artists as sources of inspiration. The thesis concludes by critically analyzing Flaxman's achievement, reviewing his objectives for the series and relating the designs to industrial/workshop drawings by Flaxman and other contemporary artists.

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CHAPTER I

Since their publication in 1793 John Flaxman's illustrations to Homer have been objects of admiration and study. Yet, if considered exclusively in an artistic context they are relatively minor works. They are not imposing paintings, sculpture, or architecture. As yet they have not been, as Robert Rosenblum observed in 1956, "the subject of a comprehensive study"¹ and indeed such a study remains only partially completed. A complication in preparing such a comprehensive study is that when Flaxman produced his Homer designs the greater part of his working experience had been not in the artistic community but as a producer of designs and models for Josiah Wedgwood a leader of large scale commercial pottery production.²

Critical discussions of Flaxman's engraved designs have consistently placed them in artistic contexts. This began in 1799 with Johann Goethe's article "Über die Flaxmanische Werk" were published in Propyläen.³ A.W. Schlegel's "Über Zeichnungen zu Gedichten und John Flaxman's Umrissen" appeared in Athenäum the same year.⁴ In this century, W.G. Constable included a discussion of them in his John Flaxman 1755-1826.⁵ More recently Gerald Bentley provided a "Bibliographical Study in the Early Engravings of Flaxman's Classical Designs."⁶ In the Dover Publications 1977 reprint of Flaxman's Illustrations to Homer Robert Essick and Jenijoy La Belle have provided biographical and bibliographical information in addition to a commentary which discusses each plate in terms of what it represents, how the image presented varies from the Homeric

text, possible sources for the image, and where preliminary drawings for each image are now.⁷ David Bindman's John Flaxman was published as catalogue for John Flaxman RA an exhibition at the Royal Academy of Arts in London, 26 October - 9 December 1979.⁸ This work put Flaxman's Homer designs in the context of his life's output. Finally David Irwin devoted an entire chapter to all of Flaxman's illustrations (Chapter V pp.67 - 122) in his John Flaxman 1755-1826⁹ which considers sources, derivatives, methods and contemporary comments.

As a matter of historical record, in the winter of 1792/3 when Flaxman drew the Homer illustrations he was not an artist of established reputation. He was a relatively obscure artist whose most widely known work took the form of designs for Josiah Wedgwood's pottery firm. This industrialist's methods were capable of producing large numbers of items and he was thus in constant need of new designs.¹⁰ Flaxman sold designs to the Wedgwood firm from 1775 until after the turn of the century.¹¹ Indeed, while Flaxman was in Italy in the early 1790's (with the assistance of Wedgwood) he continued to send designs and casts of ancient relief sculptures to Wedgwood¹² and the Homer illustrations were drawn in the evenings after the day's more pressing projects to augment Flaxman's otherwise meager income.

Under these circumstances it should come as no surprise that the Homer illustrations derived directly from Flaxman's current observations in Rome and earlier academic studies. In

illustration 31 of the Iliad series entitled Thetis Bringing the Armour to Achilles, (Figure 1) for example, there are five figures. At the right the crouched woman is in a pose strongly resembling the central figure in the earliest surviving sketch done by Flaxman as a boy of 13 (Figure 2). The figure of a mourning man behind Patroclus' bier is an academic figure to be found in any student artist's sketchbook. The supine Patroclus by contrast resembles medieval tomb figures, while the standing Thetis is reminiscent in form of Roman frieze figures or perhaps a Greek vase figure. The members of the group are assembled to strengthen the idea of Achilles grief. A strong diagonal line descends from left to right from the goddess Thetis with head bowed through Achilles' body in tearful embrace of the dead Patroclus to the figure of the woman unable to stand for her grief. The effect resembles the figure of a musical descending arpeggio and creates a persuasive sentimental appeal.

This overt depiction of emotion and the apparently varied sources for the figures' poses make the comments of contemporaries seem oddly inappropriate. Universally they regarded the Homer illustrations, particularly their purity of form and austerity of method, as true ancient representations skillfully transported from the past. George Romney, for example, remarked in 1793 that...'they are outlines without shadow, but in the style of ancient art. They are simple, grand, and pure... They look as if they had been made in the age, when Homer wrote.'¹³ In

fact, the "outlines without shadow" or linear style is itself an anachronism - a representational mode of classical not bronze age or Homeric Greece.¹⁴ Even this aside, when Flaxman used ancient Greek vase painting -- with which he was familiar through his study of both ancient pieces and archaeological publications depicting vases¹⁴ -- as an inspiration for the form of his illustrations the images he produced differ considerably from ancient pieces. A useful comparison exists between a cup c. 500 BC by the Sosias Painter (Figure 3a) and Flaxman's Iliad plate 31 (hereafter Flaxman's Homer designs will be referred to by either Iliad or Odyssey and the 1805 Longman edition number). The cup exhibits many characteristics of ancient Greek painting. In common with Flaxman's illustrations this style involved the application of dark lines on a lighter ground.¹⁵ But unlike Flaxman's work there is a tendency to fill the frame of the picture with decoration not relevant to the subject. The background is darkened and, while there is no landscape, there is a substantial groundline. The figures wear heavily decorated clothing and their faces are in strict profile with singularly Egyptian looking frontal eyes. Frequently the anatomy is poorly rendered such as Patroclus's grotesque foot and Achilles spindly arms and legs. There is a lack of variety in pose (here demonstrated on the outside of the cup Figure 3b), and male figures are often heavily bearded.

On the other hand in Iliad 31, Thetis Bringing the Armour to Achilles fully 40% of the picture area is left undecorated.

There is no landscape, shading or darkened background. The ground line is so ambiguous that it could be a part of the frame of the picture. Drapery is relatively undecorated. The rendering of anatomy is significantly more competent and figures are presented in much more varied poses. Patroclus' long legs obscure the mourning attendant's genital area something seldom done in ancient models.

By filling the open areas with decorations not relevant to the story the Sosias painter gives the impression that he was simply attempting to cover the vase with decoration. He presented a picture that represents a single moment in time as one figure bandages the other. To form a parallel case Flaxman might have isolated Achilles grieving over a dead Patroclus but instead he depicted a series of events to give a better sense of the Homeric narrative. In this single image Flaxman reminds the viewer of the death of Patroclus and thus the loss of the armour he had borrowed from Achilles. It was this loss of the old armour that prompted the manufacture of the new that Thetis now delivers. In a pose reminiscent of the Parthenon Athena or Britannia, she personifies duty calling Achilles back to the battle that ends in Troy's defeat.

The dominant theme of the Flaxman's design, human grief, is drawn from the text but the details of the picture are Flaxman's invention. Homer made no reference to Patroclus' funeral bier, the stool beside it, nor the female mourner.¹⁶ Flaxman did not produce absolutely faithful translations of

the Homeric texts from literary to pictorial imagery. Rather as Mrs. Flaxman wrote from France to William Hayley in 1802, her husband was recognized as 'the best commentator of the great bard Homer.'¹⁷

Today the significance of Mrs. Flaxman's remark is obscure. The Homeric epics, the oldest great works of western literature, are not important in modern education. They are not, for example, required reading in British Columbia schools or universities. This includes the Classics Department at the University of British Columbia where only one or the other is required, and that reading may be in translation.¹⁸ Such was not the case in the 18th Century.

Throughout the 18th Century the Iliad and Odyssey were a fundamental part of education. In a program "contrived according to what is commonly practiced in England and foreign countries; and is in sundry particulars proportioned to the ordinary capacities of children under fifteen years of age"¹⁹ the Reverend Hoole recommended not only the "'Father of Poetry", Homer, [but also] Pindar, Euripides, Sophocles and Aristophanes in Greek.'²⁰ Earlier the Reverend Richard Holdsworth D.D., fellow of St. John's College, Oxford, from 1613 to 1637 had regarded as appropriate Hesiod, his Theognis, Homer, Pindar, Theocritus, Plutarch and a number of tragedies and orations of Latin authors.²¹ These 17th Century educators apparently set the direction for the curricula throughout the following century. Sydney Smith reviewing R.L. Edgeworth's Professional

Education of 1809 wrote in the Edinburgh Review in an essay entitled "Too Much Latin and Greek," that "a Young Englishman goes to school at six or seven years old; and he remains in a course of education till twenty-three or twenty-four years of age. In all that time sole and exclusive occupation is learning Latin and Greek: he has scarcely a notion that there is any other kind of excellence.'²² For those who did not continue to higher forms translations of Homer were widely available.²³

Thus the greater majority of the young men destined for careers in the law, politics, the armed services and the Church and even commerce, trade, and industry had read classical authors including Homer of whom a writer to the Gentlemen's Magazine in 1793 wrote: 'In Homer nothing is casual, nothing idle or irrelative, nil molitur inepte. Every expression is pregnant with meaning.'²⁴ Homer was not read in the late 18th Century merely for entertainment or the intellectual discipline of learning another language but presented as a model of human society. Theorist Robert Wood had written some years before that 'whatever his [Homer's] plan of instruction, either moral or political, might have been (for to deny that he had any would be highly unreasonable), his choice of characters for the purpose never carried him beyond Nature, and his own experience of life'.²⁵

Homer, it was believed, 'had lived in the most enlightened age, and possessed all advantages for improving his natural talents'.²⁶ In that 'most enlightened age' the Greeks of

Homer's stories were seen to live in an age of wealth, military prowess and refinement.²⁷ And yet, as the passage illustrated by Flaxman's Thetis Bringing the Armour to Achilles, Iliad 31, indicated, human values, not material objects, were the subject. The Achaean Greeks had not dissipated their national vigour on the accumulation of material wealth, a point not lost on those in Britain who feared that the sudden proliferation of consumer goods provided by the Industrial Revolution would corrupt society. In a 1774 'Essay on Luxury' appearing in London Magazine 'luxury [was] said to have poisoned the whole nation.'²⁸ Five years later the idea was expanded to: 'But man, anxious to be unhappy, industrious to multiply woe, and ingenious in contriving new plagues, new torments, to embitter life, and sour every present enjoyment, has inverted the order of things, has created wishes that have no connection with his happiness.'²⁹ Human society was here seen as being progressively overburdened with new plagues and torments that were obscuring the essential nature of mankind. In the oldest known extended description of any age the society of the Iliad and Odyssey was logically the least overburdened and thus the most enlightened.

Oddly, the enthusiasm of Homeric society was not tempered by an acknowledgement of its more mundane aspects (which may simply have gone unrecorded by Homer). In fact, Homer provided as spare a picture of his society as did Flaxman. Referring again to Thetis Bringing the Armour to Achilles, Iliad 31 both poet and artist might well have included a background. The

Myrmidons may have been presented polishing armour, sharpening weapons, preparing food or eating or even just standing about in carefully detailed material surroundings. Neither Homer nor Flaxman provide any such details but significantly the spare quality of their respective depictions of the Iliad and Odyssey seem to have been reached by different means. Robert Wood believed that it had been 'Homer's object to please as well as instruct'.³⁰ As such, describing details familiar in the everyday life of his listeners would have diluted the stories' vigorous narrative. Alternatively, a late 18th Century audience would have seen embellishing detail in Flaxman's designs as obscuring Homer's presentation of the essential nature of man and human society.

The concept of the essential was not derived entirely from a perusal of Homer or even ancient authors. In addition to Homer there was increased interest in the severe tragedies of Aeschylus (first translated into English and French in the 1770's), the 'iron age' works of Hesiod and Pindar, the Roman historian Livy and the Greek, Plutarch, biographer of both Greeks and Romans.³¹ From the works of these authors was derived a conception of man with uncorrupted manners and emotions of those living close to nature.³² Dante, Shakespeare, and the Nibelungenlied presented similar visions and interest in them was similarly revived. Recognizing the popularity of these revived authors and using Homer as a model, James MacPherson created the "fake" Celtic bard Ossian and published his Fingal

and Temora between 1760 and 1763. The books successfully created characters and put them into situations designed to accommodate the most nostalgic visions of human society devised by 18th Century writers and readers. Life in the time of Ossian was 'simple, rugged, unsophisticated and at the same time, moral, rational and touched with sentiment'.³³ With Macpherson conspicuous by his absence in discussions regarding the authenticity of his work, Ossian was immediately hailed as a great ancient work. MacPherson's contrived work was not unique. It was paralleled by 18th Century landscape gardens, which were 'attempts to recreate the literary landscape which had been sketched by Homer, elaborated and populated with love-sick shepherds by Theocritus and the other bucolic poets, and given classic expression by Virgil who transferred it from Sicily to more remote Arcadia and Vale of Tempe'.³⁴ The shepherd might dwell in such architectural whimsies as the Pantheon Temple at Stourhead (Figure 4). Such concepts were fundamental to 18th Century thought. It was believed that reason, applied to careful observations of nature, would reveal universally valid truths, laws, and principles and by extension nature and reason could be employed for the general benefit of mankind. Indeed, exploration and exposition in divers fields of interest characterized the 18th Century. Even during Flaxman's life and career, discovery, discussion and invention extended over a broad range of endeavour: in the field of science the discovery of several of the elements

including hydrogen in 1766 by Cavendish, nitrogen by Rutherford in 1772 and Oxygen in 1774 by Priestly; in geography Cook's exploration of Australia in 1770 and Pacific in 1778. These examples should not suggest that research or inquiries represented only a passive interest in the accumulation of knowledge. The isolation of elements, for example, suggested to Lavoisier their previous combination as when he explained combustion in 1777. Generally an increased understanding of properties resulted in a greater utilization of materials in the form of inventions of significant social impact. Those inventions included: Watts piston steam engine in 1769, Miller's circular saw in 1777, Franklin's bifocal lens (for eyeglasses) in 1780, Harrison's steel pen in 1780, and Murdock's gas lighting in 1792. The diversity of the contemporary intellectual arguments is indicated by the titles of but a few works of the time ranging from Edmund Burke's Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the sublime and the Beautiful in 1756, Adam Smith's Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations in 1776, to David Hume's Dialogues concerning Natural Religion in 1779.

Common to all these fields of 18th Century intellectual endeavour was the need to create conceptual models. That need itself had been widely recognized. In his Analysis of Beauty of 1753 William Hogarth, whose intellectual aspirations greatly exceeded his actual accomplishments, wrote: 'The constant use made of lines by mathematicians, as well as painters, in

describing things upon paper, hath established a conception of them, as if actually existing on the real forms themselves'.³⁵ There are two ideas here. The first is that line drawings were used 'in describing things upon paper.' Hogarth's observation may have been extended far beyond his examples of mathematicians and artists to include all scientific and technical endeavour where there was a need to reduce observations to general laws or in the instance of inventions, to visualize something that had not previously existed. For example, Figure 5 is a conceptual model of the hull of a ship which appeared in William Sutherland's Ship-Builder's Assistant of 1755. It is not a picture of an existing or even a proposed hull but rather an illustration of how to lay out a hull. Similarly Figure 6 is a drawing by Flaxman for a medallion submitted to Wedgwood in 1783. It is not a finished artistic work but a designers concept for a tradesman to translate into pottery. Herein lies Hogarth's second idea that the line drawing must convey to the viewer the idea of the thing drawn 'as if actually existing on the real forms themselves'. Thus the ship's hull, Flaxman's design and Hogarth's mathematical model ignore solidity, colour, texture and perspective but to the experienced viewer they convey sufficient information to explain the essential concept.

A second common theme of 18th Century thought was the fervent belief of enlightened men believed that endeavour should be directed to the general betterment of society. In

the case of the Ship-Builder's Assistant, William Sutherland, as the preface indicates, 'endeavoured to lay everything down in the most plain and perspicuous manner, with a desire to instructing young SHIPWRIGHTS, and those Gentlemen who are desirous of being acquainted with these surprising Fabrics...; [with the hope] 'that every improvement made in an Art of such importance to society, adds a farther security to the power, strength and interest of these kingdoms'.³⁶ Similarly Robert Adam in dedicating his Ruins of Spalatro to King George III pointed out that 'your Majesty's singular Attention to the Arts of Elegance promises an Age of Perfection'.³⁷ The industrialist Josiah Wedgwood, to whom Flaxman submitted many designs (Figure 6 for example), saw his position in similar terms. In a passage repeated in a number of his catalogues, Wedgwood stated that he wanted 'to diffuse a good taste through the arts' by the 'power of multiplying copies of fine things'.³⁸

Wedgwood constantly searched for designs for Jasperware, inspired by antique cameos. He did not, however, merely reproduce ancient pieces. He wrote to his friend Erasmus Darwin, 'I only pretend to have attempted to copy the fine antique forms, but not with absolute servility. I have endeavoured to preserve the style and spirit, or if you please, the elegant simplicity of the antique forms'.³⁹ Wedgwood's impression of the antique form his products emulated was formed in no small measure by archaeological publications many of which were in his own library.⁴⁰ The candid statement regarding his

products almost paraphrases the introduction to the Comte de Caylus' Recueil d'antiquités égyptiennes, étrusques, et romaines (Paris 1757) the purpose of which was 'to shed light on the past ... to arrive at the spirit of the antique rather than to copy antique details'.⁴¹ In the publications of William Hamilton Collection of Vases, illustrated entirely with line engravings, there was a deliberate attempt to remove detail and extract the essence of ancient design. The preface states that the work was confined 'to the simple outline of the figures of the Vases, which is the essential, and no unnecessary Ornaments or coloring...[are]...introduced'.⁴² Recalling Figure 3 as an example, ancient vase painters often included 'unnecessary Ornaments' or decoration not associated with their pictorial representations of ancient society. In addition, the red and black figured vases were, in fact, colored. The archaeological publications such as de Caylus and the Hamilton Collection were for many, including Wedgwood and his artists, the chief source of knowledge of the material remains of antiquity. Significantly they presented not an accurate detailed record of the ancient society but rather the antique as the late 18th Century wanted to see it.

NOTES TO THE TEXT

CHAPTER I

- 1 Robert Rosenblum, The International Style of 1800 : A Study in Linear Abstraction (New York, 1956 and 1976), p. 114 fn.
- 2 Sources for the association of Wedgwood Flaxman seem to fall naturally into two categories : those centering on the life of Wedgwood, such as; Eliza Meteyard, The Life of Josiah Wedgwood (London, 1865-66); K.E. Farrer, Letters of Josiah Wedgwood (London, 1903-06); the more recent A. Finer and G. Savage The Selected Letters of Josiah Wedgwood (London, 1965); and Wolf Mankowitz, Wedgwood (New York, 1953) and those treating the works of Wedgwood artists and their works as collector's items, such as H.M. Buten, Wedgwood and Artists (Merion Pennsylvania, 1960).
- 3 Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, "Über die Flaxmanischen werke," Propyläen, 1799, also in Werke, 47 (Weimar, 1896) pp. 245-46.
- 4 A.W. von Schlegel, "Über Zeichnungen zu Gedichten und John Flaxmans Umrissen," Athenäum, 1799 also in Sammtliche Werke (Leipzig, 1846), IX, pp. 102-57.
- 5 William George Constable, John Flaxman 1755-1826 (London, 1927).
- 6 Gerald Bentley 'Notes on the Early Editions of Flaxman's Classical Designs', Bulletin of the New York Public Library, 68, (1964), pp. 277-307, 361-380. Published separately as The Early Engravings of Flaxman's Classical Designs, (New York, 1964).
- 7 Robert Essick and Jenijoy LaBelle, Flaxman's Illustrations to Homer, (New York, 1977).
- 8 David Bindman, John Flaxman, (London, 1979). Appeared previously as Werner Hofmann, David Bindman et al. John Flaxman Mythologie und Industrie, (Hamburg, 1979).
- 9 David Irwin, John Flaxman 1755-1826 (London, 1979)
- 10 Wedgwood's set of dishes for Empress Catherine consisting of 952 pieces contained 1244 different views for example. Josiah Wedgwood: the Arts and Sciences United (1978) p. 50. For more on the Wedgwood firm's voracious appetite for designs see David Irwin, Neo-Classical Design : industry plunders antiquity, Apollo ns 96 (October, 1972), pp. 289-297.

- 11 'An Account Book of John Flaxman, R.A.' (British Library Add. MS. 39784 BB), Edward Croft-Murray (ed.), Walpole Society XXVIII 1939-40 pp.79. The entry for July 8, 1803 is as follows "Josiah Wedgwood Esq. A Monument sent by Goddard's Waggon (sic), Castle and Falcon, Aldersgate Str 73, 10, -.
- 12 Meteyard, op. cit. p. 504.
- 13 W. Hayley, The Life of George Romney (London, 1809), p.203.
- 14 Discussed later ch. II
- 15 See R.M. Cook, Greek Painted Pottery (London, 1972), particularly for technique ch.9, pp. 240 ff.
- 16 In addition to Alexander Pope's renditions of the Iliad and Odyssey modern translations are also useful and often more readable. Two such are : The Iliad trans E.V. Rieu (Harmondsworth, 1950) and The Odyssey trans E.V. Rieu (Harmondsworth, 1946)
- 17 MSS, Art Institute of Chicago, Gurley Collection, Mrs. Flaxman to Hayley, 10 December [1802].
- 18 The University of British Columbia 70th Session (1984-85) Calendar, Vancouver, 1984 p.71.
- 19 Charles Hoole, New Discovery of the Art of Teaching Schooles (sic) 1660. Quoted by John R. Mulder, The Temple of Mind (New York, 1935), p. 25.
- 20 Mulder *ibid* p. 18.
- 21 Mulder *ibid* p. 30.
- 22 Sydney Smith, 'Too Much Latin and Greek' (a review of R.L. Edgeworth, Professional Education (1809) Edinburgh Review 1809 cited in H.C. Barnard A History of English Education from 1760 (London, 1961) p. 17.
- 23 An incomplete list will include : Ten Bookes (sic) of Homers Iliades (sic), trans. out of the French by Arthur Hall (London, 1581); Seven Bookes (sic) of the Iliades (sic) of Homer Prince of Poets Trans. according the Greeke (sic) George Chapman (London, 1598); Achilles Shield, trans. George Chapman (London 1598); Homer Prince of Poets trans. George Chapman (London, 1610); The Whole Works of Homer, Prince of Poets, in his Iliades (sic) and Odyssees (sic) trans. George Chapman (London, 1612); Homers Odyssees (sic) trans. George Chapman (London, 1614); The Whole Works of Homer; Prince of Poetts (sic) in his Iliads (sic) and

- Odysseys (sic) trans. George Chapman (London, 1616); The First Three Books of Homer's Iliad trans. Thomas Grantham (London, 1661); The Travels of Ulysses; As they were related by himself in Homer's Nineth, Tenth, Eleventh and Twelfth Books of his Odysseys (sic) to Alcinous King of Phaeacia trans. Thomas Hobbs Malmessby (London, 1673); and occasional appearances of amateur translators such as that of an unidentified person who submitted 'A Translation of a Part of the 22nd Book of Homer's Iliad into Blank verse made almost literally,' Gentlemen's Magazine Dec. 1797 p. 1052.
- 24 Gentlemen's Magazine, (July 1793) p. 623.
- 25 Robert Wood, An Essay on the Original Genius of Homer (1769; New York, 1971), p. 298.
- 26 Alexander Gerard, An Essay on Genius (1774; Munchen, 1966) p. 11.
- 27 J.V. Luce, Homer and the Homeric Age (London, 1975) p. 181.
- 28 London Magazine, XLII (October, 1774) p. 481.
- 29 London Magazine, XLVIII (1779) p. 537.
- 30 Robert Wood, op. cit., p. 30.
- 31 Hugh Honour, Neo-classicism (Harmondsworth, 1968) p. 64.
- 32 Ibid., p. 142.
- 33 Ibid., p. 66.
- 34 Ibid., p. 161.
- 35 William Hogarth, Analysis of Beauty (London, 1753) p. 37.
- 36 William Sutherland, The Ship-Builder's Assistant, or Marine Architecture (London, 1755), p.iii.
- 37 Robert Adam, Ruins of the Palace of the Emperor Diocletian at Spalatro (London, 1764) p.IV.
- 38 Noted by David Irwin, op. cit., p. 19.
- 39 Wedgwood to Erasmus Darwin, 28 June 1789.
- 40 For more on this point and its implications see David Irwin, 'Neo-classical design: industry plunders antiquity,' Apollo ns 96: 289-297, October 1972.

- 41 Comte de Caylus, Recueil d' antiquités égyptiennes, étrusques et romain (Paris 1752-67) I pp. XIIff.
- 42 Sir William Hamilton, Ancient Vases (1791-95) unpaginated preface.

CHAPTER II

Flaxman's contemporaries generally believed that his engravings of the Iliad and Odyssey embodied the artistic principles of 'the age when Homer wrote'. However, as has been suggested, Flaxman's designs bear only superficial resemblance to ancient works. The apparent variety of sources for the poses of the figures, their more accurate anatomy, the more carefully determined use of the picture space, the depiction of consecutive events and the deliberate depiction of Homeric society as an uncluttered conceptual model, reveal an artist whose experience was much wider than any ancient artist's could possibly have been.

Flaxman's earliest exhibited works met with success. When only 11 years of age he won a First Prize from the Society of Arts for a medal modelled in clay. In 1769 he gained another First Prize for a model in clay and in 1770 he won the Society of Arts Gold Palette for a figure of Garrick.¹ Flaxman's precocity at modelling is, in part at least, explained by the milieu of his father's shop and business.

John Flaxman Senior² opened his London premises in New Street Covent Garden in 1755 and later moved to the Strand carrying on business until after the turn of the century as a cast maker. He was directly involved in the restoration and repair of classical sculpture and gems as well as the making of plaster cast reproductions of classical sculpture and gems that were being imported in large numbers to England. His clients thus ranged from artists such as the sculptors Louis

Francois Roubiliac and Peter Scheemakers, to the industrialists Matthew Boulton and Josiah Wedgwood. Nor was Flaxman's father merely a cast maker. He occasionally executed original works, such as the figure representing Architecture (Figure 7) in a late Baroque style, somewhat after the manner of his most illustrious customers Roubiliac and Scheemakers. The deeply cut drapery folds of Architecture along with its torsion and outward gaze are antithetical to the style his son would develop and employ for the Homer designs.

With only the activities around his father's shop as teacher the younger Flaxman was developing an artistic style of his own.³ He drew The Death of Caesar (Figure 2) at about the time he exhibited the prize winning models at the Free Society of Artists. Its theme is classically inspired but its style is less distinctly classical than the later Homer illustrations, even though, as already noted, there is a similarity between the central figure in The Death of Caesar and the mourning woman in the Thetis Bringing the Armour to Achilles, Iliad 31 design. In fact, one might almost imagine it being the same figure depicted a few seconds later when collapsed into deeper grief.

The Death of Caesar provides an idea of Flaxman's artistic development and knowledge at the age of 13 or 14 years. He was quite capable of rendering anatomy in remarkably varied and vigorous poses. He knew how to create spatial perspective using overlapping, shading, and varied figure size and detail.

He knew how to direct the viewers attention towards the centre of action by having the figures nearer the edge of the frame less detailed than those nearer the centre. Although he had at that time no artistic instruction other than in his father's shop Flaxman had well developed artistic sensibilities. He appreciated the pictorial and dramatic potential of the subject matter and had the mechanical means of setting a design on paper.

In his father's shop Flaxman met two people who were to exert a significant influence upon his development. The first, the Reverend Anthony Stephen Matthew⁴ entered John Flaxman Senior's shop about 1768 and, finding young Flaxman attempting to read a Latin text, promised to give the lad something more suitable. His wife Henrietta, who read Homer in translation to Flaxman, also introduced him to members of her 'blue stocking' literary group. Brief biographical notes of some of them indicate the intellectual horizons that then opened to the young Flaxman. Anna Letitia Barbauld had mastered French and Italian and had a knowledge of Latin and Greek and was later to operate a very successful school at Palgrave in Suffolk. Elizabeth Carter spoke six modern languages but was best known as a scholar of ancient Greece with a great interest in ancient history and geography. In 1739 she had published her own translation from the French of M. Crousaz An Examination of Mr. Pope's Essay of Man.⁵ Hester Chapone wrote, in 1772, Letters on the Improvement of the Mind.⁶ Finally, at the centre of activities was Elizabeth Montagu who boldly proclaimed,

'I never invite idiots to my house'.⁷ She did entertain Horace Walpole, Dr. Johnson, Edmund Burke, David Garrick and Sir Joshua Reynolds.⁸ The poet William Cowper wrote of Elizabeth Montagu, 'I no longer wonder that Mrs. Montagu stands at the head of all that is called learned.'⁹ Out of this circle came Flaxman's first commission - a set of six sketches based on Homer for Jeremiah Crutchley, M.P.¹⁰

The second person of sustained importance to his career that Flaxman met in his father's shop was George Romney. The meeting took place in 1775 soon after Romney had returned from a period of study in Rome. On at least one occasion, Romney Flaxman and their mutual friend William Hayley, spent an afternoon and evening together in 1783 looking at the sculpture in Westminster Abbey.¹¹ Shortly after Romney's death in 1802, Flaxman, by then an established artist in his own right, wrote to Hayley recalling that Romney had 'first come to see my father's casts. I was a little boy, and as he frequently found me employed in modelling, he would stand by me a long while together giving me encouragement in a manner so obliging and affectionate that he won my heart, and confirmed my determination in the pursuit of sculpture'.¹² As late as 1821, Flaxman told Romney's son that his father's earlier 'original and striking conversation' continued to be of benefit to his sculptural works.¹³ Flaxman's words that Romney had 'frequently found me employed in modelling' indicate how the aspiring sculptor acquired the skill to produce the medal in clay and

figure of Garrick that won for him prizes from the Society of Arts and a place for him in the then one year old Royal Academy.

Throughout the duration of Flaxman's years as student at the Royal Academy instruction was directed by Joshua Reynolds.¹⁴

The principles he used to direct the studies of the many students there (then including a number of artists who later won recognition: the painter William Hamilton, sculptor Thomas Banks, the elder John Bacon, James Tassie and Thomas Stothard)¹⁵ were enshrined in the annual lectures he addressed to the assembled members and students of the Royal Academy. The collected lectures are known as the Discourses on Art.

In his Discourses Reynolds set out a plan to be followed by the students and the objectives to be pursued by the artist. To develop the required skills, instruction at the Academy was to be given in three stages - the rudiments of drawing, modelling and the use of colour, the examination of the works of past artists, the production of new works of according to the newly acquired educated judgement.¹⁶ To accommodate the second stage the Academy became a repository of fine art in the form of borrowed works and, of particular relevance to Flaxman the aspiring sculptor, casts of ancient sculpture.¹⁷

With the creation of the Royal Academy Reynolds envisioned a general amelioration of natural British taste and design. If an institution such as the Royal Academy has 'an origin no higher [than merely mercantile] no taste can ever be formed in manufactures; but if the higher Arts of Design flourish,

these inferior ends will be answered of course.'¹⁸ His idea was not simply to provide Britain's industrial revolution with artistically aware and competent designers. The goal he envisioned was much loftier. He declared, "the wish of the genuine painter...is to 'improve' mankind 'by the grandeur of his ideas' and to strive for fame, 'by captivating the imagination'.¹⁹ Although himself a painter of fashionable portraits, Reynolds directed aspiring artists to History Painting which he regarded the noblest of all forms. History Painting had the advantage that a subject could be a 'general one' (that is, of general appeal), drawn from 'the great events of Greek and Roman fable and history, which early education, and the usual course of reading, have made familiar and interesting to all Europe'. Of similar broad appeal were the chief subjects of Biblical history.²⁰

The methods and intentions of the portrait painter and History painter necessarily differed. Reynolds attempted to create an image that depicted the appearance and evoked a recollection of his sitter. However, no contemporary whatever had seen the characters immortalized by Homer. Reynolds was aware of the problem when he recounted the story of Phidias sculpting a figure of Jupiter. 'Phidias', he wrote, 'when he formed his Jupiter, did not copy an object ever presented to his sight; but contemplated only that image which he conceived in his mind from Homer's description.'²¹ An application of the principle is demonstrated by Flaxman's version of Achilles

shield in Figure 1 Thetis Bringing the Armour to Achilles
Iliad 31 which is a convincing conceptualization of Homer's
description.

To draw pictures from descriptions by ancient authors
required familiarity with the texts and some historical per-
spective. These Royal Academy endeavored to instill through
its library and its Professors of Ancient Literature and
Ancient History. During Flaxman's student period these honorary
positions were held respectively by men of no less a stature
than Samuel Johnson (1770-1784) and Oliver Goldsmith (1770-
1774).²² Considering Flaxman's lack of formal education, the
fact that Mrs. Matthew had read Homer to him must also have
been of great value.

By including ancient literature and history in the Royal
Academy's course of studies Reynolds assured that his students
had the means to avoid 'that ridiculous style which has been
practised by some painters, who have given to Grecian Heroes
the airs and graces practised in the court of Lewis (sic) the
Fourteenth; an absurdity almost as great as it would have been
to have dressed them after the fashion of that court.'²³
These anachronisms appeared increasingly absurd as ancient
artifacts became more common in collections and were illustrated
in archaeological publications. Yet, Reynolds was not simply
seeking archaeological detail but rather a reflection of
current conceptions of the ancient world. 'We must have
recourse to the Ancients as instructors,' he wrote, 'to attain

to the real simplicity of nature [as] they had probably little or nothing to unlearn, as their manners were nearly approaching this desirable (sic) simplicity; while the modern artist, before he can see the truth of things, is obliged to remove the veil, with which the fashion of the times has thought proper to cover her.'²⁴ It would seem that Reynolds not only thought the simplicity of the ancient world to have been a reality, but that it was also a desirable aesthetic ideal. 'Truth of things', the universally valid characteristics of human beings and human society, was divorced from fashion. When depicting human society the artist should 'get above all singular forms, local customs, particularities and details of every kind.'²⁵ To depict the universally valid 'the historical painter never enters into the details of colours, so neither does he debase his conceptions with minute attention to the discriminations of Drapery. With him cloathing (sic) is neither woolen, nor linen, nor silk, sattin (sic), or velvet: it is drapery; it is nothing more.'²⁶

Always an exponent of learning from the best artists, Reynolds suggested that 'The more extensive... your acquaintance is with the works of these who have excelled, the more extensive will be your powers of invention.'²⁷ In his Discourses he praised the consistency of the styles of Rubens and Poussin, for example, by noting that both "always preserved a perfect correspondence between all the parts of their respective manners..."²⁸ As a form of exercise he recommended his students

to "consider with yourself how a Michael Angelo or a Raffaelle would have treated (your) subject: and work yourself into a belief that your picture is to be seen and criticised by them when completed."²⁹

In developing their mechanical skills and studying the accomplishment of worthy artists, the student also created their own works. Reynolds offered direction in this regard too. He wrote that 'the painter ... is to exhibit distinctly, and with precision, the general forms of things. A firm and determined outline is one of the characteristics of the great style in painting...³⁰ Instead of copying the touches (i.e. the brush strokes, etc.) of [the] great masters, copy only their conceptions.'³¹ In his Discourses he repeatedly pursued the theme of extracting and illustrating from a situation with artistic potential only the single dominant idea. Referring to Pliny's account of Euphranor's Statue of Paris with its, to him, confused theme, Reynolds wrote: 'A statue in which you endeavor to unite stately dignity,, youthful elegance, and stern valour, must surely possess none of these to any eminent degree³² ... the expression of a mixed passion ... appears to me out of the reach of our art.'³³ Details added to embellish a theme or make it more satisfying by virtue of its increased complexity only 'serve to divide the attention of the spectator.'³⁴ In the end, a painting should appeal 'not to the eye but to the mind' and so doing 'entitles it to the name of a Liberal Art, and ranks it as a sister of poetry.'³⁵

Upon his graduation from the Royal Academy of 1775 Flaxman attempted to set up a practice as a sculptor in London. Commissions were modest in number and size: monuments to Ann Russell and her son Henry who died, in 1780-81, in All Saints at Lydd in Kent (with angels perhaps inspired by a plate from Stuart and Revett Antiquities of Athens, 1762 (Figures 8a and b respectively)); in memory of Barbara Bouchier, who died in 1784, (in St. Mary, Newent, Gloucestershire (Figure 9)); for Mrs. Sarah Morley, who also died in 1784, (Gloucester Cathedral (Figure 10)), and for the Reverend Thomas and Mrs. Ball (1784-86 in Chichester Cathedral (Figure 11)). Thus to support himself Flaxman was forced to rely upon his established relationship with the Josiah Wedgwood pottery firm.

Wedgwood quickly appreciated Flaxman's abilities. The industrialist wrote to his partner Thomas Bentley in early 1775, soon after the young artist started submitting designs, praising Flaxman as "valuable".³⁶ The majority of Flaxman's Wedgwood designs were for the most famous of Wedgwood's products - jasperware. It was (and remains) a pottery ware made in imitation of the stone jasper, cut since classical times to produce cameos and partial medallions. In the cameos and jasperware the figures appear contrasted in colour to the ground. The subjects were of great variety including "illustrious moderns" (notable people) such as the actress Mrs Siddons (Figure 12) as well as a chess set for which Flaxman was the principal designer (Figure 13).

Wedgwood had more than one concern in the production of jasperware. Of utmost importance, the designs submitted to him had to be capable of execution in jasperware. In the process he developed, a model was normally made of wax applied to a supporting plaque from which a plaster of paris mould was made. That mould was filled with clay to form a figure which, when dry, was fired. This firing caused a one seventh reduction in the size of the clay figure. By repeating the process, a design, executed as a wax model the diameter of a dinner plate, could be used for jasperware products ranging from six-sevenths the size of the original to items as small as buttons. The mould could at any stage be used to form the figures which were applied, leather hard, to a coloured body of an article such as a dish or vase. When the body and applied decoration were fired they were permanently bonded.

The artist's appreciation of the technical problems addressed by the tradesmen who actually transformed the models into jasperware was (and still is) fundamental. Figures made from wax models needed to be thick enough for ease of handling during the application to the body and yet thin enough to let the colour of the body enhance the modelled effects. To produce successful jasperware pieces, standards could not be relaxed. Even after submitting many designs to Wedgwood, Flaxman produced models for jasperware which the potter found unuseable. Wedgwood wrote to Bentley: "Mr. Flaxman's model is too flat in several parts ... In some things the blue shade

which our ground is so apt to cast through the thin parts of the white may be of advantage to the subject ... But when the naked part of the Figure is penetrated with the colour of the ground, it is generally injurious. See the poor Queen's nose and many other Cameos."³⁷

Also of concern to Wedgwood, the jasperware needed to be of a consistent and distinctive form even when a variety of artists and sources of inspiration were used. He provided books of engravings of archaeological materials to his many artists as he stated in a letter to Bentley concerning jasperware pieces. 'I apprehend we shall model them much cheaper than Flaxman and perhaps as well in other respects, provided we have Fine Prints or impressions from Gems to model from, but I wish you would give Flaxman a head or two to model as it may excite our modelers' [at Etruria] emulation and acquaint us with the prices for which those things may be done in London.'³⁸

This last comment reveals Wedgwood's third and overriding consideration, the need to make a profit. Hence his products must be saleable. Wedgwood wrote, this time to Flaxman, of a design depicting the Judgement of Paris that "it is absolutely necessary" to drape nude figures, for though "so general in the works of the ancients, none either male or female of the present generation will take or apply them as furniture if the figures are naked."³⁹

Wedgwood did indeed seek to establish the credibility of his products with potential customers. In his advertising

catalogues he proclaimed that his "Painted Etruscan Vases" were "copied from the antique with the utmost exactness: as they are to be found in Dempster, Gori, Caylus, Passeri, but more especially in the most choice and comprehensive collection of Sir William Hamilton".⁴⁰ The works to which he was referring (Thomas Dempster's De Etruria Regali (1723-1726), Antonio Francesco Gori's Museum Etruscum (1737-1743), the comte de Caylus's Recueil d'Antiquites Egyptiennes, Etrusques et Romaines (1752-1770), and Passeri's La Peinture a l'Encaustique (1775) were part of the expanding corpus of publications of antiquarian interest being purchased by educational institutions such as the Royal Academy and by gentlemen who had been on the Grand Tour. Wedgwood had purchased them in order that his artists might derive inspiration for works that would then seem somewhat familiar to his customers. The factory library also contained d'Hancarville's Cabinet of the Hon. William Hamilton (1766-1767) a plate from which (Figure 14) provided the inspiration for one of Flaxman's most popular Jasperware designs The Crowning of a Kitharist (Figure 15).

Despite his familiarity with the production process Flaxman did not work at the pottery unlike most of Wedgwood's artists and modellers. He chose to remain in London where he could maintain his Royal Academy associations and build a practice as a sculptor. Although the jasperware designs represented the bulk of his work at the time, Wedgwood's catalogues did not name the artists who provided designs and

as a result Flaxman could acquire neither a reputation nor important commissions. In addition, despite the wide distribution of his designs as jasperware, the commissions he received from Wedgwood provided insufficient income for Flaxman to accumulate the resources to travel and study at first hand the antiquities that so often served as his inspiration.

The value of directly examining the remains of the ancient world must have been foremost in Flaxman's mind. As early as 1771 a Mr. Freeman reported to Wedgwood that he had suggested to John Flaxman Sr. that he send his son to Rome to develop his talents but Flaxman Senior's business was never able to support such an expense.⁴¹ At about the same time, in Flaxman's second year at Royal Academy, the coveted Gold Medal and its attendant travelling prize was awarded to Thomas Englehart. According to Constable, Reynolds had 'used his influence against Flaxman.'⁴² Reynolds may have found Flaxman annoyingly precocious. The young artist's manner had been noted by Wedgwood in unflattering terms. In a letter to partner Bentley in 1775 he commented that it was 'but a few years since [Flaxman] was a most supreme Coxcomb.'⁴³ In fact, Reynolds was never really sympathetic towards sculptors. Indeed, he reserved his most specific suggestions for sculptors until his tenth Discourse, delivered 5 years after Flaxman had left the Academy and then his comments were brief. In the highest or 'grand style' of sculpture the ornamental was ruled out, modern dress must never be used, architectural backgrounds in perspective were

to be avoided, and there were to be no picturesque contrasts but rather a symmetrical balancing of parts.⁴⁴ He might well have been describing a two dimensional image rather than a three dimensional sculpture.

Reynolds remained unsympathetic to Flaxman's cause. When Flaxman attempted to obtain funds to go to Rome in 1784 he approached Reynolds with the idea that he, the eager young sculptor, with experience gained in his father's cast shop and trained at the Royal Academy schools which Reynolds still headed, could become a Rome-based supplier of casts to the Academy. Reynolds declined the offer.⁴⁵

Undaunted, Flaxman and his wife Nancy eventually left for Rome in the autumn of 1787 hoping to stay two years. They were assisted by Romney who accepted Flaxman's offer of casts sent from Rome in exchange for money paid before they left,⁴⁶ by Nancy's parents⁴⁷ and by Wedgwood who paid to have their heavy luggage sent on to Rome.⁴⁸ The Flaxman's crossed to Dieppe, travelled through France and in late 1787 arrived in Rome.

During their journey Flaxman recorded in journals and letters his impressions of those things he saw and believed he might later find useful. His notes suggest that although much of what he was seeing was new to him, his reactions were ultimately based on a few firm principles. At Versailles, as he wrote in a letter to his parents, he considered that the theatre was 'wonderfully rich'⁴⁹ while in his own journal he described it as 'barbarous.'⁵⁰ Ornamentation might be pretty

to look at but he could not foresee its being suitable for his own work. In Italy he found the Baroque palaces in Turin tainted with the 'bad taste of architecture which succeeded the age of Michelangelo', their carved facades and interiors being 'as rich in gold, silver and fine marble as they were poor in taste.'⁵¹ In striking contrast were his reactions to the Venus de Medici and the Niobe he admired in Florence. Where the theatre in Versailles was 'barbarous' these sculptures were done with 'wonderful attention to nature without exaggeration, there [was] no affectation of style, beautiful nature was chosen by the Artist and copied with so much spirit, judgment...' Where the Baroque palaces were 'rich in gold silver and fine marble' and thus 'poor in taste' the classical works showed 'truth of anatomy and outline with a delicacy of execution that when seen in proper light the naked parts seem capable of motion, the draperies are of fine cloths, light, beautifully disposed to contrast the limbs and shew them, as well as to add dignity to the figures.'⁵²

Flaxman also sketched extensively. Of particular interest here is the variety of the type and style of motifs he selected. Figure 16 is a study from life rendered in a manner suggestive of the Homer designs with its pure outline and parallel hatching in the background. Figure 17 is Flaxman's sketch of a detail of Signorelli's Battle of the Nudes (Figure 18) in the Duomo in Orvieto.⁵³ The reduction of the original to outline with only slight shading and the elimination of the background has

given that sketch a two dimensional aspect that is not stressed in Signorelli's version. Flaxman has also altered and corrected the anatomy of the figures. In a third sketch, this of an antique relief in the Vatican depicting the Battle of the Amazons, (Figure 19), Flaxman has again reduced the figures to slight outline pencil lines. These sketches from varied sources, with figures in varied poses but with little detail, are representative of Flaxman's attempts to accumulate images that could be reassembled in new compositions.

On his peregrinations about Italy, Flaxman came into contact with a several members of the artistic community. In a letter to his parents from 1790 he commented, 'I have been treated with particular attention by most of the artists of the first eminence, both Englishmen and foreigners'.⁵⁴ A number became such good friends that they contributed sketches to one of Flaxman's sketchbooks.⁵⁵ Among them were Charles Percier who Flaxman described as 'a French architect of the first talent'.⁵⁶ The French landscape painter Ducros contributed a watercolour. The Flaxman's circle of friends also included the Irish portrait-painter Hugh Douglas Hamilton,⁵⁷ the English History Painter Guy Head, and the Italian sculptor Antonio Canova. And he wrote a letter of introduction for James Playfair,⁵⁸ the English architect, to Sir William Hamilton, the British Ambassador to the Court at Naples, with whom Flaxman had been acquainted for some time. In 1790 Flaxman corresponded with Hamilton, asking him for 'some few particulars of the Greek

stories represented on these beautiful Etrusean vases which you have added to your collection since I was last at Naples and which I have so great a longing to see.'⁵⁹ His most important sculptural commission was the Fury of Athamas (Figure 20) which came on the recommendation of his friend Antonio Canova, and led to the commissions for the Homeric designs.

The precise history of the Homeric commissions was recounted by Flaxman in 1824 to his friend the architect Charles Robert Cockerell who recorded their conversation in his diary:

Flaxman had received L600 for the composition of Athamas in 1790 but the marble, time and expenses (sic) had cost so much that this work "had beggared him" (his own phrase) [;] he was glad being thus named to accept the proposition to execute the designs of Homer for Mr. [Hare-]Naylor. Flaxman composed the Dante at Mr. Hope's invitation.⁶⁰

Indeed The Fury of Athamas had not been a financial success but Flaxman had an ulterior motive. He wrote to Romney in April of 1790 expressing the hope that the work 'might establish my reputation as a sculptor'.⁶¹ In a letter, written to his parents in October of the same year, he was even more specific: 'if I ever expect to be employed on great works, it is but reasonable that I should show the world some proof of my abilities, otherwise I cannot reasonably expect employment of that kind.'⁶²

In fact, it was on Flaxman's insistence that the commission had grown from what Lord Bristol wanted - a five foot by eight or nine foot bas-relief based on an existing terracotta - to the free standing four figure group over seven feet tall

Flaxman finally delivered. As he worked on the Athamas it became obvious that his other artistic activities could not support the costs of production. He was forced to ask for more money but only L100 in addition to the originally agreed upon L500 was forthcoming. By comparison, for the rather more successful Lord Mansfield monument of 1794 (Figure 21). Flaxman's sculptor's fee alone was L2000.⁶³ Flaxman was certainly aware of the importance of costs. The concept for a monument for the poet William Collins (Figure 22) was abandoned for the less expensive one Flaxman delivered (Figure 23).⁶⁴

Lord Bristol had a reputation for being "eccentric and mean"⁶⁵ and had treated other artists rather shabbily. For example, in 1778 the architect John Soane arrived in Rome to begin a period of study only to leave prematurely in the following year lured away by Lord Bristol's promise of the commission for his new mansion at Ickworth. When Soane returned Lord Bristol failed to honour his promise.⁶⁶ Soane was never to resume his Italian studies. In Flaxman's case, it would seem that Lord Bristol was taking advantage of the sculptor's desire to establish himself to guarantee the completion of the project.

For all his indifference to Flaxman's financial plight, Lord Bristol did not hesitate to praise the man or his work. After all, no less a figure than Antonio Canova had suggested that Flaxman was capable of delivering excellent work.⁶⁷ Furthermore, Lord Bristol mentioned in a letter to Lady Erne

that he had sent a message to Flaxman's father saying that the young man would 'rise to be the first sculptor in Europe'.⁶⁸ He hoped he was getting Flaxman's greatest work just before the sculptor's name became a household word. To have purchased such a major work, the product of three years work, for only 600 guineas would have demonstrated Lord Bristol's business acumen as well as his refined tastes. Indeed, he personified Reynolds' observation that 'there is a general desire among our Nobility to be distinguished as lovers and judges of the Arts'.⁶⁹

As it transpired The Fury of Athamas was an artistic failure, in no small part because it is really only comprehensible when viewed from the one side shown in Figure 20. But even then its dramatic impact is subdued and the faces of the figures passionless. The participants seem curiously divorced from the action. One might imagine that as Flaxman toiled on, without compensation, his enthusiasm was similarly divorced from the work.

Flaxman's relationship with the Hare-Naylors, who commissioned the Homer designs, could not have been more different. They were not simply fellow visitors to Italy but personal friends. Mrs. Hare-Naylor embroidered a carpet for the Flaxmans⁷⁰ and Flaxman's sister was the governess of the Hare-Naylor's four sons.⁷¹ The Hare-Naylor's financial situation did not permit them to give Flaxman an outright gift without at least the hope of a return and had they offered him a loan Flaxman

probably would have refused. He had been very reluctant to accept money from Romney to assist with expenses for his trip to Rome and only agreed to accept money in exchange for casts.⁷²

Flaxman had already demonstrated his talents as a draughtsman. As early as 1788 he had related that 'my drawings have surprised some of the best English artists here (in Rome), who thought they were copied from the stories on Greek vases'.⁷³ Apparently even at this time he was able to take subjects from life, art works ancient and modern, and expressly from Greek vases and produce from them original drawings reminiscent of the line drawings on ancient vases. Further, his words 'copied from the stories on Greek vases' suggest that his drawings were being associated with passages from ancient literature.

The texts Mr. Hare-Naylor proposed that Flaxman should illustrate, the Iliad and Odyssey, also offered a promise of success since the epic narratives had inspired a number of significant works in the second half of the 18th Century. In the course of investigating over 300 works based on subjects from the Iliad, Dora Wiebenson found that while over 200 date from the period 1750 to 1825 fewer than 40 are from the preceding three centuries.⁷⁴ She identified two factors that contributed to the sudden increase in popularity.

The first factor is a change in attitude of literary critics toward the Homeric epics. Before 1750, they censured "Homer's common language, long digressions which left his poems with little formal structure, his realistic and vulgar

descriptions, ordinary, unideal actions and unheroic heroes, and the lack of allegorical structure of the poems".⁷⁵ The vigour of his narrative was ignored by literary critic and artist alike such that, on the rare occasions when Homeric subjects were depicted, emphasis was placed on didactic purpose rather than accurate representation of the text. The most notable series of the earlier period, eight tapestry designs by Rubens (c. 1630), focused on a depiction of the life of Achilles not on a recounting of the events of the Trojan War. Included are a Wrath of Achilles (cf. Flaxman's Minerva Repressing the Fury of Achilles (*Iliad* 2, Figure 37)) and the earliest known Return of Briseis (not illustrated by Flaxman). The painter has used Homer's well known characters to present visual metaphors of two themes -- the influence of the gods upon men and the dominance of love.⁷⁶ In the first half of the 18th century didactic purpose was subordinated to spectacular visual image. In his version of the Wrath of Achilles (one of three designs for Gobelins tapestries⁷⁷ (1721-1725)) Antoine Coypel separates mortals and goddess by placing Minerva in a cloud only visible to Achilles; yet, consistent with works of the period, the central figures in the action are located in an expansive landscape completed with foliage, ships in a harbour and a fully described military encampment populated by many colorfully costumed figures.

The second factor in the increased popularity of Homeric subjects was the publication of Tableaux tirés de l'Iliad, de

l'Odyssée d'Homère et de l'Eneide de Virgile, avec des observations générales sur le costume in 1757. Its author, the Comte de Caylus, considered at length how and which scenes might be used to successfully illustrate the epics. This analytical work suggested, for example, that as Briseis departure was a consequence of the same event that precipitated Achilles' wrath the two images should logically appear together. In addition, by pairing them, both the public official and the private domestic sides of the hero's character could be exposed. Before de Caylus' Tableaux the subjects had been associated only once but after 1757 they were rendered together often. Among the artists who did so were: Giambattista Tiepolo for his Valmarana series painted in 1757 only a few months after the publication of the Tableaux,⁷⁸ Tobias Sergel in the 1760's,⁷⁹ J.H. Tischbein in the 1770's,⁸⁰ Joseph-Marie Vien, de Caylus' protégé, in the 1780's,⁸¹ and Flaxman in the 1790's. While each contains details inspired by de Caylus,⁸² Flaxman's (Iliad 2 and 3, Figures 37 and 35 respectively) are set apart from all previous treatments as he revealed Achilles character using fewer figures in simple frieze-like compositions with virtually no setting.

Wiebenson also recalls de Caylus' activities in a movement "which stressed a return to the classical ideals of 17th century French art, notably to the art of Poussin."⁸³ It was from engravings of this artist's works that Gavin Hamilton derived the compositions for at least three of his works --

Hector's Farewell, Priam and Achilles and Andromache Mourning.

A fourth work Achilles Dragging Hector's Body around the Walls of Troy (Figure 53) is based on an engraving by Pietro Testa a member of Poussin's circle in Rome. Years before Flaxman had borrowed a scene of the subject from an antique gem illustrated in Gori's Museum Etruscum⁸⁴ to produce a Jasperware design for Wedgwood but he chose not to revive it for the Homer commission. Instead, he used an engraving for Hamilton's painting as a model for his Hectors (sic) Body Dragged at the Car of Achilles, Iliad 36 (Figure 38).

There was already a well established market for depictions of the ancient world with the steady flow of people through Rome on the Grand Tour.⁸⁵ Flaxman himself had found Piranesi's images of Rome an added incentive to travel there. The tourists were actively engaged in collecting antiquities and depictions of ancient art. Flaxman was well acquainted with them, acting as a guide to sites of antiquarian interest with such frequency that, as Mrs. Flaxman wrote to her sister, the visitors 'almost hurried him off his legs'.⁸⁶ This contact was not without effect. He wrote to his father 'I find from what I see of the English nobility and gentry here that the taste increases in England for plaster casts as well as other articles of sculpture'.⁸⁷ Accordingly he suggested that Flaxman Sr. increase his stock of casts. Flaxman, with Hare-Naylor, must have believed that newly created classically inspired designs would be an attractive supplement to the collecting proclivities of

the Grand Tourists particularly if the subject matter were familiar, the form appropriate and the volumes affordable.

At this juncture, it would seem appropriate to note the circumstances that surrounded Flaxman's association with Thomas Hope and the significance of his Dante commission which entered into his later discussions with Cockerell.

Flaxman's association with Thomas Hope had begun some years before the Dante designs were even considered. In the winter of 1789-90 Flaxman had been working on a group titled Aurora visiting Cephalus on Mount Ida (Figure 24) which was originally to be cast in bronze but finally executed in marble.⁸⁸ It was to be the focal point of a so-called Flaxman or Star room in Hope's then newly furnished house in Duchess Street in London. A good indication of how the room was to be arranged with the sculpture and other works is shown in the 1807 edition of Hope's Household Furniture (Figure 25). In 1792 Hope advanced Flaxman L341 of an anticipated L700 for an as yet unexecuted recreation of an ancient group to be based upon the Torso Belvedere⁸⁹ and to represent the marriage of Hercules and Hebe. The work was never attempted, as intended, in a marble comparable to that of the original Torso Belvedere. Apparently Flaxman felt his design could not be successfully translated into stone.⁹⁰ He may well have been correct. A conspicuous fault in the surviving plaster model (Figure 26) is that the figure of Hebe is so disproportionately small that she appears to be a young girl rather than a bride of Hercules.

At least two considerations had prompted Hope to commission the Dante illustrations. His intention, on the one hand, was to give engraved versions to close friends as gifts. This idea of a very personal and expensive gift was not new. Wedgewood had provided Jasperware portrait medallions of individuals for similar disposition while Flaxman was in his employ.⁹¹ There had also been an increased interest in Dante in England. As recently as 1781 Thomas Warton had published his History of English Poetry in which Dante's genius had been explored and William Hayley had considered the poet's work in Triumph of Temper and his Essay on Epic Poetry. In the same year Henry Boyd provided the first English translation of the Divine Comedy. It was this translation which was to provide the English text to Flaxman's illustrations.

Just as there had been little literary criticism to which he could refer there was also very little specific contemporary pictorial imagery for Flaxman to use for inspiration. Prior to Flaxman's undertaking the Dante Commission the most recent series of illustrations for the Divine Comedy was the late 15th Century collection by Sandro Botticelli.⁹³ As these designs were also rendered in the line they would have been of obvious interest to Flaxman. However, the Botticelli manuscript vanished in the 16th Century only to reappear in 1803 in a Scottish collection.⁹⁴ While it is unlikely that Flaxman had access to this Italian's work it is possible that both artists consulted a common source, Italian late Gothic illuminated

manuscripts of the Divine Comedy over thirty of which survive.⁹⁵ Rather unexpectedly, in 1773, Reynolds became the first artist to exhibit a Dante subject at the Royal Academy, an Ugolino. Similarly, when Antonio Zatta published an illustrated edition of the Divine Comedy in Venice in 1757 it was the first since 1596.⁹⁶ The dearth of works associated specifically with Dante to which Flaxman could refer meant that he was forced to rely upon his own resources. Thus, perhaps for the lack of available pictorial precedents, the Dante designs became "his most consistently original series of illustrations."⁹⁷

To return to the subject of the Homer designs, from Flaxman's point of view the commission had conspicuous advantages. It could exploit the artistic skills he had previously demonstrated. In 1792, he apparently regarded design (as opposed to execution of sculpture, for example) as his most highly developed skill. After his discussions with Cockerell the architect noted that 'It is a great happiness to an artist to be called into action by someone who knows he appreciates his particular forte'.⁹⁸ No less importantly Flaxman was to apply these skills to a story with which he was long familiar. Mrs. Matthew had read the Homer stories in translation to him. His first commission had been for drawing of Homeric subjects for Jeremiah Crutchley a friend of the Matthews. The materials and labor costs would be small compared with Flaxman's sculptural works. The duration of the work on the Homeric illustrations was to be considerably shortened because the

final versions were to be engraved and presented for sale by someone else, the engraver Thomas Piroli. Expediting Piroli's task, the designs were to be published as books of engravings dispensing with the need for securing the rights to an accompanying text or translation. Finally, the chosen form, line engraving, was, as Sir William Hamilton had noted in his Collection of Vases of 1791, an inexpensive form of illustration. For all those involved, Hare-Naylor, Flaxman, and Piroli, the project promised an early and successful conclusion.

NOTES TO THE TEXT

CHAPTER II

- 1 John Thomas, 'John Flaxman, R.A. (1755-1826)', Journal of the Royal Society of Arts, (9th December 1955), p.43
- 2 R.Gunnis, Dictionary of British Sculptors (London 1953; and revised edition 1968) gives as complete a biography as is possible for John Flaxman Sr whose career was almost completely overshadowed by his son's.
- 3 Flaxman's sister-in-law Maria Denman said in The Builder (24 January 1863) p. 60 that Flaxman received no training. This contradicts Allan Cunningham, Lives of the Most Eminent British Painters Sculptors and Architects, 2nd edition. (London, 1830-1833) vol. III p. 61. Noted by Irwin op. cit. p. 213 fn 26.
- 4 For the most complete consideration of Rev. and Mrs. Mathew see Gerald Bentley, 'Patron of Flaxman and Blake,' Notes and Queries, 203, 1958, pp. 168-178.
- 5 George Smith The Dictionary of National Biography ed. Sir Leslie Stephen and Sir Sidney Lee (London, 1938), vol. III p.1104.
- 6 Ibid., vol IV p.59.
- 7 Ibid., vol XIII p.688.
- 8 Ibid., vol XIII p.688.
- 9 Ibid., vol XIII p.689.
- 10 The first patron of Flaxman as a professional artist was probably Edward Knight senior cousin of Richard Payne Knight. See Ella Hendricks, 'The First patron of John Flaxman' Burlington Magazine October 1984 pp. 618-625. Mr. Crutchley's six black chalk drawings are now lost. Irwin op. cit., p. 220, n. 51.
- 11 William Hayley, Memoirs (London 1823). I. p.309.
- 12 MSS, Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, Flaxman to Hagley, 24 August 1803.
- 13 J. Romney, Memoirs of George Romney (London 1830), p.203.
- 14 Sidney C. Hutchison The History of the Royal Academy 1768-1968 (London, 1968); James Northcote, Esq. The Life of Sir Joshua Reynolds (London, 1818) p. 164 ff.

- 15 Sidney C. Hutchison, 'The Royal Academy Schools, 1768-1830', Walpole Society, XXXVIII, 1960-1962, p.134.
- 16 Sir Joshua Reynolds, Discourses on Art ed. Robert R. Wark (San Marino, California, 1959) Discourse II ll.18ff.
- 17 Hutchison op. cit., p.102.
- 19 Reynolds, Discourse III, ll. 23-27.
- 20 Reynolds, Discourse IV, ll. 27-33.
- 21 Reynolds, Discourse III, ll. 45-47.
- 22 Sidney C. Hutchison, The History of the Royal Academy 1768-1968 (London, 1968) p. 237.
- 23 Reynolds, Discourse III, ll. 242-246.
- 24 Reynolds, Discourse III, ll. 256-265.
- 25 Reynolds, Discourse III, ll. 103-105.
- 26 Reynolds, Discourse IV, ll. 167-171.
- 27 Reynolds, Discourse II, ll. 97-99.
- 28 Reynolds, Discourse V, ll. 312-316.
- 29 Reynolds, Discourse II, ll. 188-191.
- 30 Reynolds, Discourse III, ll. 355-361.
- 31 Reynolds, Discourse II, ll. 184-185.
- 32 Reynolds, Discourse V, ll. 70-75.
- 33 Reynolds, Discourse V, ll. 45-52.
- 34 Reynolds, Discourse IV, ll. 34-36.
- 35 Reynolds, Discourse III, ll. 300-301.
- 36 Wedgwood to Bentley 14 January 1775 in E. Meteyard, Life of Wedgwood (London 1865-1866), II p. 321.
- 37 Wedgwood to Bentley 9 July 1776 in Meteyard, op. cit., II p. 366.
- 38 Wedgwood to Bentley, 14 February 1776 in Constable, op. cit., p. 10.

- 39 Wedgwood to Flaxman, 11 February 1790, in Meteyard, op. cit., p. 589.
- 40 The whole issue of industry drawing upon ancient works for inspiration was considered by David Irwin, "Neo-Classical Design: Industry Plunders Antiquity", Apollo ns 96: pp.288-297.
- 41 Noted in a letter Wedgwood to Bentley 7 September 1771 in Finer and Savage op. cit., p. 114.
- 42 Constable, op. cit., p.7.
- 43 Wedgwood to Bentley 14 January 1775 in Constable, op. cit., p. 8.
- 44 Joseph Burke, English Art 1714-1800 (Oxford, 1976), p. 259.
- 45 Constable, op. cit., p. 7.
- 46 William Hayley, The Life of George Romney Esq. (London, 1809) p.313 and J. Romney, op. cit., p. 230.
- 47 British Library, MS. 39784, A., Flaxman account book entries.
- 48 E. Meteyard op. cit., p. 506 includes a facsimile of a list written by Flaxman of the contents of a box of the Flaxmans sent by Wedgwood 'to the care of Mess, Micali and Son Leghorn.'
- 49 British Library, Add. MSS. 39780 f. 38v, Flaxman to his parents, from Paris 1 October 1787.
- 50 David Irwin, John Flaxman 1755-1826 (London, 1979), p. 31.
- 51 Ibid., p 31 also David Irwin, 'Flaxman: Italian Journals and Correspondence' Burlington Magazine, C1 (1959) pp. 212-213.
- 52 Quoted at length by David Irwin, 'Flaxman Italian Journals and Correspondence' as in previous footnote p. 213.
- 53 The correspondence of these two images is noted in David Irwin, John Flaxman 1755-1826 (London, 1979), p. 41.
- 54 British Library, Add. MS. 39780, f. 47v, Flaxman to parents, Rome, 26 January [1790].

- 55 John Murray Ltd London, Flaxman sketchbook 435. Noted in David Irwin, John Flaxman 1755-1826 (London, 1979), p. 49, 223 n.52
- 56 Collection of Autograph letters...Alfred Morrison. Hamilton and Nelson papers, I Letter 237.
- 57 British Library, Add. MS. 39780, f. 179, Mrs. Flaxman to sister, [Rome], 22 July 1788 wherein Hamilton is described as Flaxman's 'best friend in Rome.'
- 58 Bodleian Library, MSS. Autograph d. II, ff. 319-20, Rome, 13 March 1792.
- 59 Flaxman to Sir William Hamilton, undated [1790], printed in Collection of Autograph letters...Alfred Morrison. Hamilton and Nelson Papers (1893), I, Letter 237.
- 60 Charles Robert Cockerell, Diaries, 27th November 1824.
- 61 Flaxman to Romney, Rome, 15 April 1790 in J. Romney, op. cit., p 208.
- 62 Flaxman to parents, Rome, 7 October 1790 in British Library Add. MS. 39780 f. 50.
- 63 Sarah Symmons, 'The Spirit of Despair: Patronage, Primitivism and the Art of John Flaxman', Burlington Magazine, CXVII, 1975, p. 647.
- 64 The rejected version would have cost about L225. The delivered one did cost L90 D. Irwin John Flaxman 1755-1826 (London 1979), p 63.
- 65 Ibid., p. 54.
- 66 Pierre de la Ruffiniere du Prey in his John Soane's Architectural Education 1753-80 (New York, 1977) has suggested that Lord Bristol might have been justified in his ultimate rejection of Soane's design. Du Prey pointed out that the disposition of rooms would have made the mansion an "inconvenient hodgepodge" due mostly to the "tampering of the architect-Bishop and his self-opinionated amanuensis". p.285 In addition, the building seems to have been designed with no particular site in mind. p.286.
- 67 Letter from Flaxman to Romney 15 April 1790 in John Romney, Memoirs of the Life and Work of George Romney (London, 1830) pp. 204-207.

- 68 Lord Bristol to Lady Erne, 26 March 1792 in William S Childe Pemberton, The Earl Bishop [1924] Vol, II, p. 439.
- 69 Reynolds, Discourse I, ll. 30-32.
- 70 Mrs G. Hare-Naylor to Mrs Flaxman 8 November 1794. British Library Add. MS. 39781 f. 386.
- 71 Irwin, op. cit., p. 138.
- 72 William Hayley, The Life of George Romney, Esq. (Chichester, 1809), p.313.
- 73 Flaxman to Romney 25 May 1788 in J. Romney op. cit., p. 204.
- 74 Dora Wiebenson, "Subjects from Homer's Iliad in Neoclassical Art", Art Bulletin v.46, 1964; pp.23-37.
- 75 Ibid., p. 23.
- 76 Kerry Downes, Rubens, (London, 1980), pp.90-2.
- 77 Wiebenson, op. cit., p.25. The other two designs were a Hector's Farewell and Achilles' Revenge.
- 78 Michael Levey, "Tiepolo's Treatment of the Classical Story at the Villa Valmarana; A Study in Eighteenth-century Iconography and Aesthetics," Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes, 1957, pp.298-317 notes that in the British Museum there is a copy of the Tableaux which contains the book-plate of Consul Joseph Smith to which Tiepolo may have access. In addition, the book was registered as approved at Paris for publication August 31, 1756 and thus Tiepolo may have had time to study it. p.302 footnote.
- 79 Harald Brising, "Sergels techninger till Homeros och Virgilius", Tidskrift for Konstvetenskap, 1917 dates the designs to 1766-1767. p.139.
- 80 Wiebenson, op. cit., p. 25.
- 81 Vien painted five other subjects in the series. They were: Venus Wounded (Salon 1775), Hector Reproaching Paris (Salon 1779), Priam Departing for the Greek Camp (Salon 1783, Angiers), Priam Return from the Greek Camp (Salon 1785) and Hector Departing (1786, Salon 1791, Epinal).
- 82 Wiebenson, op. cit., pp. 25-27.

- 83 Wiebenson, op. cit., p.32.
- 84 See Antonio Francesco Gori, Museum Florentium, II, Gemmae antiquae, Florence, 1731-1732, p. 60, pl. xxv, no. 1. Flaxman's Wedgwood plaque is illustrated in Roderick Cameron, "Flaxman et Wedgwood", L'Oeil, May, 1959, p.54.
- 85 Useful discussions of the Grand Tourland its tourist are: William Edward Mead The Grand Tour in the 18th Century (Boston and New York, 1914) and Christopher Hibbert, The Grand Tour (New York, 1969)
- 86 Mrs. Flaxman to her sister Maria Denman [Rome] 24 April 1792. British Library Add. MS. 39780 f. 53.
- 87 Flaxman to parents [Rome] 3 March 1792 British Library Add. MS. 39780 f. 57.
- 88 British Library, Add. MS.39780, f.47v, Flaxman to parents, Rome, 26 January 1790.
- 89 Flaxman based this two figure reconstruction on a suggestion of d'Hancarville. MSS. Bodleian Library, Autog. d. 11,f.319, Flaxman to Sir William Hamilton, Rome, 13 March 1792.
- 90 After A.W. von Schlegel visited Flaxman in 1820's the German critic was promoted to include this suggestion in the 1828 edition of his 1799 article. Schegel, op. cit., p.154.
- 91 Robin Reilly and George Savage, Wedgwood the Portrait Medallions, (London, 1973), p.29.
- 92 Flaxman's designs for the Divine Comedy have also been used by other artists. See Victor Chan, "Blake, Goya, Flaxman, Romney, and Fuseli: Transcriptions and Transformations of a Dantesque Image, Arts Magazine, 55, May 1981, pp. 80-84.
- 93 See Kenneth Clark, The Drawings by Sandro Botticelli for Dante's Divine Comedy (London, 1976).
- 94 Tate Gallery, Henry Fuseli 1741-1825 (London, 1975), p. 102.
- 95 Clark, op. cit., pp. 12 ff.
- 96 Irwin, op. cit., p.95.
- 97 Irwin, op. cit., p.95.
- 98 C.R.Cockerell, Diaries 27 November 1824.

CHAPTER III

Flaxman's wife Nancy wrote to her sister May on December 15, 1792 relating that her husband was very busy in the daytime with commissioned sculptures and 'at home in the Evenings - he is employ'd and that closely too - in making a compleat (sic) set of drawings from Dantes Heaven, Hell, and Purgatory, consisting of one hundred and ten - from which engravings are Making for Mr. Hope, after there (or rather going on at the same time) are a set of drawings from Homer's iliad and Oddysey (sic) - consisting of 60 most beautiful Subjects and as beautifully treated - which also he makes duplicates for Mr. Udney an Englishman - on which also he makes duplicated for Mr. Naylor (Husband of the late Bishop of St. Asaph's Daughter) the which are also Engraving here as Mr. Naylor means to publish them on his return to England [;] he has promis'd to give us half a dozen copies'.¹ How Flaxman actually set Mr. Naylor's '60 most beautiful subjects and as beautifully treated' on paper forms the subject of this chapter.

Mrs. Flaxman's letter served not only to introduce the Homer designs to her family but also Flaxman's patrons. The sculptor's earlier association with Thomas Hope has already been reviewed. Mr. Udney was probably Robert Fullerton Udney (1722-1902)² a London merchant who traded to the East Indies. Both he and his brother John (1727-1800), English Consul to Venice, were avid collectors of art. John is known to have supplied his brother with works of art but what his connection (if any) might have been with the Homer commission is unknown.

The surviving Homer designs usually associated with Mr. Udney's name are those executed in a shaded style (see Figure 27) which is markedly different from the simple line engravings. In fact, there seems to be no conclusive proof of this connection. As an advanced collector Robert Udney put an identifying mark³ on many of the works in his collection, but this does not appear on any of the Homer designs in the shaded style.

The third person identified in Mrs. Flaxman's letter is a "Mr. Naylor (Husband of the late Bishop of St. Asaph's Daughter)". It was Mrs. Hare-Naylor who apparently gave Flaxman the Homer commission. Georgianna Shipley (Mrs. Hare-Naylor) daughter of Jonathan Shipley, bishop of St. Asaph, was accomplished in modern languages, had studied classics with her father, and had painted in Reynolds's studio. While in Italy she had devoted herself to painting and had also become a close friend of Clotilda Tambroni, at the time, the famous female professor of Greek.⁴ Mrs. Hare-Naylor was also a cousin of the dowager Countess Spencer who was herself to order a set of thirty illustrations which depicted scenes from all seven surviving plays of Aeschylus.

Reducing Homer's epic poems wherein 'nothing is casual, nothing idle or irrelative' wherein 'every expression is pregnant with meaning'⁵ to the 60 images capable of being engraved was a formidable achievement. Apparently the choice of what to illustrate was left to Flaxman himself. Mrs.

Flaxman's description 'a set of drawings from Homer's Iliad and Oddyssey (sic) - consisting of 60 most beautiful subjects and as beautifully treated - ...'makes no mention of how the individual subjects were to be chosen. There is, for example, no indication that a viewer was to be able to recreate or infer the entire stories by Homer from the designs by Flaxman. In the end the selection of subjects was dictated by the stories to be illustrated. Some whole books are represented by single drawings.

Although both the Iliad and Odyssey are associated with the Trojan War, as stories they develop along distinctly different lines. The Iliad recounts the events of 50 consecutive days just before the end of the war. The story begins and moves continuously to the end. This sense of a progression of events was well recognized in the 18th Century as a particular characteristic of poetry by such theorists as Lessing who wrote: 'I maintain the succession of time is the department of the poet, as space is that of the painter'.⁶ Poetry by its very nature cannot present, for example, an instantaneous picture of Achilles' shield. Lessing thus praised Homer's mastery of poetry by writing of the shield that 'in more than a hundred splendid lines, [Homer] has described its materials, its form, and all the figures which filled its enormous surface, so circumstantially and closely, that modern artists have not found it difficult to produce a drawing of it corresponding in all points'.⁷ Flaxman did precisely that in Iliad 31 Thetis Bringing the Armour to

Achilles. While Homer, the poet, described in Book XVIII of the Iliad the process by which the shield was made Flaxman, the artist, showed it as a finished article but by doing so loses the sense of progressive action.

Flaxman was able to recreate the sense of progressive actions in pictorial images by employing two devices. The first is consistent with Lessing's observation that 'in great historical pictures the single moment is almost always extended...'⁸ Flaxman frequently included in single designs events which occur consecutively in the Homeric poem. In the Iliad 31 for example, the act of Thetis Bringing the Armour to Achilles is combined with the moment Achilles falls into deepest grief over the death of Patroclus. The second device was to include in individual drawings allusions to past events and foreshadowings of the future. The series from Iliad 29 to 33 demonstrates this. Iliad 29 (Figure 28) depicts Thetis and Eurynome receiving the infant Vulcan. Iliad 30, Vulcan and Chares Receiving Thetis (Figure 29) reassociates the now grown Vulcan and Thetis as she requests new armour for Achilles. In Iliad 31 Thetis presents the completed armour and calls the grieving Achilles to arms. Achilles appears in Iliad 33 Achilles Contending with the Rivers (Figure 30) having returned to battle in the very armour Thetis had delivered in Iliad 31. Flaxman thus captured the sense of consecutive action that characterizes the text of the Iliad. Neither device could have been appropriate for illustrating The Odyssey.

Homer's Odyssey recounts the adventures of Odysseus (Latin Ulysses) during his 10 year voyage home to Greece after the fall of Troy. Spanning a decade, the story of necessity is reduced to a few well developed tales which are separated temporally and physically. Flaxman responded to the episodic nature of the story by focussing on a particular moment in the individual adventure and avoided representing consecutive events in single images. The result is a concentration on single themes and images of greater dramatic intensity. To compare treatments in the Iliad and Odyssey series, in the former Achilles' brutal slaughter of defenseless men and animals (with limbs bound) is only recalled by their presence on Patroclus' funeral pyre in Iliad 35 The Funeral Pile of Patroclus (Figure 31 while in the King of the Lestrigens seizing one of the companions of Ulysses, Odyssey 15, the brutal giant is shown in the much more unsettling image as he is about to hack to pieces a defenseless or overpowered member of Ulysses' crew (Figure 32). The result of the differing approach is that none of the Iliad designs seem to have as direct a sentimental appeal as Ulysses and His Dog, Odyssey 26 (Figure 33), for example, or as affecting an image as Ulysses Terrefied (sic) by the Ghosts, Iliad 17 (Figure 34) where the shrieks of the tormented go unheard by all but the terrified hero Ulysses.

Pope had written of the characters in Homer that 'no author has ever drawn so many, with so visible and surprising a variety, or given us such lively and affecting impressions of

them. Every one has something so singularly his own, that no painter could have distinguished them more by their features, than the poet has by their manners'.⁹ Reynolds had advised the artist to concentrate on one particular aspect of character in a painting but the nature of Flaxman's project allowed him to present a person in a variety of different situations each revealing some facet of the character's personality. An example is the goddess Thetis. Her character is established by the various situations in which Flaxman presents her. She appears as a fondling mother while receiving the infant Vulcan in Iliad 29 (Figure 28), humbled as she asks Vulcan's assistance in Iliad 30 (Figure 29) and dutifully calling Achilles to arms in Iliad 31 (Figure 1). Flaxman added further variety by having Thetis kneel, sit and stand in the respective designs to better display the three different aspects of her character. By displaying them in three different designs Flaxman followed Pope's idea that 'one may indeed make a hero as valiant as Achilles, as pious as Aeneas, and as prudent as Ulysses. but it is a mere chimaera to imagine a hero that has the valour of Achilles, the piety of Aeneas, and the prudence of Ulysses, at one and the same time'.¹⁰

When Flaxman was required to present the two Homeric heroes Pope had mentioned, Achilles and Ulysses, he left the viewer with images that clearly distinguished aspects of their respective characters. As drawn by Flaxman, Achilles the hero of the Iliad appears in a rather insipid, pensive pose in Iliad

3, The Departure of Briseis from the Tent of Achilles (Figure 35), as the prince of princes in Iliad 18, The Embassy to Achilles (Figure 36), prostrated with tearful grief Iliad 31, Thetis Bringing the Armour to Achilles, and as the brave warrior Iliad 33, Achilles Contending with the Rivers. He also presents the darker side of Achilles by depicting him in uncontrollable rage in Iliad 2, Minerva Repressing the Fury of Achilles (Figure 37) and desecrating Hector's body, not once but twice, in Iliad 36 Hector's Body Dragged At the Car of Achilles (Figure 38) and Iliad 34 Andromache Fainting on the Wall (Figure 39). Even Homer described these acts as 'unseemly deed,'¹¹ and Achilles's inclusion of human sacrifices of Patroclus funeral pyre as 'evil deeds.'¹² The Oxford Classical Dictionary characterizes Achilles as a 'magnificent barbarian.' Flaxman's designs present him as somewhat more barbaric than magnificent and certainly not the 'valiant' hero Pope fancied him.¹³

Ulysses'¹⁴ character is explored more fully in no fewer than 18 of the 34 designs of the Odyssey series. He is not merely a warrior who relied exclusively upon his physical prowess but rather overcomes the threat of the Sirens by carefully planning ahead (Odyssey 19), escapes the Cyclops by his cleverness and leadership (Odyssey 14), and wins to his cause the residents of foreign lands by his diplomacy (Odyssey 12). Ulysses is indeed the exemplar for all men.¹⁵ Having fought through the Trojan war and survived his voyage home he appears in only one design of tremendous violence and that when he slaughters the

suitors, in Odyssey 31, Ulysses Killing the Suitors (Figure 40), at the climatic conclusion of his return home.

As he endeavoured to relate the Homeric stories and the characters of their chief figures, Flaxman was evidently inspired by particular passages. The grisaille sketch in Figure 27 includes the Homeric text and a translation perhaps by Flaxman himself.¹⁶ His interest in the original Greek texts had been sufficient to prompt him to purchase a lexicon in 1790.¹⁷

Although in England there had been a variety of translations, including the William Cowper versions published in 1791 when Flaxman was in Rome, the Alexander Pope translation remained the most attractive. In the Gentleman's Magazine, to which Flaxman had submitted a letter regarding Roman costume,¹⁸ a contributor had compared the notes in the translations by Cowper and Pope. Cowper's were not 'without a considerable share of judicious sentiment and explanation' while 'Mr. Pope has many well written notes [which] are chiefly historical'.¹⁹ The adjective 'historical' may be somewhat misleading. The topics covered often include discussions of the nature of poetry and its limitations. Pope wrote:

"The question is, how far a poet, in pursuing the description of image of an action, can attach himself to little circumstances, without vulgarity or trifling? What particular are proper, and enliven the image; or what are impertinent, and clog it? in this matter painting is to be consulted, and the whole regard had to those circumstances, which contribute to form a full, and yet not confused idea of a thing."²⁰

The questions considered here seem familiar when compared with Reynolds's theoretical statements. Reynolds' told his students

that the artist should 'get above all singular forms, local customs, particularities and details of every kind'.²¹

Mere embellishment could only serve 'to divide the attention'.²²

Its appeal to the mind rather than the eye entitled painting 'to the name of a Liberal Art' and to a rank 'as a sister of poetry'.²³

Although Mrs. Flaxman did not specify that the published versions of her husband's designs for the Iliad and Odyssey were to be line engravings, there seemed to be no doubt that this was to be the ultimate form. From the earliest sketches to the final versions (those most closely resembling the published engravings) the designs are recorded as line drawings. Flaxman rarely introduced shading, backgrounds, figures or the intricate decoration common on ancient vases only to remove them in later sketches. He usually started with a basic idea for each scene and developed it.

The evolution of Minerva Repressing the Fury of Achilles, Iliad 2 (Figure 37) demonstrates the process Flaxman followed in the production of a design since there survive several preliminary sketches and the grisaille rendering (Figure 27) for it. In the least complete of the sketches (Figure 41) the figure of Achilles is somewhat more clearly defined than the other figures, which are indicated only by the scantest outlines. In another sketch on the bottom of the same sheet a seated figure has been added and Minerva descending from the right has been more clearly delineated while Achilles remains the most

clearly defined figure. As Flaxman approached a final solution he proceeded to test a variety of poses for Achilles before finally choosing the one he regarded as most appropriate (Figure 42). Another sketch (Figure 43) reveals that he considered having Achilles looking over his left shoulder at the descending Minerva. In a version which is apparently related to grisaille sketch in Figure 27 Achilles appears to be almost striding out of the picture plane toward the viewer (Figure 44). His arm is raised and his sword half drawn in front of his chest. Neither of these poses were seemed suitable for inclusion in the final engraved series, perhaps because Flaxman considered them to be too three dimensional. In the final engraved version (Figure 37) Achilles stands, his face turned to the other figures and away from Minerva, and his legs wide spread but parallel to the picture plane. Also his arm is raised above his head in a way that stresses the two dimensional quality of the composition.

The series of sketches for Minerva Repressing the Fury of Achilles further suggests that Flaxman composed the picture by accumulating and arranging individual cameo-like figures in positions that would balance the whole composition. By following this method he could and did arrive at least the two different final versions already mentioned: the engraved, with three seated and two standing figures on the left, and the grisaille, with two seated and three standing figures on the left. Both exhibit a common fault that seems to be inherent in his compositional method. Individual elements of many designs seem

curiously separated from each other and sometimes even unrelated to the actions depicted. For example, although their presence contributes to the balance of the composition in the engraved version of Minerva Repressing the Fury of Achilles, the two standing figures on the rear left do not seem to be at all affected by Achilles' fury. Similarly, the seated figure nearest Achilles is gazing blankly into space.

Yet Flaxman's agglomerative process was not invariably successful. When most successfully applied it allowed him to integrate figures into an attractive composition. In Nausicaa Throwing the Ball, Odyssey 10 (Figure 45), for example, the figures are arranged to present a balanced but varied composition in which all the figures are involved in the action. By contrast, The Sirens, Odyssey 19 (Figure 46) has the appearance of two unrelated scenes placed together on the same plate. On the left the three sirens sit amidst the bones of their victims and on the right Ulysses is being lashed to the mast of his boat. This composition is one of the least successful of all the designs because in order to balance a grouping of three figures with a ship and a crew Flaxman was forced to depict the latter in a much smaller scale. According to the conventional system of perspective a viewer would assume that the boat was in the far distance. Flaxman's rigorous attempt to exclude the three dimensional in his other Homer designs makes The Sirens plate seem out of place in the series.

Although the first editions of the Homer engravings had only line references to the texts of Pope and Homer, the 1805 Longman edition included the passages from Pope and the viewer was left to infer that this text was rigourously followed. Yet many variations from both the versions of Homer and Pope do occur. The Homeric text, for example, clearly implies that there were only two Sirens (12:167). Flaxman instead depicted three. He apparently considered a group of three figures presented a more satisfactory effect as it recurs in his depictions of the Daughters of Pandarus, Odyssey 29 (Figure 47) and in Penelope Carrying the Bow of Ulysses to the Suitors Odyssey 30 (Figure 48). Flaxman was not above altering specific details. For Iliad 24, Ajax Defending the Greek Ships against the Trojans (Figure 49) the text reads:

'Full Twelve the Boldest, in a Moment Fell,
Sent by great Ajax to the shades of Hell.'
Pope's Homers Iliad B15 Line 904

Some 48 lines before Pope had set the scene with the line 'No room to poise the lance or bend the bow' suggesting that the archer at Ajax's back is Flaxman's contribution to the description of the battle, added as a useful component in the compositional balance of his design. A third instance of Flaxman's alteration of the textual description appears in Iliad 22 showing the chariot of Neptune Rising from the Sea drawn by four horses rather than the two indicated by Homer (Figure 50). Pope did not specify their number.

While taking care with the compositions of the Homer designs, Flaxman was also interested in making them appealing to the people in Rome and at home in England who were acquiring archaeological books. Dora Wiebenson has suggested that an 'obvious way for an artist to link his own work with archaeological publications...was to imitate their technique.'²⁴ The use of line engraving, common in the archaeological publications, seems to have been not only a source for technique but for specific details. Items such as pieces of furniture seem to have been inspired by examples found on ancient pottery and sculpture or, perhaps more likely, the engravings made of such antiquities. David Irwin has thus associated, the cart and composition of Odyssey 11, Ulysses Following the Car of Nausicaa (Figure 51) with a plate from Sir William Hamilton's Collection of Vases... of 1791 (Figure 52).

It is unlikely that an archaeological book such as Hamilton's Collection of Vases would have supplied Flaxman with the inspiration for his version of Hector's Body Dragged at the Car of Achilles, Iliad 36 (Figure 38). The three-quarter position of the chariot, its rear platform, and the elevated position of Hector's legs do not appear simultaneously in any known ancient work.²⁵ They do appear, however, in both Pietro Testa's 17th Century engraved Achilles Dragging Hector and Gavin Hamilton's painting Achilles Dragging Hector's Body around the Walls of Troy.²⁶ (Figure 53) The latter work was most commonly known through the distribution of a 1766 engraving by Domenico Cunego.

As the Flaxmans lodged in his house while they were in Rome, it seems more than possible that Flaxman was familiar with the compositional details of the work.²⁷ His main task was to reduce it to a form consistent with the rest of the Homer series. He did so by drastically reducing detail, most notably in the background, turning Achilles to drive the chariot (necessitated by the elimination of the driver) and repositioning of the chariot to present more of a side view.

Of much greater interest than particular details is Flaxman's adaptation of elements of the line engraving technique to suit his own purpose. A device frequently encountered in archaeological books illustrated with line engravings is hatching, that is closely spaced parallel lines, such as those in Figure 54 an illustration from Spence's Polymetis of 1747. Here the horizontal hatching provides a background. Flaxman had long used the technique in a similar manner in sketches, including the self portrait (Figure 55) done some 15 years before the Homer designs. But in the Homer illustrations the hatching is used in a much more sophisticated manner. In Iliad 31, Thetis Bringing the Armour to Achilles (Figure 1), for example, the hatching is put to three distinctly different purposes. It represents the structure of the leg of the bed, defines perspective by indicating that the bedding lies farther back in the picture space than Achilles leg and, by extension, that the legs of the mourner standing behind the bed are in fact behind it, and finally as a compositional aid by partially

filling the void under the bed. These techniques to indicate volume, perspective and to accomplish a more successful composition, are repeated with further variations elsewhere. In Iliad 14, The Meeting of Hector and Andromache, a staircase is implied by horizontal hatching which neatly offset the verticality of the nanny's rather columnar dress (Figure 56). In Iliad 6, Jupiter Sending the Evil Dream to Agamemnon (Figure 57) and 38 Iris Advises Priam to obtain the Body of Hector (Figure 58) Flaxman has defined the shape of the heavens with curved hatching and in Iliad II, Otus and Ephialtes Holding Mars Captive (Figure 59) he has, with but a few lines, created seats for Otus and Ephialtes so that they are not left in mid-space. At the same time no distracting background detail is introduced. In Iliad 29, Thetis and Eurynome Receiving the Infant Vulcan (Figure 28) areas are covered with hatching apparently with the purpose of balancing the compositions without any more figures or structures.

NOTES TO THE TEXT

CHAPTER III

- 1 Gerald Bentley, The Early Engravings of Flaxman's Classical Designs (New York, 1964), pp. 17-18. BM Add. MSS 39780 f. 197.
- 2 Irwin, op. cit., p.68.
- 3 Frits Lugts, Les Marques de Collections (the Hague, 1956) entry 2248.
- 4 George Smith, The Dictionary of National Biography (Oxford, 1938), entry for Francis Hare-Naylor.
- 5 Gentlemen's Magazine, (July 1793) p. 623.
- 6 Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, Laokoon and How the Ancients Represented Death (London 1914), p.103.
- 7 Ibid, p.107.
- 8 Ibid, p.104.
- 9 Alexander Pope, The Poetical Works of Alexander Pope (London, 1841) p.204).
- 10 Pope, Ibid, p.364.
- 11 Homer, Iliad, Book 22, l.395.
- 12 Homer, Iliad, Book 23, l.176.
- 13 Oxford Classical Dictionary ed. N.G.L. Hammond and H.H. Scullard (Oxford, 1977), p.5.
- 14 For an expanded analysis of the character of Ulysses and his appearance in art works see W.B. Stanford and J.V.Luce, The Quest for Ulysses (London, 1974).
- 15 Stanford and Luce, Ibid, p.194.
- 16 This is certainly not Pope's appropriate passage as Robert R. Wark, Drawings by John Flaxman in the Huntington Collection (San Marino California, 1970) has pointed out in his note for plate 16.
- 17 British Museum, Add. MSS. 39784, E., f. 21, account-book entry, 1790.

- 18 Gentlemen's Magazine Vol 51 (1781) p. 65 printed with four illustrations.
- 19 Gentlemen's Magazine, (November, 1793), p.981.
- 20 Alexander Pope, 'Postscript to the Odyssey' The Poetical Works of Alexander Pope (London, 1841), p 474
- 21 Reynolds, Discourse III, ll.103-105.
- 22 Reynolds, Discourse III, ll. 296.
- 23 Reynolds, Discourse III, ll.300-301.
- 24 Dora Wiebenson, 'Subjects from Homer's Iliad in Neoclassical Art,' Art Bulletin, Volume 46 (1964) pp 34.
- 25 Wiebenson, *ibid*, p.29.
- 26 Dora Wiebenson, *ibid.*, refers to this work as Achilles Vents his Rage on Hector. David Irwin, 'Gavin Hamilton Archaeologist, Painter, and Dealer' Art Bulletin, Volume (1962) p.94 refers to it by the title used here. Irwin does not mention any possible association with the Testa work.
- 27 Irwin, 1979, *op. cit.*, p.48.

CHAPTER IV

In 1811, after reading some favourable comments by German critics regarding the Dante designs, Flaxman intimated to the theologian Henry Crabb-Robinson that he wished the Germans had something better upon which to exercise their critical talents.¹ This response was probably not simply an expression of Flaxman's modesty but rather a reflection of the disparity between the ultimate purpose he foresaw for his line drawings and the nature of the critical praise. He had undertaken the commissions for illustrations to make enough money to continue with his Fury of Athamas but to his amazement, in addition to the immediate financial reward, his line illustrations brought him critical acclaim, an international reputation as an artist, sculptural commissions, and indirectly in 1810, election as Professor of Sculpture at the Royal Academy in London. Moreover, the illustrations were adopted by established artists and students alike as sources of inspiration well into the Victorian age.

The financial difficulty in which Flaxman found himself was eased with the completion of the Homer designs. How effective they were in supplementing his income may be gauged if the rapidity with which Flaxman drew them is related to the amount of money he earned. Nancy Flaxman wrote to William Hayley on July 22, 1793 and informed him of the completion of the engravings of all the Iliad, Odyssey and Dante designs.² Gerald Bentley has suggested that the dates indicated in the first editions of the Odyssey and Iliad (respectively February 1, 1793 and June 1, 1793) probably record when each set of engravings was com-

pleted.³ By the latter date Flaxman had also finished the 46 drawings for Mr. Udney.⁴ Thus Flaxman had produced no fewer than 174 designs for engraving (28, plus a title page for the Odyssey; 32, plus a titlepage for the Iliad; and 110, plus a titlepage for the Dante) and 46 drawings related to, but apparently not exact copies of, the Homer designs in about 8 months. He must have been undertaking the designs at a rate of about one a day. This estimate is probably conservative. Mrs. Flaxman's letter to Hayley mentions that by then the engraver's work was completed from her husband's designs. Again Cockerell recorded that Flaxman recalled he had been paid 1 guinea each for the Dante series of 111 designs, and 4 Crowns each for the 46 Udney drawings for a total of no less than L227 - 13 - . Considering the Flaxman's financial difficulties that came as a result of The Fury of Athamas and his small investment in labour, time and materials upon them, the Homer designs must have seemed incredibly profitable.

Hare-Naylor also did moderately well. He sold the plates for the Iliad series to Longman for twice as much as the engravings (original drawings) had cost him in Italy. Mr. Hare-Naylor made at least L100 by the books in Italy before his sale of the plates of the Iliad'.⁵ Even though the Hare-Naylors made more money from the Homer designs than Flaxman, they remained good friends. Indicating their continued closeness, Flaxman included portraits of their four sons in his monument to the Reverend Dr. Joseph Warton executed from 1800 to 1804.⁶

Years later when Mrs. Hare-Naylor wrote a novel, the title of which was Theodosius or the Enthusiast, she asked Flaxman to design a series of illustrations for it.⁷

Tomaso (Thomas) Piroli the third of those directly involved in the completion of the Homer commission also did well. Gerald Bentley has suggested that in addition to the income derived directly from the Hare-Naylor plates some of the editions came from unauthorized plates ultimately traceable to Piroli's shop.⁸

Several months after the Homer and Dante commissions had been completed Flaxman wrote to Hayley that the purpose of the engravings was to show 'how any story may be represented in a series of compositions on principles of the ancients, of which as soon as I return to England I intend to give specimens in sculpture of different kinds, in groups of bas-reliefs, suited to all purposes of sacred and civil architecture.'⁹ Flaxman's immediate aim was to fulfil Hare-Naylor's commission by representing the Iliad and Odyssey in a series of compositions. But, in his own mind, the designs were to perform at least two subsequent functions. First, they were, in essence, to serve as working drawings for a sculptor (Flaxman himself as it happened) to translate into another artistic medium. They were thus akin to Flaxman's designs for Wedgwood. Second, the resultant bas-reliefs were to establish Flaxman as an artist amongst people who would purchase sculpted versions of the

images for their houses or institutional buildings in which they had the choice of decorative elements.

In striking contrast to Flaxman's emphasis on the design's future usefulness, was their critical reception. Where Robert Adam hoped his Ruins of Spalatro would promise 'an Age of Perfection',¹⁰ J.C. Fiorillo thought Flaxman's illustrations ushered in that age. He wrote 'a shining star has risen in England's artistic heaven. May his (Flaxman's) arrival announce the dawn of a marvellous period of art.'¹¹ When the architect Robert Smirke saw Flaxman's classical designs he too immediately made an association between the line engravings and the line drawings of ancient Greek art. Although he thought Flaxman's works had a 'forced simplicity', this characteristic, he suggested, was 'very proper to the designs when treated after the manner of antique designs.'¹² Goethe made analogous observations in his 1799 article which dealt largely with Flaxman's Dante drawings. He described Flaxman's economy of means in the Dante drawings as 'naivety' and commented on his 'gift of adopting the innocence of the older Italian School.'¹³ Flaxman's friend George Romney was delighted to report that the Homer engravings were 'outlines without shadow, but in the style of ancient art. They are simple, grand, and pure... They look as if they had been made in the age, when Homer wrote.'¹⁴

The validity of Flaxman's place in discussions of ancient art was questioned on the basis of the quality of the engraved

line by George Cumberland in his Thoughts on outline sculpture, and the system that guided the ancient artists in composing their figures and groups in 1796. He mentioned 'the very tasteful Homer and Aeschylus by Mr. Flaxman' and the then recently published Sir William Hamilton's Collection of Engravings ... of his second collection but criticized the engravings in the latter because they had 'outlines thick and thin alternately' and not the uniformly thick lines he had correctly observed on ancient vases. The last Hamilton volume, he wrote, '... seems to have given the death's blow to all hope of ever seeing a faithful tracing of any outline design on copperplate'. Cumberland upheld the view that to be truly in the ancient style line width should not vary. In his (Cumberland's) opinion, Flaxman had missed this most important characteristic of ancient drawing.¹⁵

Paradoxically, the Homer illustrations were also criticized for too closely resembling ancient art. The diarist Joseph Farington wrote in December 1795 that the designs were 'strictly formed on the Greek model... each circumstance being copied from some authority.'¹⁶ In January 1797 he recorded that the English painter John Hoppner believed that the designs 'were all borrowed and purloined from a variety of things which he (Flaxman) has seen. He (Flaxman) has nothing original about him'.¹⁷ Indeed the rather obvious correspondence of Flaxman's Ulysses following the Car of Nausecaa Odyssey 11 and one from Hamilton's Collection of Engravings has already been noted.

When comparing Flaxman's outlines and A.J. Carsten's line illustrations to Les Argonautes (1799) Carsten's engraver Koch wrote that as this work was more 'painterly' than Flaxman's it would be preferred by connoisseurs (Figure 60).¹⁸ Goethe more correctly suggested that Flaxman's classically inspired designs had made Flaxman 'the idol of all the dilettante.'¹⁹ Having been nominated their idol Flaxman might have expected the dilettante to make him their most sought after illustrator. Instead commissions arising as a direct of the engraved designs seem to have been few. Prompted by the generally enthusiastic early acceptance of the Homer and Dante designs he published, in 1795, Compositions from the Tragedies of Aeschylus with Tomaso Piroli engraving the 30 plates. The simple line Flaxman used for classically inspired compositions was associated with him to the extent that in at least one instance he lost a commission. In 1804 it was suggested that he illustrate Sir Walter Scott's Lay of the Lost Minstrel. Scott declined to engage Flaxman, reasoning that he was 'too classical to stoop to body forth my Gothic borderers' who might resemble 'the antique of Homer's heroes rather than the iron race of Savior'.²⁰ Had it been offered Flaxman may have declined such a commission. In 1807 Hayley was only able to persuade Flaxman to illustrate his edition of Milton's Latin poems because he was a close personal friend. Flaxman protested that: 'I have already stated my objections to make designs for the decoration of printed books - that I never have made any for such purposes;

that it is a branch of art in which I am not likely to succeed for want of practice, and the productions in which will be regarded with a jealous eye by those to whom that department belongs'.²¹ Flaxman clearly had little interest in a career as a book illustrator. When he published his series of Compositions from the Works and Days and Theogony of Hesiod in 1817 the choices of subjects and the small income from their sale were his.

Rather than pursuing commissions for illustration upon the Flaxmans' return to England in 1794, he reestablished his practice as a sculptor hoping for greater personal recognition than his individual efforts had received seven years before. His ambition was to capitalize on his designs by translating them into stone. Their suitability suggested to Lord Bristol that reliefs based on the Homer designs would be appropriate for decorating the Rotunda of Ickworth House, which was to house the Fury of Athamas. Ironically, however, the actual production of the reliefs was not accomplished by Flaxman but by the Carabelli brothers in 1800 and 1803. Similarly, when, in 1809, Flaxman designed anew a frieze on the subjects of Ancient and Modern Drama for Covent Garden Theatre the actual production of the reliefs was accomplished by John Charles Rossi, protégé of its architect Robert Smirke. As he worked, Rossi is reported to have spoken 'of the little power Flaxman has in working upon marble of stone. His power is confined to designing and modelling'.²² This view was somewhat restrictive.

Long before 1809 Flaxman had proven himself more than just a designer and modeller. His major work the monument for the tomb of William, first Earl of Mansfield (Figure 21) had been installed in Westminster Abbey in 1801. The Fury of Athamas upon which he had pinned his hopes for recognition was virtually unknown. It had been captured by French troops and following its eventual installation in Lord Bristol's country house (after his death, as it happened) remained out of the view of the general public. Moreover, it was never engraved. Typically, however, his first projects after his return to London had been more modest than either of these. The monument to Mrs. Mary Blackshaw (Mary Lushington) (Figure 61) for example was begun in 1798 and completed the following year. It is not a direct translation of a Homer design into stone and yet, when considered in their context, various of the elements are familiar: the frame surrounding the figures is formed with a wide moulding comprised of concentric arcs reminiscent of the arcing parallel line hatching Flaxman used to represent the heavens in Iliad 6, Jupiter Sending the Evil Dream to Agamemnon (Figure 57);, the grieving figure positioned over the lid of a sarcophagus recalls Achilles in a semiprone position over the dead Patroclus in Iliad 31, Thetis Bringing the Armour to Achilles (Figure 1); the figures are disposed in a manner that creates a composition resembling Odyssey 7, Penelope's Dream (Figure 62); and the winged angel is analogous to the Minerva figure with draperies aflutter to indicate flight. For this new composition, rendered

as a bas relief, Flaxman was not required to study live models, contemporary or ancient works or engravings from them. His own classically inspired designs provided the components.

Once published as engravings, the designs were no longer Flaxman's private quarry for figural motifs. They fell rather into the category of pattern books, akin to Hamilton's Collection of Vases ... or the engraved sources Wedgwood kept for the inspiration of his artists.²³ The suitability of Flaxman's designs for adaptation into new works was recognized by artists of all ages. The young German painter Philip Otto Runge even suggested that now that he had Flaxman's illustrations he need no longer refer to copies of Etruscan vases for inspiration.²⁴ Flaxman's Leucothea Preserving Ulysses, Odyssey 9 (Figure 63) has been suggested as a possible source for the central figure in Runge's Morning (Figure 64).²⁵ With the perspective of an established artist Jacques Louis David was reported to have said somewhat prophetically of the then newly published Aeschylus and Homer designs, "Cet ouvrage fera faire des tableaux."²⁶

David himself proved his own foresight. In a sketchbook (now in the Musée des Beaux-Arts in Lille) filled in the 1790's he worked out compositional details for his Les Sabines.²⁷ For this work (Figure 65) he drew figures of a warrior (Figure 66) which are variations of the central character (Achilles) in Flaxman's design from Iliad 33, Achilles Contending with the Rivers (Figure 30). Similarly, the composition for Les Sabines was drawn from the Fight for the Body of Patroclus Iliad 26

(Figure 67). David elaborated the image by adding many individual combatants to the soon to clash armies and by providing an architectural background. David's Les Sabines, based upon components taken from the Homer engravings, apparently intrigued the sculptor as the finished scheme was to reappear in a subsequent Flaxman design.

In 1810 Flaxman began work on the design of a Shield of Achilles to be drawn from the description given by Homer in Book XVIII of the Iliad.²⁷ Design alone took eight years, in part at least, because of the care Flaxman took in relating visual image to text. Included was a rather two dimensional version of David's battle scene drawn first on a straight ground line (Figure 68) and then fitted to the circular format of the shield (Figure 69). For twenty-four drawings of details and five models including the final one the firm of Rundell, Bridge and Rundell, goldsmiths to royalty, paid Flaxman 600 guineas.²⁸ The silver-gilt original was purchased by King George IV (in celebration of his succession to the throne in 1820) and silver versions by the Duke of York (now in the Huntington Art Gallery in San Marino), the Duke of Northumberland and the Earl of Lonsdale. Each shield contained over 600 ounces of silver and represented many hours of work of Rundell silver smiths. There are also plaster and bronze versions. In his biography Cunningham records that Flaxman was 'justly proud' of this 'magnificent' piece which was 'considered by many as one of the artist's most successful works.'²⁹

To return to the theme of the influence of Flaxman's engravings on French artists, Sarah Symmons contends that, "It was in France that his work provoked the most fruitful imitation and research throughout the nineteenth century. From David to Degas Flaxman's outlines retained their importance and the artist himself was always an object of admiration."³⁰ One such was François Rude who was commissioned, during his exile after Waterloo, to the decorate the exterior of the Château de Tervueren in Brussels.³¹ As a sculptor himself he realized the potential of Flaxman's line engravings for translation into bas reliefs. His Achilles déplore l'enterrement de Briseis (Figure 70) was derived from the Departure of Briseis from the Tent of Achilles (Figure 35)(Iliad 3). A preparatory sketch for the relief clearly shows that while inspired by Flaxman's work Rude did not trace his figures but rather chose to create anew adopting similar poses and gestures and significantly a visual means akin to Flaxman's line (Figure 71). In addition, by rearranging the figures and drawing closer them together, Rude was able to eliminate the apparent division of the left and right sides of the original in which Flaxman had less successfully united the sides by adding horizontal hatching. If the relief was Rude's, the figures and visual means Rude used to establish his conception were Flaxman's.

The second artist, Antoine Gros, concentrated not on altering Flaxman's compositions to fit his own purpose but rather on individual figures.³² In his sketchbooks Gros followed

a procedure similar to that of Flaxman by assembling on a single sheet individual figures from a variety of sources. However, instead of adopting the work of a variety of other artists Gros drew figures with some particular quality from a number of the Homer designs. Figure 72 for example displays five figures traced from Flaxman's Odyssey series. All five are standing, draped figures with heads bowed forward. Similarly in figure 73. Gros has accumulated three gesturing figures with fluttering drapery. The contrast between these studies of types and Gros's standard means of pictorial representation is dramatically demonstrated in Figure 74 where one of a series of seated figures is rendered on a page below a remarkably vigorous shaded study of a horse. These line drawings would seem to have been traced with great care in an effort to fix impressions of particular types of figures in Gros' mind without his resorting to time consuming studies of live models or other artists works.

The third French artist associated with Flaxman's work was, of course, Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres.³³ His personal library as preserved in the Musée Ingres in Montauban contains six of the published works of Flaxman including the illustrations to the Iliad, Odyssey, and Divine Comedy. From these Ingres drew inspiration. Soon after the turn of the eighteenth century he had been considering a new work Jupiter and Thetis. The concept he settled upon and developed into the final work (Figure 75) appeared soon after 1805 as did coincidentally a new edition of the Homer engravings published in London by

Longman. To supplement the original 34, five new designs by Flaxman had been added including Thetis Entreating Jupiter to Honor Achilles (Iliad 5) (Figure 76). Symmons has inferred from the resemblance of Flaxman's and Ingres' suppliant Thetis figures, with sinuous necks and heads tilted back, that Ingres probably acquired one of these new Longman Odyssey's and drew his Thetis from it. To complete the composition Ingres contrasted this soft, contoured Thetis figure with a more muscular, angular, and dominating male figure analogous to Jupiter in The Council of the Gods, Iliad 9 (Figure 77).

Ingres' own hard edge style may also have derived from his appreciation of Flaxman's illustrations.³⁴ In his methodical production of a new painting Ingres frequently made notes about his attitudes toward it. Of Thetis' appearance he wrote: 'La beauté s' associe à la jeunesse...La gorge des déesses³⁵... ..la nature de dessin pour blanc'³⁶ and directly to the point 'La beauté dans les ouvrages de l'art est la première chose [,] elle doit dominer sur tout[;] la couleur blanche est adoptée comme la plus belle pour les anciens[.]'³⁷ The very whiteness upon which Ingres fixed his attention and which he believed most appropriate for the subject is perhaps the most conspicuous quality of Flaxman's engraved designs. The English artist defined his figures on the white field of the picture with thin black lines. Ingres rendered his figures by painting them in light, consistent tones on a contrasting ground apparently so his paintings would give a comparable impression of precision.

The relative merits of the two artists were considered in L'Artiste in 1833. Flaxman's Dante, Homer, and Aeschylus were said to possess: "...une grande pureté; une grande finesse, une tres grande soin. Nul dessin plus que celui de Flaxman n ' exige absolument toutes ces qualités; la sévérité des lignes, la simplicité des contours font le grand caractère de ses compositions; la moindre alteration de ces graves et purs profils en ferait de ridicules silhouettes d' ombres chinois."³⁸ Having placed the constraint upon the use of Flaxman's designs - that if they are subjected to the least alteration they become ridiculous silhouettes - little wonder that when Flaxman's use of line and Ingres' use of colour are compared Flaxman was upheld as having the better instincts. The writer noted : "Ingres, dont le génie n'est pas sans de nombreux rapports avec le sien, a compris aussi de même qu'il n' avait rien à démêler avec la couleur; mais il n' a pas eu le bon instinct, comme Flaxman, de renoncer à la peinture et de s' en tenir au dessin, au bas - relief, à la statuaire."³⁹ As much as praising Flaxman, the author implies that the sculptor's method of designing with line was best applied to bas relief or statutory. Ingres, the painter, was to show his agreement many years later.

In the year Flaxman died, 1826, Ingres received a commission for his first version of L'Apothéose d'Homère. At this time he must have been somewhat ambivalent in his feelings about the sculptor's importance. Although it was considered for inclusion, Flaxman's portrait does not appear in this work. Only after

many years reflection on his own work did Ingres include Flaxman in a second work on the same theme Homère Déifié. This semi-autobiographical work was completed only two years before the painter's death in 1867. In it were portraits of those people Ingres judged to have contributed to the continued popularity of Homer and thus to the credibility of his subject. The personages included Longinus, 1st Century A.D. author of On the Sublime a work which threw real light on what constituted literary greatness, M^{me} Dacier translator of Homer into French, and Flaxman the artist whose designs had provided readers with images to complement the Homeric texts. The only visual works Ingres presented as recognizable specific sources in Homère Déifié are Flaxman's classical outlines adapted to form the frieze of the building in the background (Figure 78).

As a result of the recognition he received when he returned home to England, Flaxman found himself in a position to be of direct influence over more, particularly young, artists than he was on the continent, where he was known almost exclusively through the distribution of his engraved designs. In 1797 he was elected associate of the Royal Academy and three years later a full Royal Academician. He was invited to give evidence to a House of Commons Committee considering the purchase of the Elgin marbles.⁴⁰ In 1810 John Flaxman R.A. became the Academy's first Professor of Sculpture,⁴¹ which required him to present six lectures a year.

John Flaxman's Lectures on Sculpture ... As delivered
before the President and Members of the Royal Academy,⁴² published
in 1829 give his perspectives on art, the acquisition of artistic
skills and the construction of new works. "We must avail
ourselves of the studies and practice of the most celebrated
artists,"⁴³ he wrote. His own studies of the ancient works
with which his contemporaries had associated with his own
outline illustrations had led him to believe that the crudeness
of ancient sculpture or barbaric sculpture was attributable to
a lack of scientific knowledge in the form of anatomy, geometry,
mathematics, proportion etc.⁴⁴ The deficiencies of these
earliest works were resolved through the application of the two
sciences arithmetic and geometry: 'by arithmetic, the proportions
of the human figure and other animals are reckoned, and the
quantities of bodies, superficies, or light and shade ascertained;
geometry gives lines and diagrams for the motions, outline, and
drapery of the figure, regulated by the harmony of agreeable
proportions, or the opposition of contrast'.⁴⁵ For individual
figures he recalled a dialogue of Socrates where he notes that
the philosopher and Parrhasius agree that 'the good and evil
qualities of the soul may be represented in the figure of man
by painting'.⁴⁶ Subsequently he expressed the principle in his
own words: 'Expression distinguishes the species of action in
the whole and in all the parts; in the faces, figures, limbs
(sic), and extremities'.⁴⁷ When assembling into a new composition
figures created with every feature contributing to an expression

of the character's soul the artist should again be mindful of ancient art: 'The characteristics of Grecian composition, in the best ages, are simplicity and distinctness ... Where the story does not require much action, it is told by gentle movements, and the figures, whether grouped or single, have a sufficient portion of plain back-ground left about them to show the general lines with the forms of the limbs and draperies perfectly intelligible.'⁴⁸

For the production of a new work the instant depicting 'every action is more perfect as it comprehends an indication of the past, with a certainty of the end, in the moment chosen'.⁴⁹ Of particular relevance to his intended purpose for the Homer designs is a comment on basso relievo. He wrote, 'The species of sculpture is not intended to be seen in many views like the entire group; but it has this advantage, that more groups than one may be on the same back-ground, and sometimes a succession of events in the same story; a greater force is given to harmony, or contrast of lines by the number of groups and figures as well as the projection of their shadows.'⁵⁰ The critical acclaim Flaxman accrued from the illustrations was not maintained in England, being replaced during his lifetime by a reputation as a sculptor. To follow Gerald Bentley's figures only 656 copies of the Longman Homer illustrations were sold between 1805 and 1828.⁵¹ By the latter part of the 19th Century all Flaxman's works were reviewed almost apologetically. For example, E.S. Roscoe wrote, '[Flaxman's] works appeal to the

cultured minds of a very small number ...'⁵² At the turn of the 20th century Flaxman's visual means of illustration had been reduced to the form suitable for cartoons such as the one by Phil May represented by Figure 79. When compared with Flaxman's designs of a century before the line engraving, heavy draperies, parallel hatching, minimal background presence of physical types rather than individuals are familiar but Flaxman's serious intent has been replaced by social satire.

NOTES TO THE TEXT

CHAPTER IV

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4. Ibid. p. 18 footnote 8 notes that Flaxman recorded "Sent by Hawkins McKinnon & Com: to Mr. Udney 46 drawings from the Iliad & Odyssey at 4 Crowns each ---- 184 --" in his Account book for 1792-1794 (British Museum, Add. Mss 39784 F, f. 32)
5. Charles Robert Cockerell, Diaries. Manuscript in R.I.B.A. Drawings Collection. 27 November 1824.
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8. Bentley, op. cit., pp. 13-14, 31.
9. Flaxman to Hayley Rome 26 October 1793. MSS. Fitzwilliam Museum, Flaxman letter-box no.4.
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12. Farington, Diary, unpublished entry, 19 December 1795. In Irwin, op. cit., 84.
13. Goethe, op. cit., p.245.
14. William Hayley, The Life of George Romney, (London, 1809), p.203.
15. Irwin, op. cit., p.84.
16. Farington, Diary, unpublished entry, 19 December 1795. In Irwin, op. cit., 84.

17. Farington, Diary, edit. Greig, I, p.184, 12 January 1797. In Irwin, op. cit., 84.
18. Koch letter, dated Rome 16 January 1799, in Otto R. von Lutteroitti, J.A. Koch (Berlin, 1940), p.142.
19. Goethe, op. cit., p.245.
20. Sir Walter Scott, Letters, edit H.J.C. Grierson (London, 1932-1936), I, pp.226-227.
21. Letter Flaxman to Hayley, London, 6 November 1807. British Library, Add. MSS. 39780, f.98.
22. Farington, Diary unpublished entry 19 July 1809 in Irwin, op. cit., p.172.
23. David Irwin, Neoclassical Design: Industry plunders Antiquity, Apollo, XCVI, 1972, pp.289ff.
24. Phillip Otto Runge: Hinterlassen Schriften, Hamburg (1840), Vol. II p. 31. Runge to his brother Daniel, 23 August 1800.
25. Bindman, op. cit., p.177.
26. Quoted Jeanne Doin 'John Flaxman (I)', Gazette de Beaux-Arts, V [1911], 4^{me} periode, p.233.
27. Brian Ivon-Jones, 'The Achilles Silver-gilt Shield', Apollo ns 97 [April 1973] p.447.
28. British Museum, Add. MSS. 39783 a volume containing correspondence of Maria Denman f281 in Robert R. Work British Silver in the Huntington Collection (San Marino California, 1978) number 58.
29. Allan Cunningham Lives of the Most eminent British Painters Sculptors and Architects 2nd edition, 6 vols. London 1830-3 in Irwin, op. cit., p.196.
30. Sarah Symmons, 'French copies after Flaxman's Outlines' Burlington Magazine, 115 [Sept 1973] pp.591-599. This passage p.596.
31. Now destroyed. Ibid., p.595.
32. Ibid., p.596.
33. Sarah Symmons, 'J.A.D. Ingres: The apotheosis of Flaxman' Burlington Magazine vol 121 [November 1979] pp.721-725.
34. Ibid., p.722.

35. Quoted by Daniel Ternois, Ingres, (Petit Palais, Paris [1967-1968]), p.76, No. 51 in Symmons, *ibid.*, p.722.
36. Montaubon, Musée Ingres, Inv. No. 8671786. in Symmons, *ibid.*, p.722.
37. Montaubon, Musée Ingres, Inv. No. 8671793. in Symmons, *ibid.*, p.722.
38. L'Oeuvre Complet de John Flaxman, ' L'Artiste, Tome V. 21^e livraison [1833], p.260.
39. *Ibid.* p.260.
40. Published as: Report from the Select Committee of the House of Commons on the Earl of Elgin's Collection etc [London, 1816]. Flaxman's evidence pp.70-80.
41. Sidney C. Hutchison, The History of the Royal Academy 1768-1968 [London 1968], p.233.
42. John Flaxman, Lecture on Sculpture ... As delivered before the President and Members of the Royal Academy. With a brief memoir of the author. London, 1829. Later published as John Flaxman, Lectures on Sculpture ... Second edition. To which are now first added, an introductory lecture and two addresses to the Royal Academy on the death of T. Banks, in 1805, and A. Canova, in 1822, with and Address on the death of Flaxman by Sir R. Westmacott. London, 1838. New edition London, G. Bell and sons, 1881.
43. *Ibid.*, (1881), p.215.
44. *Ibid.*, (1881), p.101ff.
45. *Ibid.*, (1881), p.160.
46. *Ibid.*, (1881), p.133.
47. *Ibid.*, (1881), p.151.
48. *Ibid.*, (1881), p.157.
49. *Ibid.*, (1881), p.151.
50. *Ibid.*, (1881), p.153.
51. Gerald Bentley *op.cit.*, p24.
52. E.S. Roscoe, 'The Career and Works of Flaxman' Magazine of Art V4 [1881], p.368.

53. A plaque on the house where Philip William May was born reads: "A great black and white artist ... A fellow of infinite jest". His style ranged from line to heavily shaded figures. See David Cuppleditch, Phil May, The Artist and His Wit (London, 1981), p.125.

CHAPTER V

Having examined the intellectual context, history and influence of the Homer designs, it is necessary to appraise Flaxman's achievement in producing a series of images that to this day retain their captivating freshness and vigour. Lucidly conceived and uncluttered by superfluous detail, the engravings not only illuminate Homer and his stories, but also explore the nature of man. Indeed, they seem to be documents recording a society with an objective, scientific precision that is far removed from the ancient decorative art by which they were partly inspired. Instead the line engravings form a compendium of the Homeric epics and, in the spirit of intellectual enquiry that characterized 18th Century thought, seemingly present the essence of humanity without the distraction of its material substance.

John Flaxman's 1792 Homer designs embodied his experience accumulated during his first 15 years in his fathers' cast and model shop, four years at the Royal Academy, 12 years as a designer for Josiah Wedgwood (a leader in the development of industrial methods of mass production), and five years study in Italy. Despite the prominence of commercial constrictions criticism of the engravings has centred on their relationship with the work of ancient and contemporary artists. That interpretation, however, overlooks his more prosaic and practical approach. While in Wedgwood's employ, Flaxman had developed his linear style as both a means of creative expression, and of technical communication to the industrialist and his potters,

paralleling the well-established use of drawing/engraving in the 18th Century as the medium for transmitting essential ideas. It is in this context that Flaxman's Homer illustrations essentially belong, having been completed rapidly by an accomplished industrial designer and intended for translation into other artistic media.

Flaxman's goal, as he indicated to Hayley, was to 'show how any story may be represented in a series of compositions on principles of the ancients.'¹ The expression 'on principles of the ancients' did not preclude the inclusion of anything that could be adapted to present an appearance appropriate for the Homeric epics. His adaptations and innovations were many: alterations of the focus and detail of the stories, inclusion of compositional schemes unknown to Homer's time; novel devices in high art such as the horizontal hatching (more usually employed in 18th Century books of engravings of ancient art); taking of 'short cuts' such as the exclusion of heavily decorated draperies (even though ancient vases often show it); and, last but not least, selection of the engraving process, a mass production method, itself unknown in Homer's time. Clearly, to Flaxman, "on principles of the ancients" did not mean detailed reproduction of ancient compositions. He was neither simply adopting ancient or early Italian art as models nor attempting to create a series of images contrived to be indistinguishable from ancient work. Runge, commenting in a letter of 1800, observed, 'My God, I have never seen this kind of thing before

in my life; the drawings on Etruscan vases completely pale by comparison'.² Indeed, the Homer illustrations were quite unlike the Etruscan designs, in no small part because Flaxman had employed the methods and principles utilized by his own contemporaries for the clear expression of essential ideas.

By comparison, in the sculptural side of his practice Flaxman clearly distinguished the different purposes to which shaded pictorial representations and line diagrams should be put. The conceptual scheme for a monument to the poet William Collins in Figure 22 contains a study in pen and ink and wash of the figures to be represented in a bas relief, and a line drawing in pen and ink without shadow. At the top is a picture, 'a graphic description...capable of suggesting a mental image'³ of the finished result. At the bottom is a diagram, 'an illustrative figure giving an outline or general scheme of an object and its various parts.'⁴ The distinction is instructive. As the notes on the sheet describe, the top, with its enlivening detail, and shading was included to give his patrons a good idea of what the finished relief would look like and what each figure would represent. By contrast, the lower drawing, done in Flaxman's own linear shorthand, shows only the relative positions of the various parts of the work. Unlike the rendering at the top of the sheet the bottom sketch is only suggestive, leaving the provision of detail to the imagination of the viewer.

In a similar fashion, Flaxman's Homer designs do not convey sufficient information for the viewers of them to create

a mental image of characters he represents. Whereas Reynolds, for example, portrayed people who had actually been seated before him, neither Flaxman nor anyone else of his time had ever seen the people or gods described by Homer. The portrayal of Homer's characters thus necessitated the use of details not from the texts but rather from the artist's experience. Yet, Flaxman did not provide detail. His depictions were only suggestive, the final interpretation being left to the imagination of the viewer.

By extension, it would be impossible for any viewer to reconstruct Homer's stories by studying Flaxman's visual images. Strictly speaking Flaxman failed in his attempt to 'show how any story (in particular the Iliad and Odyssey) may be represented in a series of compositions...'⁵ And yet, as Reynolds noted, Homer was part of 'the usual course of reading.' For those already familiar with the stories, literate people, Flaxman's engraved designs could become a pleasant diversion as a kind of secular Book of Hours. The images display, as the captions indicate, Achilles' fury, Penelope confronting the suitors, Argus' death or the King of the Lestrigenes killing a man, and the informed viewer is stimulated to recall the textual context.

To a 20th century viewer, the depiction of events that occurred twenty-five hundred years ago might seem to be pure escapism, akin to taking a stroll through a great English Neo-Classical garden such as Stourhead with its classically inspired topography and architecture (Figure 4). But escapism,

a 20th Century word, is frequently associated with activities that seem frivolous or unreal. Its application here would not reflect a late 18th Century point of view. For 18th Century observers, Homer was being studied as a model for contemporary society. Robert Wood had written of Homer that 'whatever his plan of instruction, either moral or political, might have been (for to deny that he had any would be highly unreasonable), his choice of characters for the purpose never carried him beyond Nature, and his own experience of life.'⁶ Homer demonstrated a moral position by including such characters as the ever faithful Penelope. He even opened the story of the Iliad by recounting how a plague had befallen the Greeks because their king, Agamemnon, had refused to give up the priest Chryses' daughter for ransom and thus offended the plague causing god Apollo. When considering the Iliad and Odyssey as political models, a reader cannot but notice that throughout both tales of war, violence and upheaval the structure of Homeric society remained secure. Gods always ranked before kings, kings before heroes and heroes before ordinary men. Ulysses, the greatest Homeric hero, the exemplar for all men, prevails by overcoming the upstart suitors and restoring the old order. It is of interest that in Flaxman's illustrations Gods are typically depicted physically above kings who are, in turn, above heroes who are, in turn, shown above common men. In Homeric society human relationships are simple and direct and its hierarchies are maintained and frequently demonstrated. Flaxman's designs

reflect these particularities of Homeric society. Had he lived longer Wood might have regarded the engraved books of Flaxman's designs as visual representations of Homer's moral and political instructions.

The evidence for Flaxman having intentionally included a political statement in the Homer designs can only be regarded as circumstantial. It has been observed that he showed little interest in politics in the 1790's⁷ but it would be incorrect to assume that he was politically unaware. In his own inventory of personal items taken to Rome he noted that "amongst the Books are none either Religous (sic) or Political".⁸ These exclusions may simply represent the prudent removal of material which might have been considered controversial in the foreign lands he was about to visit. However, by 1794, as the Flaxmans prepared to leave Rome, holding certain political positions could be dangerous. France was in the midst of a revolutionary war that was actually accomplishing what the Trojan war had failed to attain, namely, the overthrow of the very structure of society. The Flaxmans thus chose to avoid even the possibility of accidentally straying into the main areas of conflict by leaving Italy via Venice and travelling north through Innsbruck, Augsburg and Kassel.⁹ Flaxman was only to travel again in France, briefly. In 1802 he visited Paris to see the works of art Napoleon had looted from conquered countries. During that visit he had the opportunity to meet David, but Flaxman refused

feeling that, as a result of his part in the Revolution, the Frenchman's hands had been "dyed beyond purification."¹⁰

By the time Flaxman had finished the Homer designs, his objectives for them were much more mundane than as instruments of political instruction. In late 1793 he intimated in a letter to his close friend Hayley that he intended to exploit the designs in the form of "sculpture of different kinds".¹¹ This suggests that, as he worked on them, Flaxman came to conceive of the Homer designs as working drawings to be used not only by an engraver to translate into his chosen medium but by Flaxman himself to translate into a variety of sculptural forms. Some of the designs were indeed rendered in other media but typically by other artists. It would appear that Flaxman had not anticipated that once published as line engravings the illustrations could be as useful a source of inspiration by other artists as he had hoped they would be for him.

It is paradoxical that the actual works that so attracted these other artists were executed not by Flaxman but by a series of engravers. In the 1805 Longman edition¹² four engravers are represented: Tomaso Piroli, the engraver of the first editions, James Neagle, James Parker and William Blake who engraved the Flaxman compositions newly created for the 1805 edition. The engraver of each image is identified at the lower right hand corner of the plate. The Blake engravings offer much greater variation in line width, extending from the use of dotted lines for some details of musculature (Iliad 2, Figure

37) to heavy ragged lines for horizontal hatching. He has also represented shadow using not horizontal hatching but a line whose width is several times that of the narrowest. Neagle and Parker together completely re-engraved the Odyssey for the 1805 Longman edition and Parker engraved three of the new designs for the Iliad. Both men used variations in line width comparable to Blake's Iliad additions. Although the effect achieved by Blake and to a lesser extent by Neagle and Parker is perhaps more subtle, even pretty, it was not as archeologically correct as Piroli's. The lines of engraving from Piroli's studio maintained a more constant width. He and his associates were either more conservative or perhaps more conscious of the potential place of the Flaxman Homer designs in a library of contemporary archaeological texts.

Line drawing was, indeed, intimately associated with the ancients but it was also the visual language of choice in the 18th Century for the transmission of essential ideas, for instruction in a wide variety of fields including art, technical and scientific disciplines. This had been noted by Hogarth in his Analysis of Beauty particularly with reference to the use of line to diagram mathematical problems.¹³ Flaxman himself saw line in a similar context when he wrote 'geometry gives lines and diagrams for the motion, outline and drapery of the figure ...'¹⁴ Once mass produced as engravings, the form in which they were most widely known and influential, Flaxman's outlines were at once removed in kind from one-off artistic

works or diagrams. Those 2 latter required personal study, but, by virtue of their distribution as engravings, the Homer designs could become instruments of inspiration and instruction of established artists and students alike without the necessity of examining the original drawings. The use of the Homer designs as a means of acquiring artistic skills placed them in the category of books of instruction. Their association with ancient work quickly established their credibility and once an artist such as David demonstrated their suitability in the production of new works they also became an essential addition to the studios of his students.

During the period between the late 1790's when David created Les Sabines and 1865, when Ingres as a mature painter used Flaxman's designs as sources of imagery for his Homère Déifié, there had been a significant change in the way line engravings were viewed. Even though Les Sabines was based upon his own work Flaxman apparently found its composition and detail sufficiently fresh and vigorous to use them as the basis of his own design for the Shield of Achilles of 1810 to 1818. Some 50 years later when Ingres used the Homer designs to form the background of his Homère Déifié they had become a part of the folk imagery, created in an age beyond the memory of working artists, and now forming not a basis for new work but rather providing images suitable for the background. By using them, Ingres symbolically established the credibility of his subject

and of himself, an artists whose training was based in the neo-classical tradition.

When artists such as David, Ingres, Rude and Gros began to use the Homer designs to create new works, the images were fulfilling a particular aspect of an objective often expressed throughout Flaxman;s lifetime: that effort should be directed toward the cultivation of society. The engravings did, as Wedgwood hoped for his own work, diffuse "a good taste through the arts" by the "power of multiplying copies of fine things".¹⁵ After Flaxman's death, the English painter G.F. Watts (1817-1904) was to suggest that the walls of schools be adorned with the outlines for the betterment of young students.¹⁶

In 1927 William George Constable ended his biography of Flaxman with the wish that artists and manufacturers might be brought as close together as they had been when Flaxman worked for Wedgwood.¹⁷ The same might be said of the Homer designs. In his own lectures before the Royal Academy Flaxman was to note some years after the completion of the Homer designs that in ancient Greece painting and sculpture had been 'studied by the noblest and best educated persons; they were improved by the accumulation of science; they were employed to excite and celebrate virtue and excellence; and, finally, to exalt the mind of the beholder to the contemplation of divine qualities and attributes.'¹⁸ In Flaxman's mind, works of art in major forms were to elevate the taste of the 'noblest and best educated persons'. The Iliad and Odyssey were, of course, being studied

in Flaxman's time for virtually the same reasons. Thus, to best effect an amelioration of taste, the episodes from Homer's epics, then acknowledged the greatest literary works of the ancient world, should have been depicted in paintings or sculptures, the highest forms of visual art of the ancient and contemporary world. The form used, simple line, was however, fundamentally unlike these visual forms. In the context of ancient art simple line was most closely associated with the craft traditions of Greek red and black figure pottery. Pieces of this pottery were intended for everyday domestic use rather than for profound contemplation or intellectual improvement. Flaxman himself had become intimately familiar with the line form during the years he submitted designs to Wedgwood (Figure 6). These drawings were never intended for profound contemplation but rather for the shop use of Wedgwood's potters. In his Homer designs Flaxman combined a representational form of ancient craft and contemporary industrial traditions and unwittingly furthered the cultural objectives of high arts.

This idea of uniting the traditions of craft and the objectives of high art that Flaxman exhibited in the Homer designs was to reappear as a guiding principle in the 19th and 20th Centuries. A pamphlet published in 1919 entitled Program of the State Bauhaus in Weimar sets out the objectives of the Bauhaus School. It reads in part: "Art comes into being above all methods; it cannot be taught as such, although the craft can. Architects, painters, sculptors are craftsmen in the

original sense of the word; consequently all students are expected to acquire a thorough training in the workshops and on the practice and work sites, since this is the indispensable basis of all creative activity".¹⁹ The worksites cited were those envisioned by the new director of the school, Walter Gropius. He had formulated the curriculum to stress the search for solutions to contemporary problems in such areas as housing, urban planning, and high-quality, utilitarian mass-production. Significantly, the solutions were to unite the fundamentals of craft tradition with a socio-cultural objective, in particular an amelioration of living conditions in post World War I Germany.

Although not planned beforehand, Flaxman's path to the artistic competence that he displayed in the Homer designs paralleled the Bauhaus curriculum. He was 37 years old when he undertook the commission. Of those years, the first 15 had been spent in his father's shop where he learned the principles of modelling and sculpture. The products of the shop were made to the specifications of a clientele that included the sculptors Roubilliac and Scheemakers. He progressed to a more formal training at the Royal Academy where it was impressed upon the students that it was the "wish of the genuine painter [to] improve mankind".²⁰ From the time of his graduation from the Royal Academy in 1775 until 1792 when he began the Homer illustrations he had worked for Wedgwood (from 1775 to 1787 almost exclusively). The industrialist had expressed a wish "to diffuse a good taste through the arts" by the sale of his

mass-distributed products;²¹ however, it is doubtful that it was Flaxman's idealism that made him attractive to Wedgwood.

When Wedgwood wrote to his partner Bentley that he was "glad Flaxman is as valuable an artist" -- as he soon proved be -- there is no indication of what qualities prompted the praise.²² Yet, the varied nature of the work he was doing for Wedgwood suggests an answer. Flaxman was executing with equal facility, portraits from life (such as of Mrs Siddons (Figure 12)), designs based upon the antique (such as The Crowning of a Kitharist (Figure 14)), and original designs to fill a particular commission (The Manufacturer's Arms (Figure 6 for example)). He was valuable because he could function equally well as an artist or as a modeller. He was modelling with the eye of an accomplished artist, and, perhaps more important, he was creating designs in a form that could be readily utilized by the craftsmen who were making the moulds which formed the clay components that constituted Jasperware. With Flaxman's designs no intermediate renderings were necessary between artist's presentation and shop use.

Considerable effort might be expended rendering an artist's concept into working drawings for the use of a craftsman in a shop. Such is demonstrated by the activities of Rundell, Bridge and Rundell, the firm of silversmiths, from whom Flaxman received the commission for the Shield of Achilles and whose smiths executed various other of his designs.²³ Figure 80 represents a design (now in the British Museum) for a wine-cooler

by Flaxman's Royal Academy classmate and long time friend Thomas Stothard.²⁴ It is an impressionistic sketch that includes comparatively little detail. In an album of silver plate designs in the Victoria and Albert museum is a rendering (Figure 81) after the Stothard original. It was prepared for Rundell Bridge and Rundell probably by one of their employees who was well acquainted with silversmithing.²⁵ The draughtsman has transformed the original concept by setting down more precisely the details that were to cover the finished piece.

Original designs were also produced by Rundell, Bridge and Rundell. In an effort to obtain complete clarity of concepts, designs were rendered in a still more precise manner. Figure 82 represents another design for a wine cooler perhaps after William Theed R.A.²⁶ head of the Rundell design department. It was created expressly for the use of the silversmiths themselves and accordingly was reduced to simple pen line without any shading. While clarity in the presentation of the outlines of figures and animals in the relief and floral forms beneath the rim was stressed, perspective was compromised to a degree clearly evident when the design is compared with the finished cooler (Figure 83). In silver, the relief covers the curved surface and the extreme left and right are not visible from a single view point. On paper it appeared to have been applied to a flat panel. More drawings to clarify the point that a flat design was to be applied to a curved surface were clearly unnecessary, because the convention of the two-dimensional line

drawing conveyed sufficient information for the modeller or silversmith to produce a finished three-dimensional piece.

Significantly, Flaxman's designs for Jasperware, the Homer illustrations and silverware were similar in their common purpose. None were created to be a finished work in itself but to be interpreted and rendered in another medium. The technical problems associated with the production and sale of the ultimate form were to be solved by someone else, or, in the case of bas reliefs, by Flaxman, in the capacity of a sculptor at some unspecified time in the future. To be most useful for the potter, engraver or silversmith his designs needed to be presented in a form which specified detail clearly and unambiguously so that as little adaptation as possible was required.

The problems associated with presenting line drawings on flat sheets for rendering on curved objects had long been known to Flaxman through his work for Wedgwood. Although the sample of designs executed by his hand and delivered to Wedgwood is unfortunately small,²⁷ it is nonetheless significant. Figure 6, drawn while Flaxman was still in Wedgwood's employ, shows both that the designer was submitting work to the industrialist in a style which foreshadowed that of the Homer illustrations, and also that the design Wedgwood was accepting from his artist was consistent with industrial shop drawing in use through the period. If, as Constable implies, Flaxman constituted the bridge between the arts and industry it would seem that the traffic of ideas flowed through him in both directions. Flaxman

took to Wedgwood his skill as a modeller, his knowledge of ancient work, and his willingness to design in a manner that could be adapted into products reminiscent of ancient work. Wedgwood's design requirements forced Flaxman to take back a style of graphic representation that could be applied with equal facility to the manufacture of Jasperware, engravings and silverplate.

Flaxman's friend Cockerell wrote enthusiastically of the illustration that they are "the works by which he will live ... clearly the fruit of Flaxman's life as an artist are those works."²⁸ Strictly speaking Flaxman never did transform the Homer illustrations into the sculpture he envisaged and thus did not achieve the dictionary definition of artist as "one who cultivates one of the fine arts, which please by perfection of execution".²⁹ In fact, for his contribution to the Homer commission, the actual production of the designs, he fulfill the definition of a designer rather than an artist: "one who makes an artistic design or plan of construction: specifically one who makes designs or patterns for the manufacturer or constructor".³⁰

If Flaxman's Homeric illustrations are considered only from the standpoint of his contemporaries, that is, in the context of what they regarded as the greatest of human societies, the association with ancient art is inevitable. But it is only when the line drawings are considered in the light of his stated purpose for them -- the preliminary stage in the production

of sculptural works in a form akin to industrial drawings suitable for submission to Wedgwood or Rundell, Bridge and Rundell -- that his reaction to his contemporaries' interpretation and praise can be explained. Hailed as capturing the essence of ancient work, Flaxman regretted that the critics were judging his creativity on the basis of a project never fully realized.

Footnotes Chapter 5

- 1 MSS Fitzwilliam Museum, Flaxman letter-box no. 4, Flaxman to Hayley, Rome, 26 October 1793.
- 2 P.O. Runge, Hinterlassene Schriften (Hamburg 1841), I, p.54.
- 3 The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary ed C.T. Onions (Oxford, 1975) v.II p.1580 no. 4.
- 4 Ibid V.I p.539, no.2.
- 5 See note 1 Chapter V.
- 6 Robert Wood, An Essay on the Original Genius of Homer (1769; New York, 1971), p.298.
- 7 Hugh Honour, Neoclassicism (Harmondsworth, 1968), p.71.
- 8 Meteyard, op. cit., p. 506 includes a copy of this inventory. It lists as well as personal effects "Some Classical Books" and artists' supplies.
- 9 Irwin, op. cit., p. 224 fn73, notes "Augsburg for example is mentioned in British Library, Add. MS. 39781, f. 382, unnamed correspondent to Mrs. Flaxman (4 November 1794) and Kassel in same volume, f. 386, Mrs. G. Hare-Naylor to Mrs Flaxman, 8 November 1794."
- 10 Honour, op. cit., p.71.
- 11 Flaxman to Hayley Rome 26 October 1793.
- 12 Reproduced by Dover Publications as Flaxman's Illustrations to Homer (New York, 1977) with an introduction and commentary by Robert Essick and Jenijoy La Belle.
- 13 William Hogarth, Analysis of Beauty (London, 1753), p.37.
- 14 John Flaxman, Lectures on Sculpture (London, 1881) p.160.
- 15 Noted by David Irwin, John Flaxman 1755-1826 (London, 1979), p. 19.
- 16 George Frederic Watts, Works (1912), Vol. III, p. 109.
- 17 W.G. Constable, op. cit., p.77.
- 18 Flaxman, op. cit., 1881, p.179.

- 19 Hans Winkler, Graphic Work From the Bauhaus (London, 1965), p. 18.
- 20 Reynolds Discourse III, ll. 23-26.
- 21 See note 15 above.
- 22 Wedgwood to Bentley, 14 January 1775. Quoted by Meteyard, op. cit., Vol. II, p. 321.
- 23 See Chapter IV note. Also Mary Henderson, "The Beresford Hope Silver" Apollo ns 99 January 1974 pp.34-37, wherein the Beresford Cup is attributed to Flaxman; John F. Hayward, "Rundell, Bridge and Rundell, Aurifices Regis Part I" Antiques 99 (June 1971), pp. 860-865, Part II Antiques 100 (July 1971), pp.110-115; N.M. Penzer, "Some Royal Plate of the Regency by Paul Storr", Apollo 62 September 1955 p.66 has specific data on Flaxman's Theocritus Cup and Charles Oman, "A Problem of Artistic Responsibility: The firm of Rundell, Bridge and Rundell", Apollo ns 83 (March 1966) pp.174-183, which discusses Rundell, Bridge and Rundell working methods as they relate to an album of silver plate designs (now in the Victoria and Albert Museum) titled Designs for plate by John Flaxman, etc.
- 24 Stothard's silver designs included The Wellington Shield. Charles Oman, English Silversmiths' Work (London, 1965) reproduces Stothard's design in line (Plate 205) and includes a photograph of the shield (Plate 206).
- 25 Oman, op.cit., p.80.
- 26 Bryan's Dictionary of Painters and Engravers ed. George C. Williamson (London, 1921), Vol. V p.164 notes that William Theed 1764-1817 was a great friend of Flaxman, submitted designs to Wedgwood and from 1803 worked for Rundell and Bridge "for whom he prepared the drawings that the engravers might work on their plate."
- 27 Alison Kelly, The Story of Wedgwood (London, 1975) relates that in 1828 Wedgwood's 'stock of ware, old moulds and models was sold for L16,000' p.51. There may have been Flaxman drawings amongst this material but more likely when moulds or models were made from a design the drawings were simply discarded.
- 28 C.R. Cockerell, Diaries, 27th November 1824.
- 29 The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary ed. C.T. Onions (Oxford, 1975) V. I p.111 no.III. 1.
- 30 Ibid., p.528 no.2.

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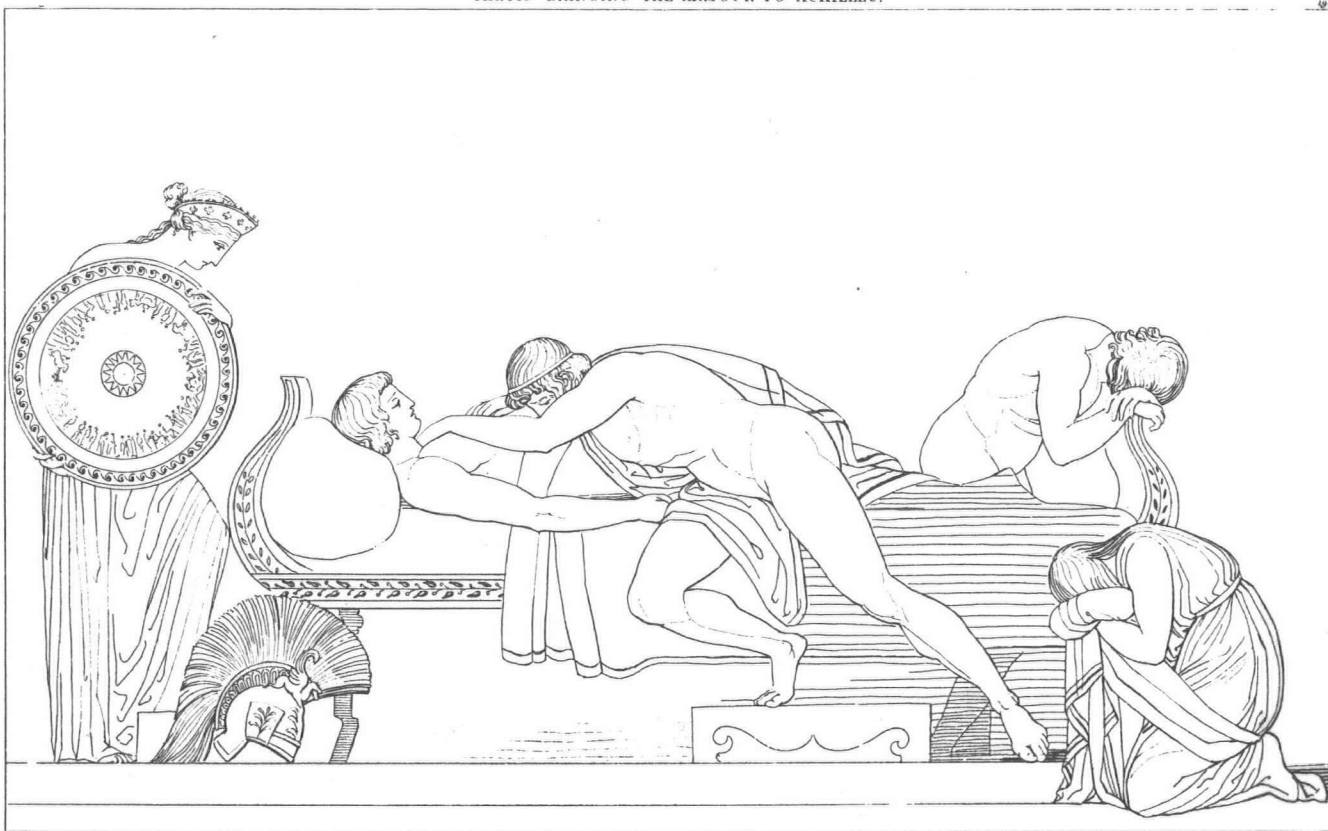
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THE IMMORTAL ARMS THE GODDESS MOTHER BEARS
 SWIFT TO HER SON; HER SON SHE FINDS IN TEARS,
 STRETCH'D O'ER PATROCLUS' CORSE.

1 Thetis Bringing the Armour to Achilles Engraving, after Flaxman by Tomaso Piroli, Iliad, 1805, Plate 31.



2 Anthony's Oration over the Dead Caesar, Pencil and grey wash. 22.3 X 34.1 cm.



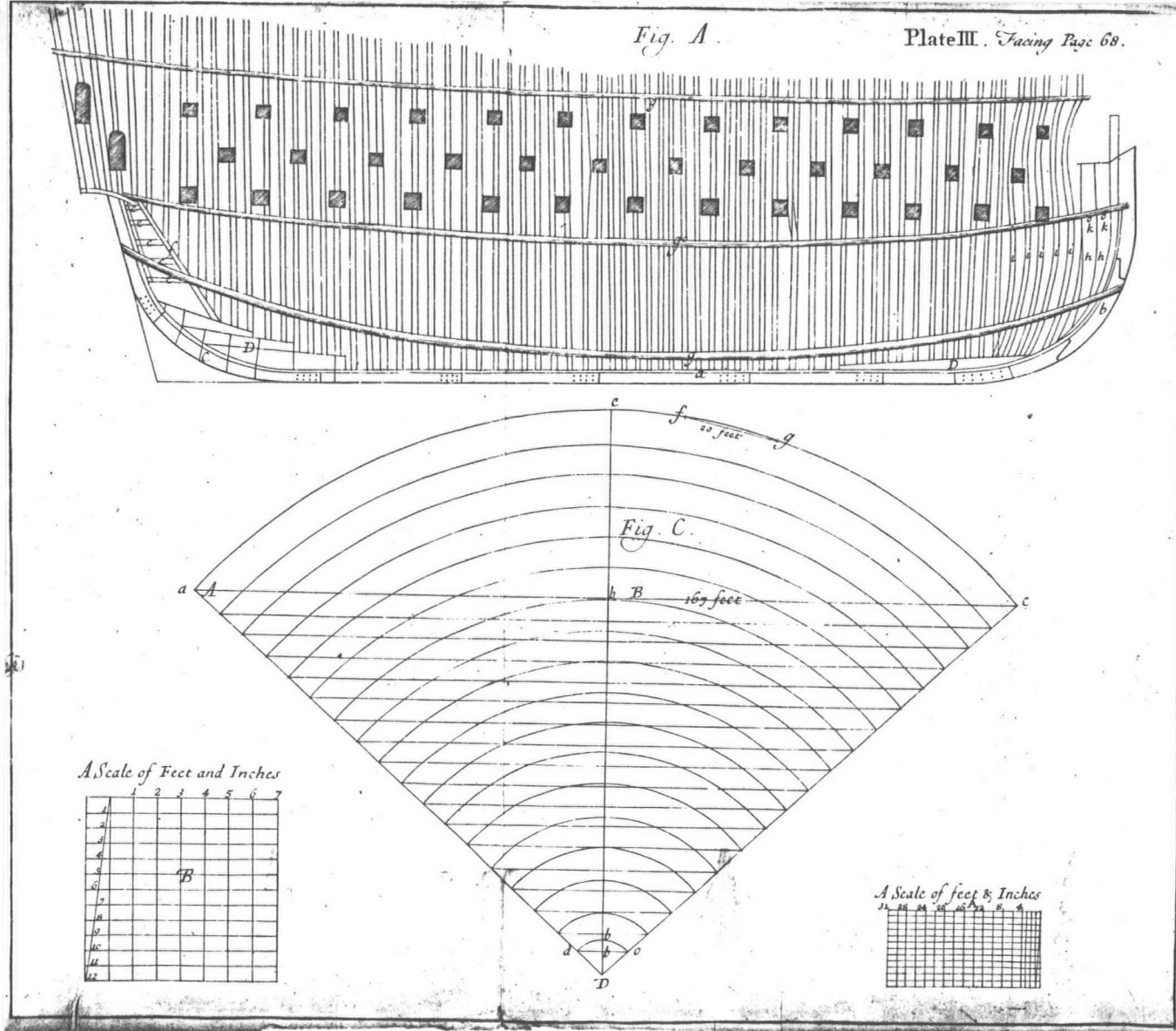
3a Sosias Painter Red-Figure cup interior
Achilles and Patroclus



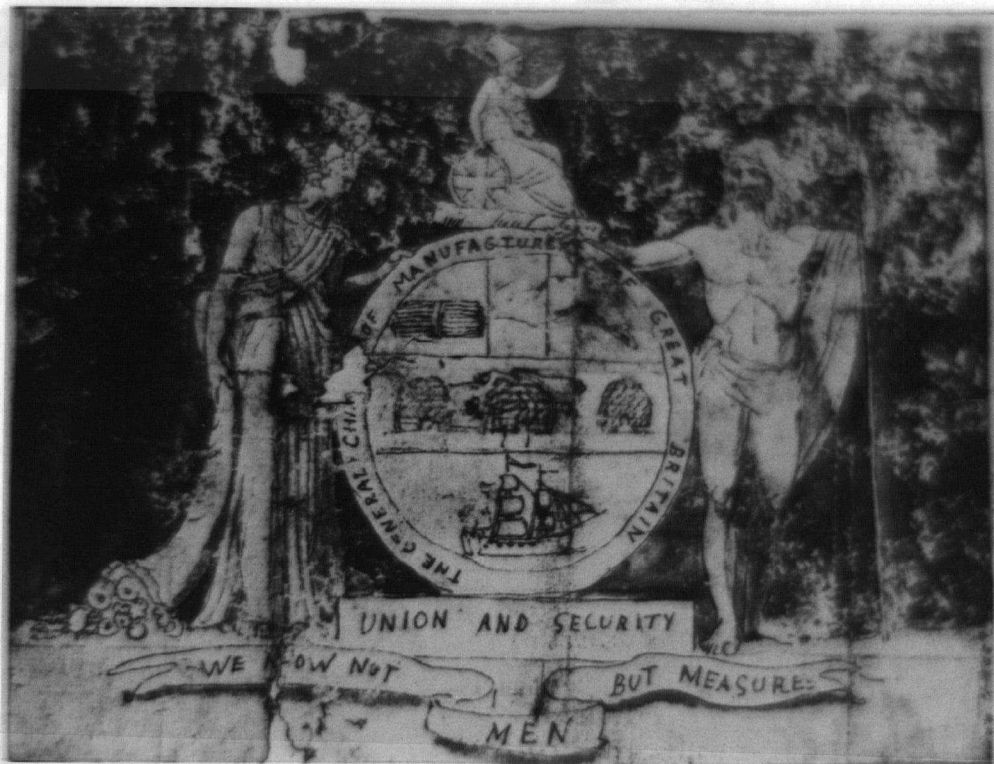
3b Sosias Painter Red-Figure cup exterior
Introduction of Heracles to Olympus



4 Henry Flitcroft : Pantheon Temple Stourhead, Wiltshire
England



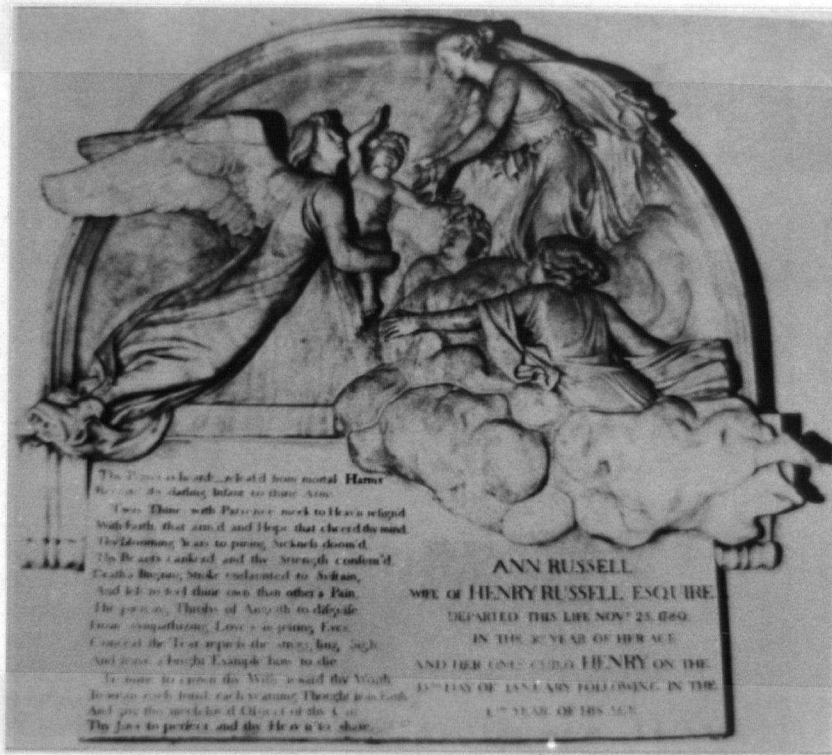
5 William Sutherland : The Ship-BUILDER'S Assistant or Marine Architecture, 1755, Plate III Section of a Ship.



6 The Manufacturer's Arms, 1784. The Trustees of the Wedgwood Museum, Barlaston. Staffs.



7 John Flaxman, the elder : Architecture, Marble, Lord Barnard, Raby Castle, Durham. 117.7 cms high.



8a Ann Russell and her son Henry : monument Died 1780-81. All Saints, Lydd, Kent.



8b A figure from The Tower of the Winds in Athens. Depicted in James Stuart and Nicholas Revett: The Antiquities of Athens, 1762, Vol. I, Chapter III, Plate XVII.



9 Barbara Bouchier : monument. Died 1784. St Mary,
Newent, Gloucestershire.



10 Mrs. Sarah Morley : monument. Died 1784. Gloucester Cathedral.



11 Reverend Thomas and Mrs. Ball : monument, 1784-86. Chichester Cathedral.



12 Mrs. Siddons : Jasperware portrait, after Flaxman's model of 1782.



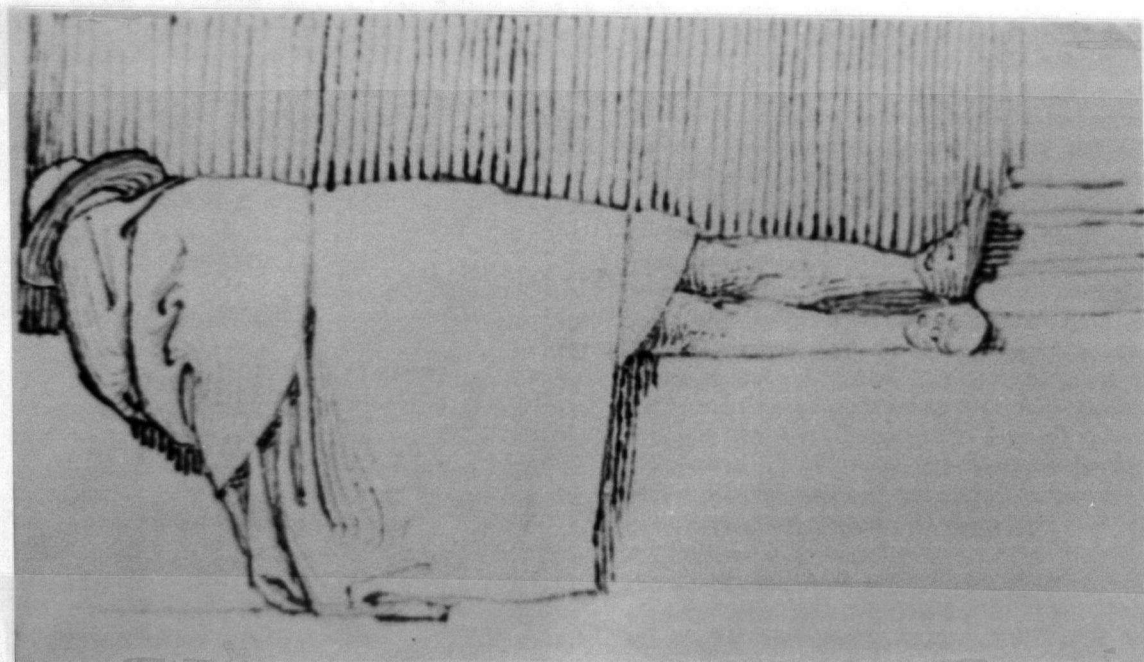
13 Flaxman's own design for the Chessmen. Probably 1783. Later executed in Jasperware by Wedgwood.



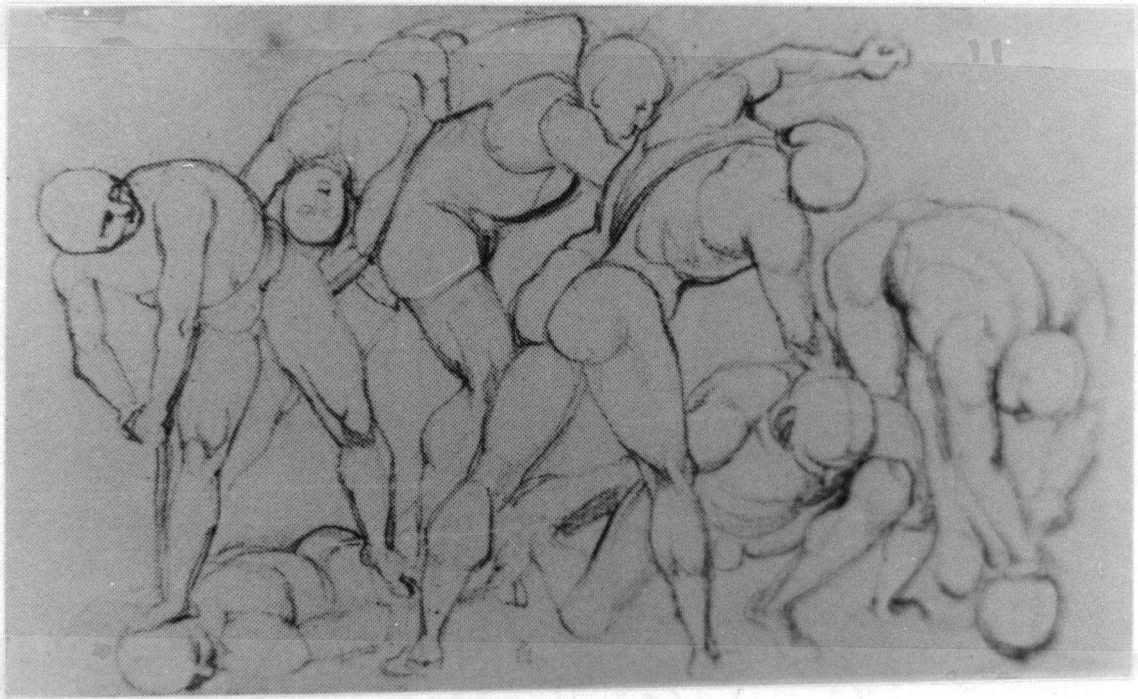
14 The Crowning of a Kitharist. Engraving from D'Hancarville's Cabinet of the Hon. William Hamilton, 1766-67, Vol.3.



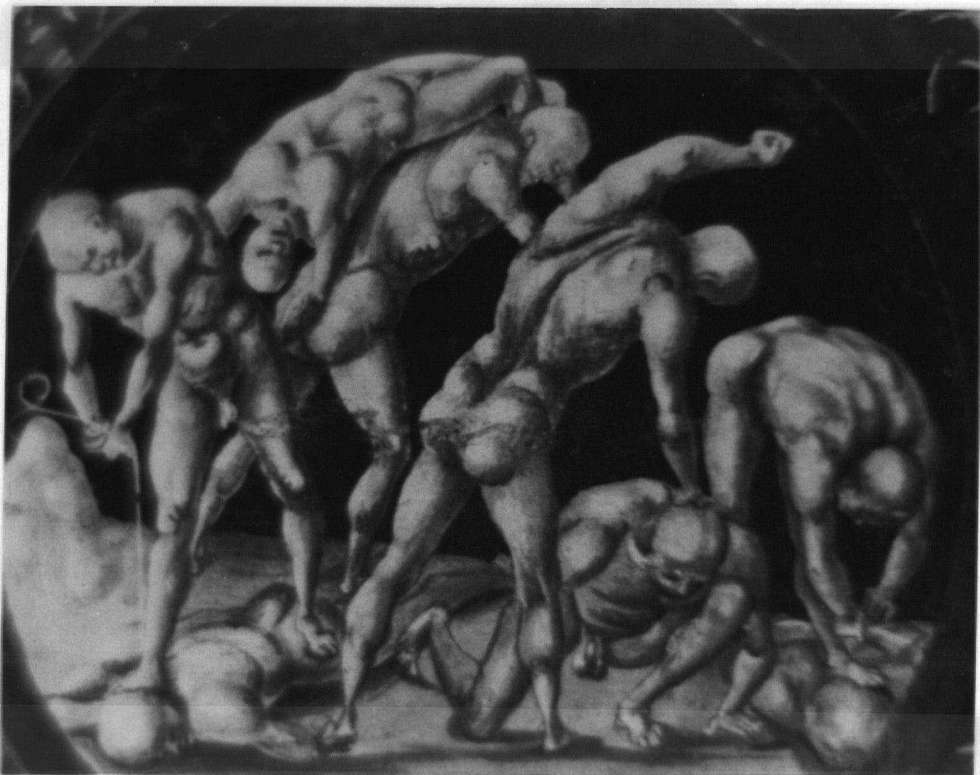
15 Kitharist Vase.
Design by John
Flaxman, 1786.



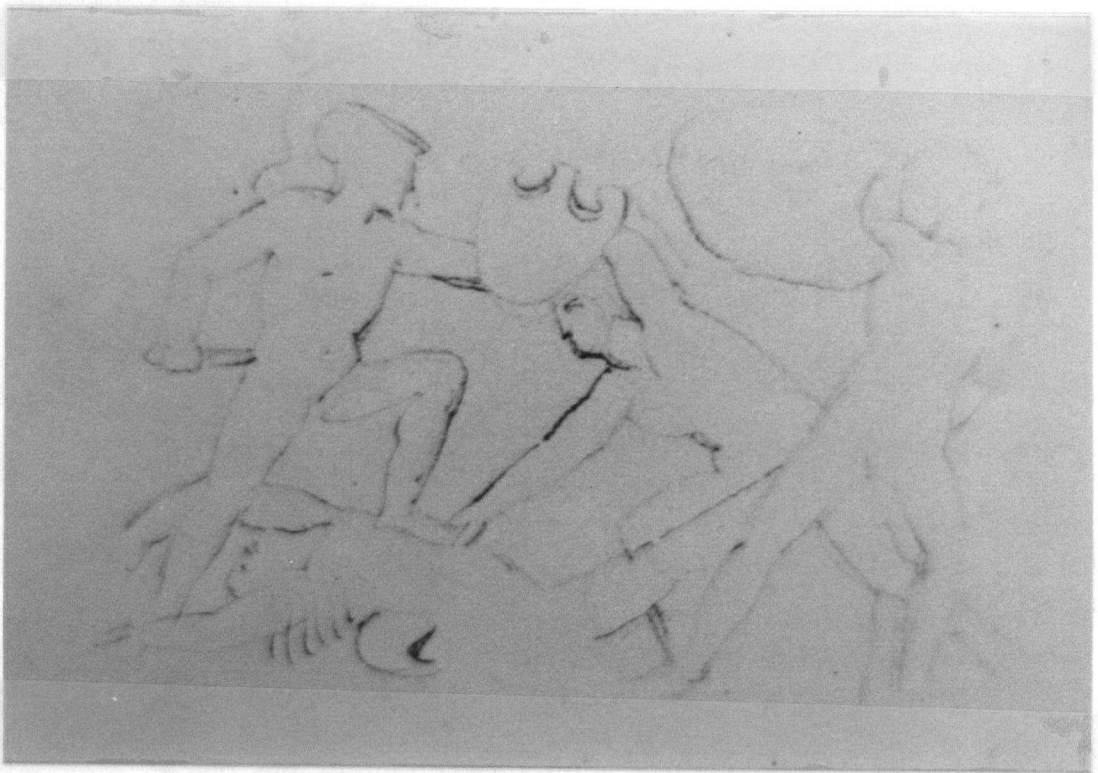
16 Peasant asleep on the plinth of a building. Pen and ink,
5.8 x 10.5 cm.



17 Battle of the Nudes, after Signorelli, Duomo, Orvieto.
Pencil, 15.2 x 36.2 cms.



18 Signorelli : Battle of the Nudes (detail) Duomo, Orvieto.



19 Battle of the Amazons, after antique relief in the Vatican.
Pencil, 24x16.5 cms.



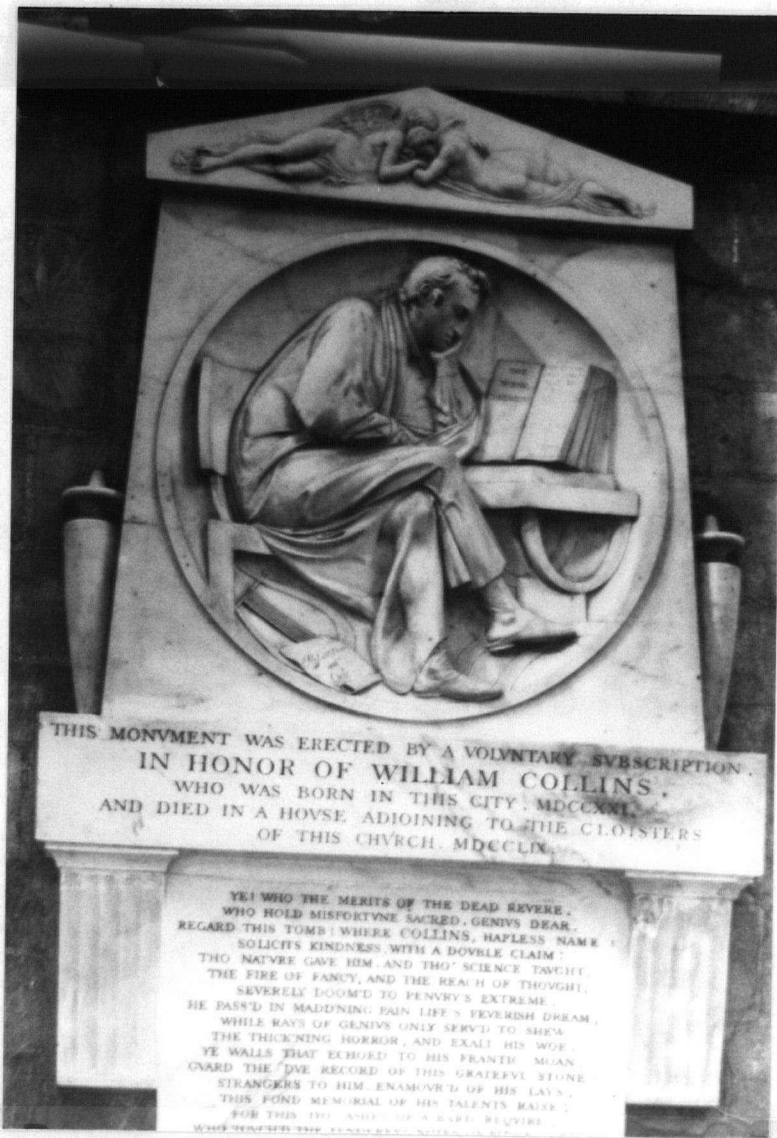
20 Fury of Athamas, 1790-1794. Marble, 208.5 cms. high.



21 William, 1st Earl of Mansfield : monument, 1793-1801.
Westminster Abbey.



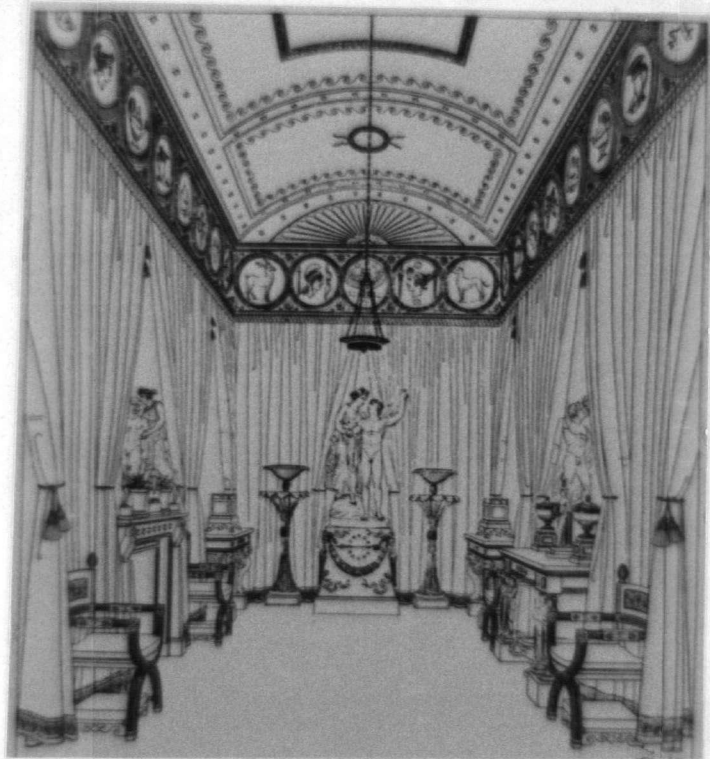
22 William Collins: monument: design: detail. Pen and ink and wash, 39.5 x 27 cms. (whole sheet)



23 Williams Collins : monument, 1792-95 Chichester Cathedral.



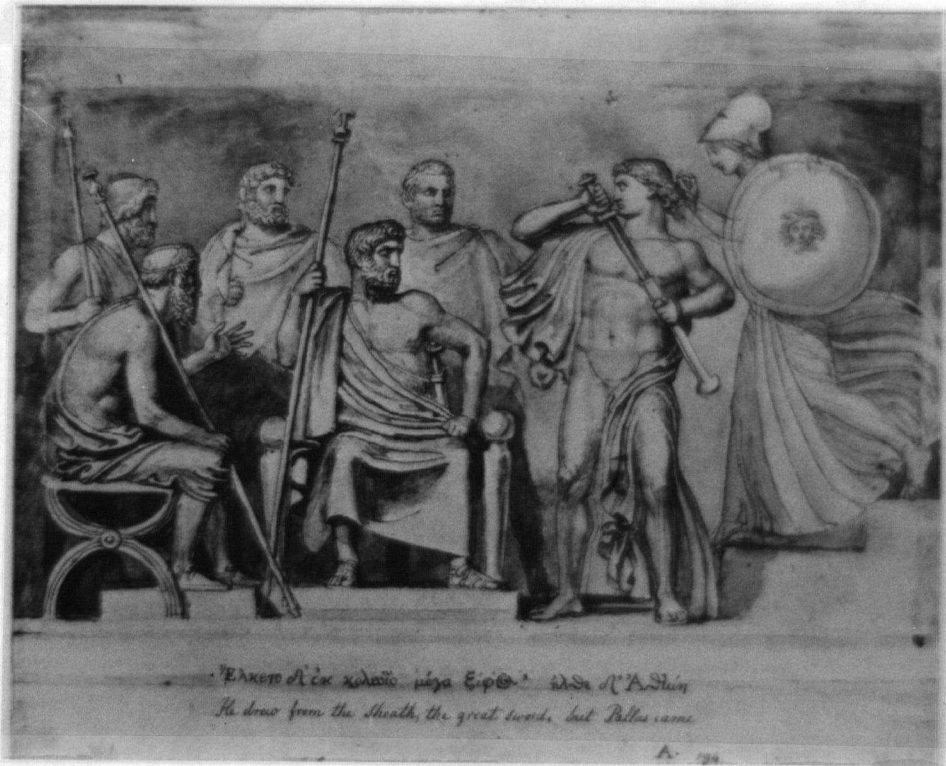
24 Aurora visiting Cephalus on Mount Ida,
1789-90. Marble, 184 cms. high.



25 Aurora visiting Cephalus on Mount Ida:
in original setting. Plate 7 from
Thomas Hope, Household Furniture, 1807.



26 Hercules and Hebe, 1792. Plaster, coloured, 190.5 cms. high.



27 Minerva Repressing the Fury of Achilles. Preliminary pencil, ink, and brown wash. 22.9 x 27 cm. Huntington Library and Art Gallery.

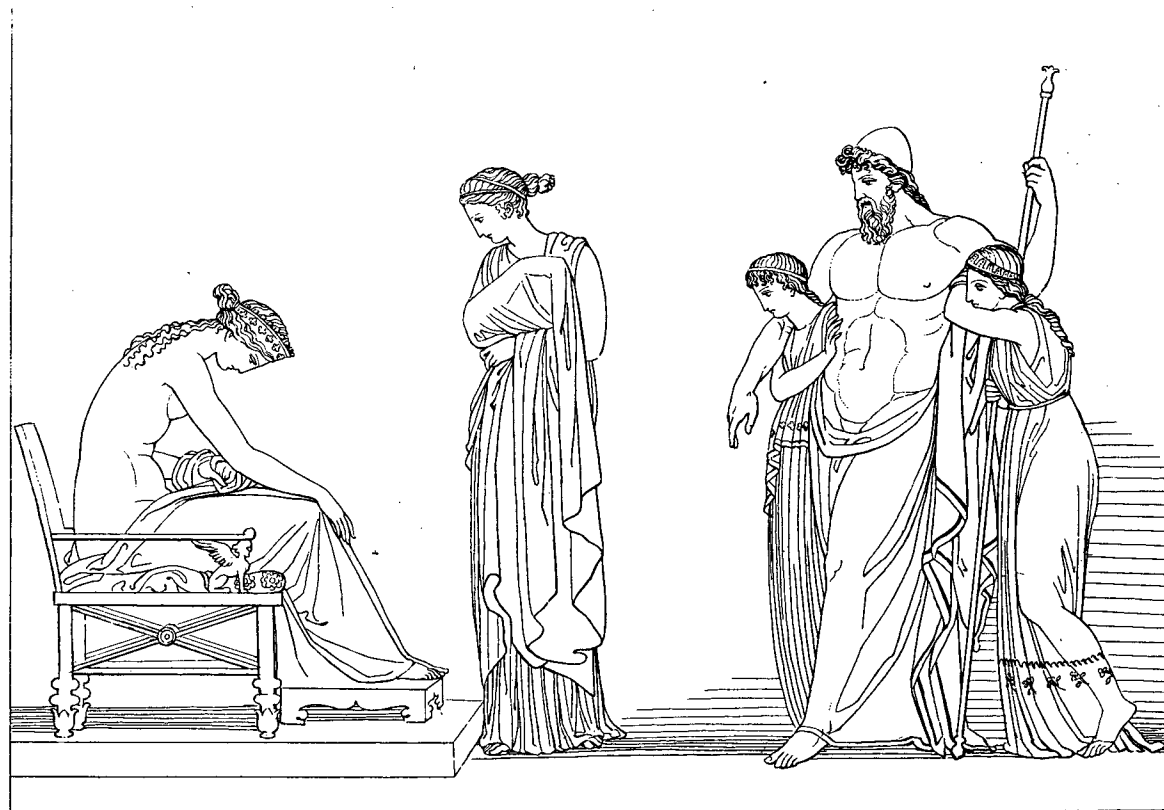


Thetis Infant Vulcan Eurynome

SHE AND EURYNOME MY GRIEFS REDREST
AND SOFT RECEIVED ME ON THEIR SILVER BREAST.
From Homer's Iliad Book Line 45.

144

28 Thetis and Eurynome Receiving the Infant Vulcan. Engraving after Flaxman by Thomas Piroli. Iliad, 1805, Plate 29.



Thetis

Chares

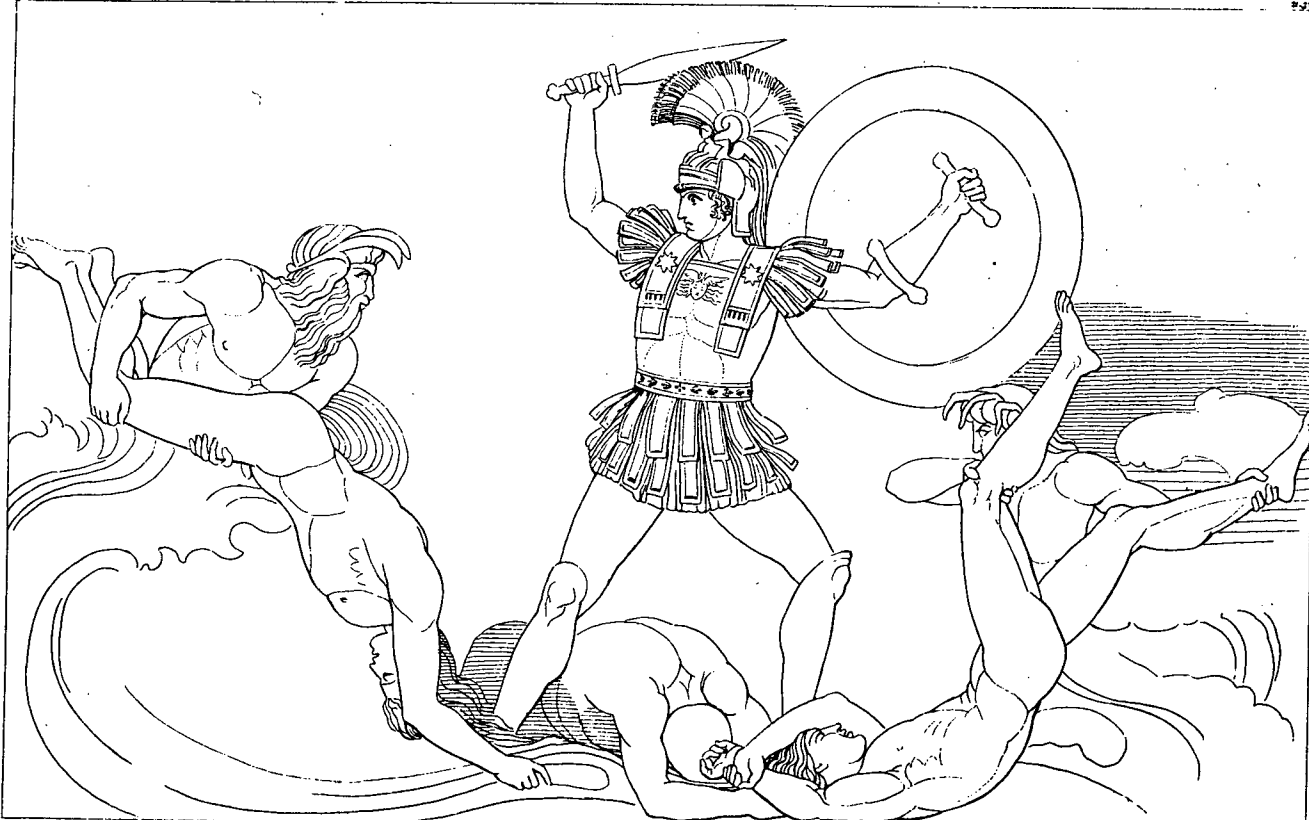
Vulcan

Moirai

THE MONARCH'S STEPS TWO FEMALE FORMS UPHOLD,
 THAT MOVD. AND BREATHD. IN ANIMATED GOLD.
 Hope's Traces find not like this.

145

29 Vulcan and Chares Receiving Thetis. Engraving after
 Flaxman by Thomas Piroli. Iliad, 1805, Plate 30.



Kiklops

Achilles

Simois

Peneios

HE SAID, AND ON THE CHIEF DESCENDS AMAIN,
 INCREASED WITH GORE AND SWELLING WITH THE SLAIN.
Depict Homer's Iliad Book XXII.

146

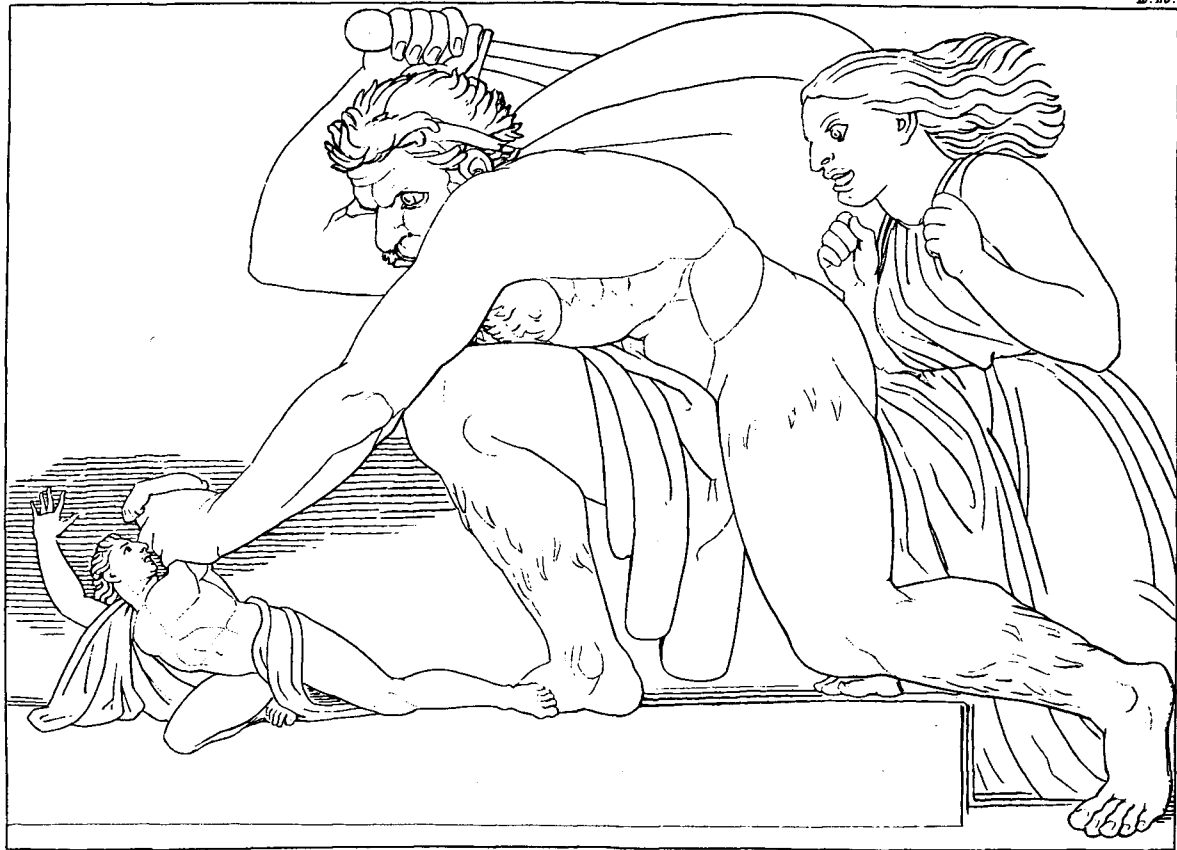
30 Achilles Contending with the Rivers. Engraving after Flaxman by Thomas Piroli. Iliad, 1805, Plate 33.



SWIFT AS THE WORD, THE WINDS TUMULTUOUS FLEW.

Pope's Homer's Iliad B. 23. line 263.

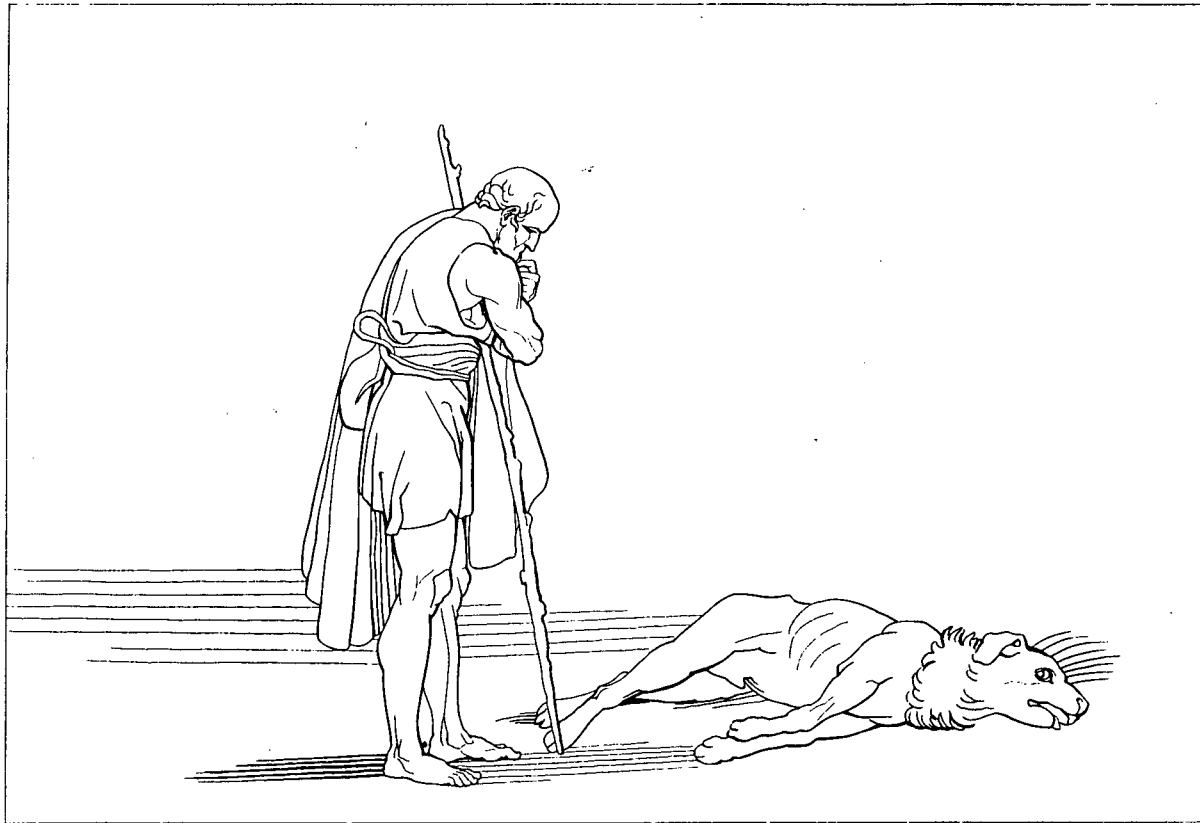
31 The Funeral Pile of Patroclus Engraving after Flaxman by Thomas Piroli. Iliad, 1805, Plate 35.



ONE FOR HIS FOOD THE RAGING GLUTTON SLEW.

Page's Homer's Odyssey B. 10. Line 135.

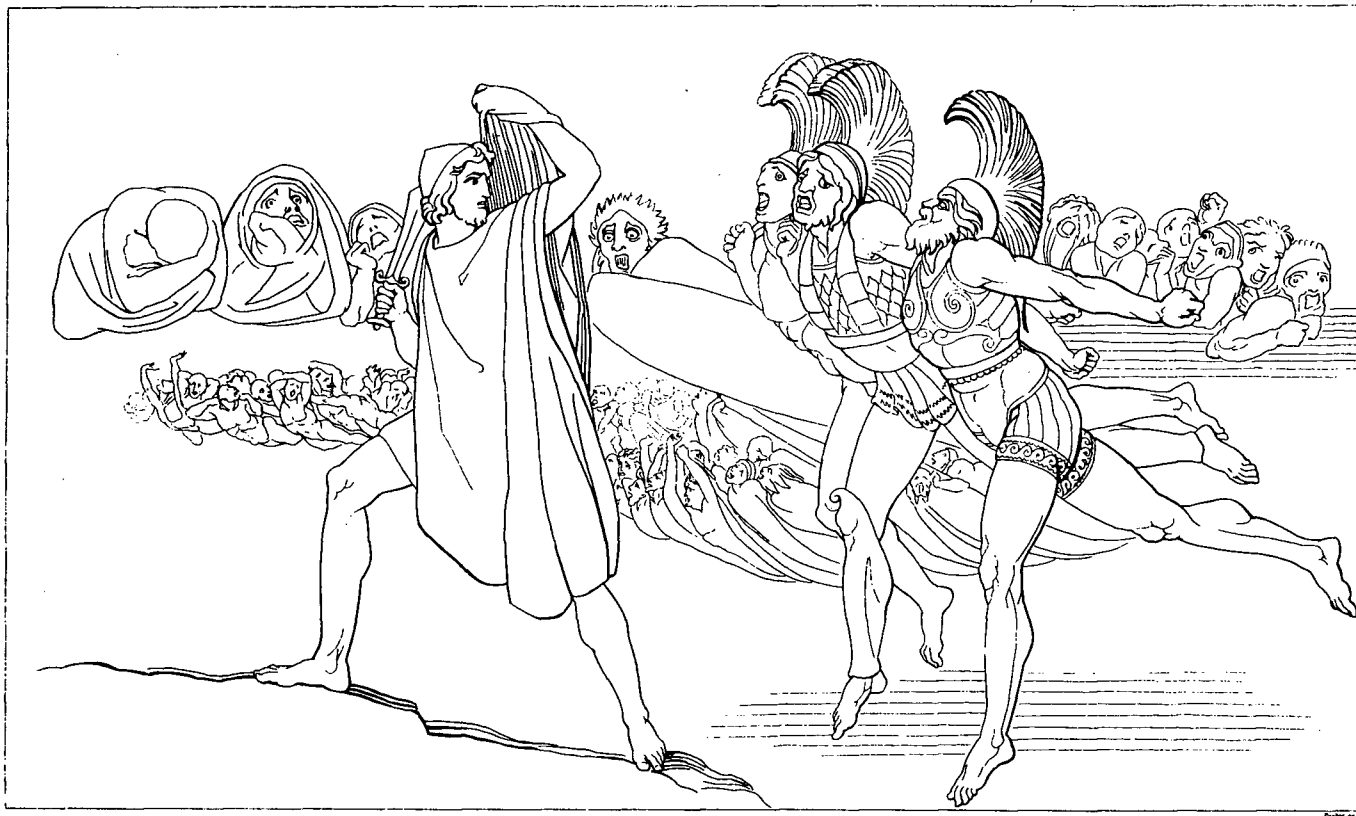
32 King of the Lestrigens Seizing One of the Companions of Ulysses. Engraving after Flaxman by James Parker. Odyssey, 1805, Plate 15.



TAKES A LAST LOOK, & HAVING SEEN HIM DIE,
SO CLOSED FOR EVER FAITHFUL ARGUS' EYES.

Pope's Homer's Odyssey B. 17. Line 399.

33 Ulysses and His Dog. Engraving after Flaxman by James Parker. Odyssey, 1805, Plate 26.

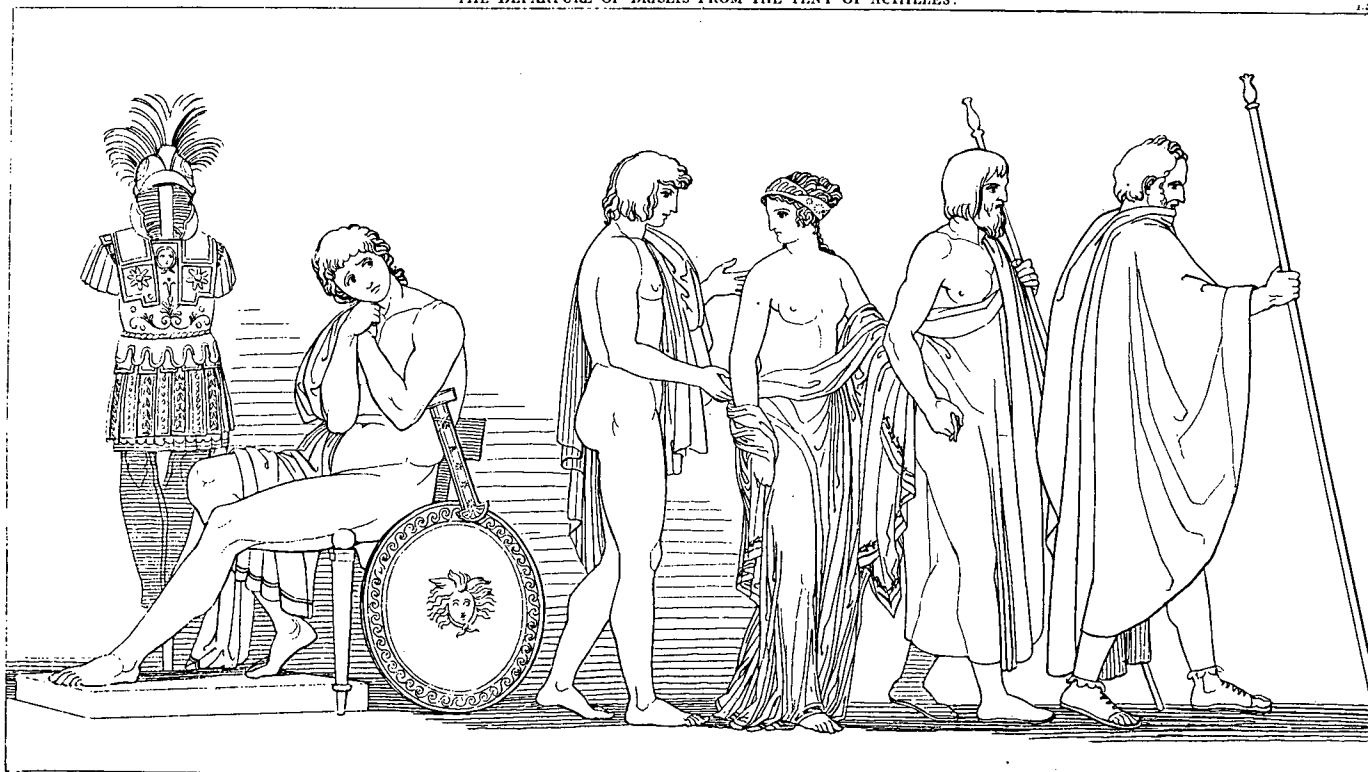


HUT SWARMS OF SPECTRES ROSE FROM DEEPEST HELL,
 WITH BLOODLESS VISAGE, AND WITH HIDEOUS YELL,
 THEY SCREAM, THEY SHRIEK: SAD GROANS AND DISMAL SOUNDS
 STEN MY SCARD EARS, AND PIERCE HELL'S UTMOST BOUNDS.

Paper Bound, Oxford, No. 122

150

34 Ulysses Terrefied (sic) by the Ghosts. Engraving after Flaxman by James Parker. Odyssey, 1805, Plate 17.



Achilles

PATROCLUS NOW TH' UNSWILING BEAUTY BROUGHT:
SHE IN FOE'S SORROWS, AND IN PENSIVE THOUGHT,

Briseis

Heralds

FAST SILENT, AS THE HERALDS HOLD HER HAND,
AND OPT LOOK'D BACK, SLOW MOVING OER THE STRAND.
From Homer's Iliad Bk. IX. line 146.

Patroclus

35 The Departure of Briseis from the Tent of Achilles.
Engraving after Flaxman by Thomas Piroli. Iliad, 1805,
Plate 3.



Odysseus

Achilles

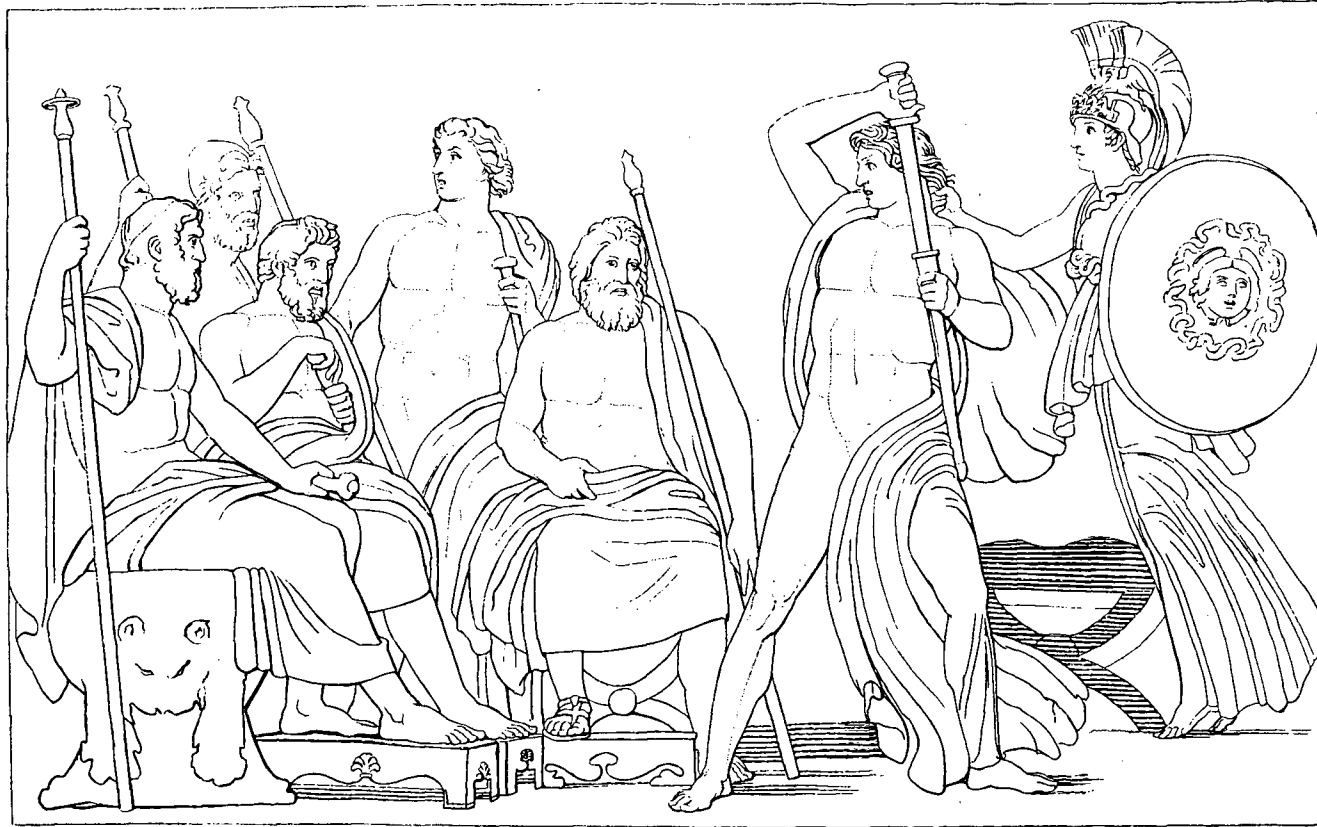
Nestor *Ajax*
PRINCES ALL HALL!
By the Honorable Miss P. L. L. etc.

Thetis

Pirolis

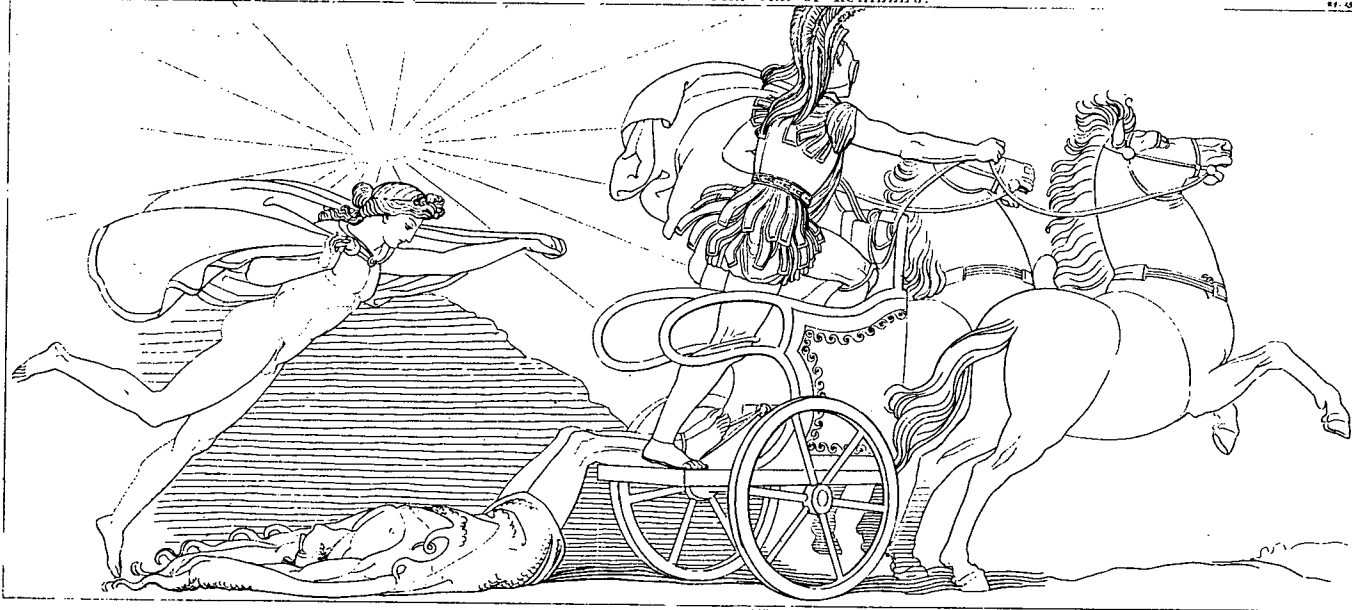
152

36 The Embassy to Achilles. Engraving after Flaxman by Thomas Piroli. Iliad, 1805, Plate 18.



WHILE HALF UNSHEATH'D APPEAR'D THE GLITTERING BLADE,
MINERVA SWIFT DESCENDED FROM ABOVE.

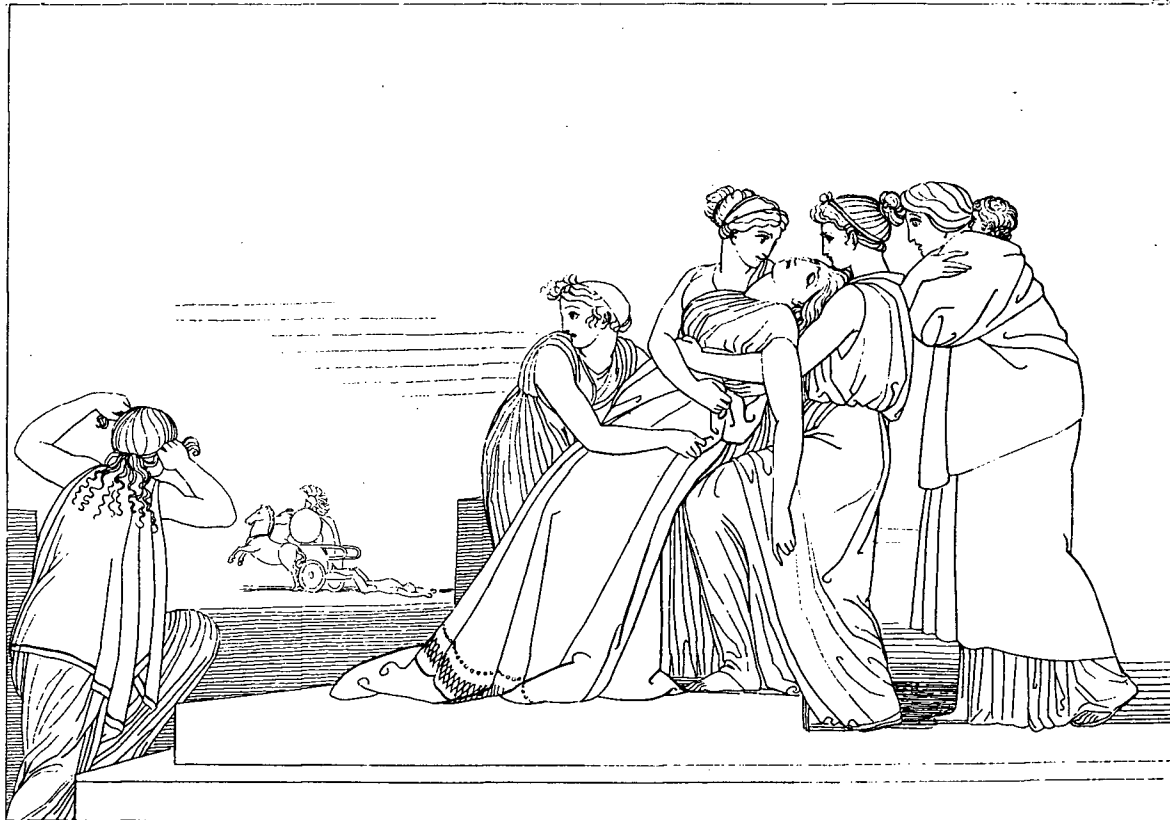
Upon Homer's Iliad II. Line 206.



THE CHARIOT FLIES, & HECTOR TRAILS BEHIND.
Page 676 of Iliad B. 21. Line 44.

154

38 Hector's Body Dragged at the Car of Achilles. Engraving after Flaxman by Thomas Piroli. Iliad, 1805, Plate 36.



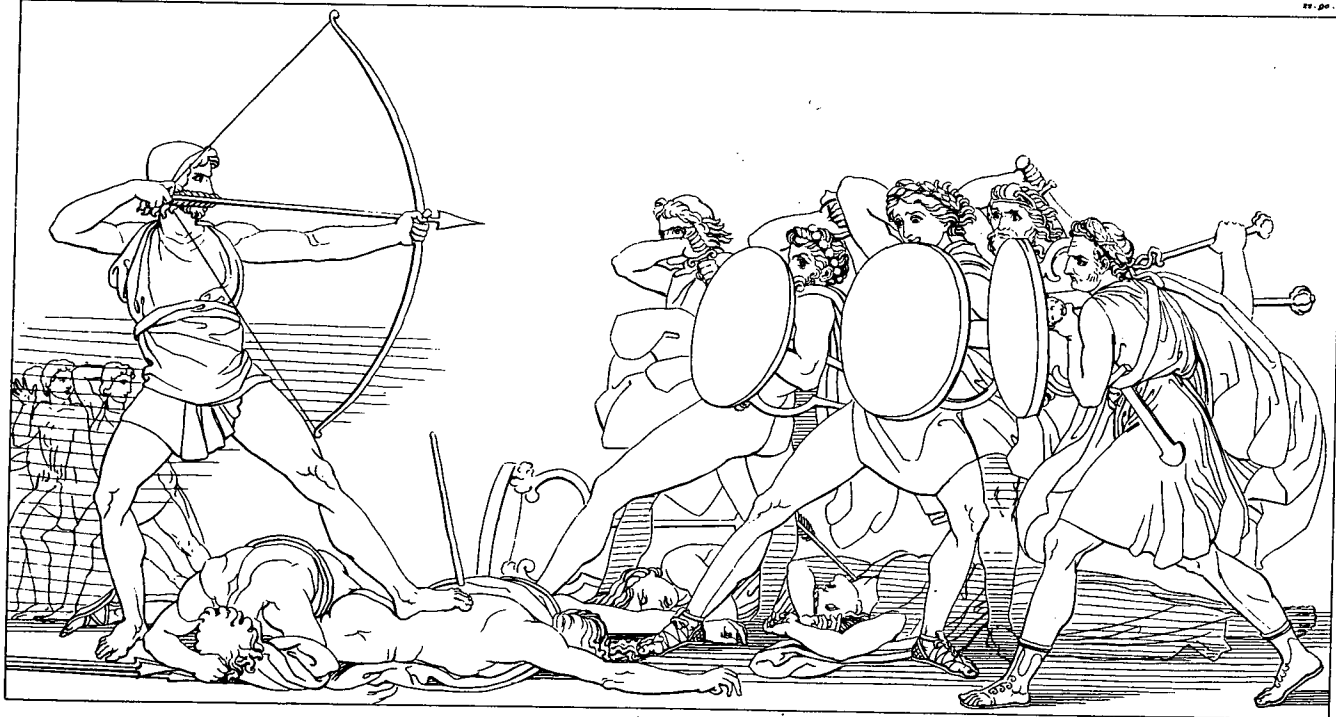
Andromache
 AROUND A TRAIN OF WEeping SISTERS STANDS,
 TO RAISE HER SINKING WITH ASSISTANT HANDS.

Fig. 1. Museum. Chel. R. in. Line. Eng.

Flaxman

155

39 Andromache Fainting on the Wall. Engraving after Flaxman by Thomas Piroli. Iliad, 1805, Plate 34.

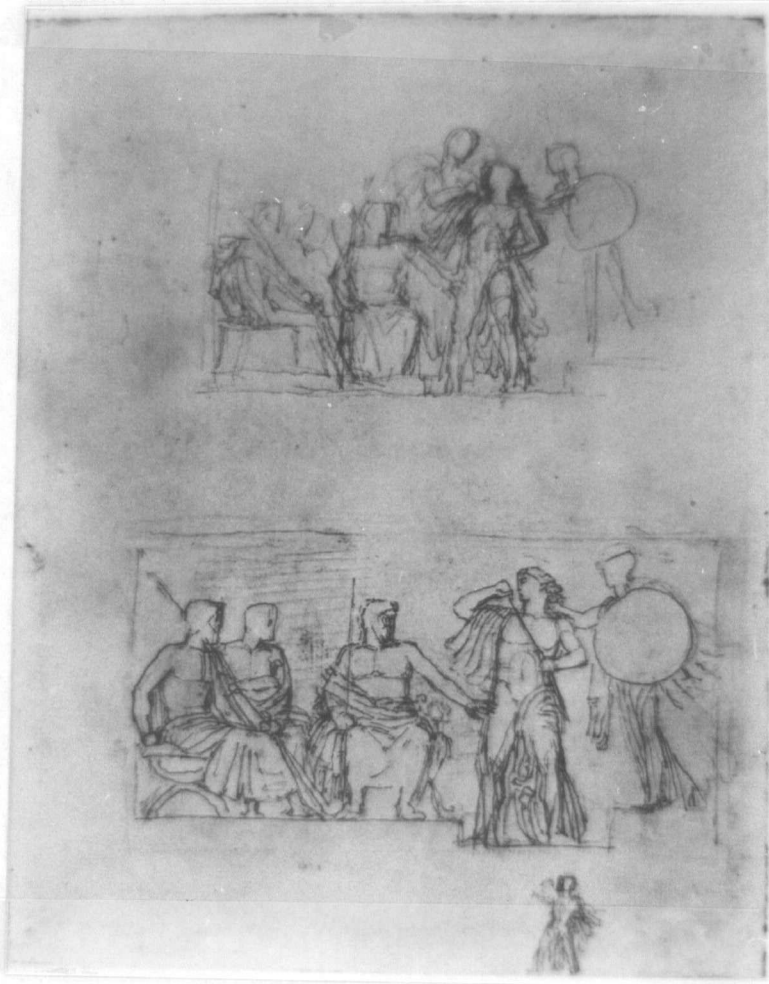


HASTE & RETURN, ULYSSES MADE REPLY,
 WHILE YET TH' AUXILIAR STRAITS HIS HAND SUPPLY.

Figure Homer's Odyssey B. 22. Line 127.

156

40 Ulysses Killing the Suitors Engraving after Flaxman by James Neagle. Odyssey, 1805, Plate 31.



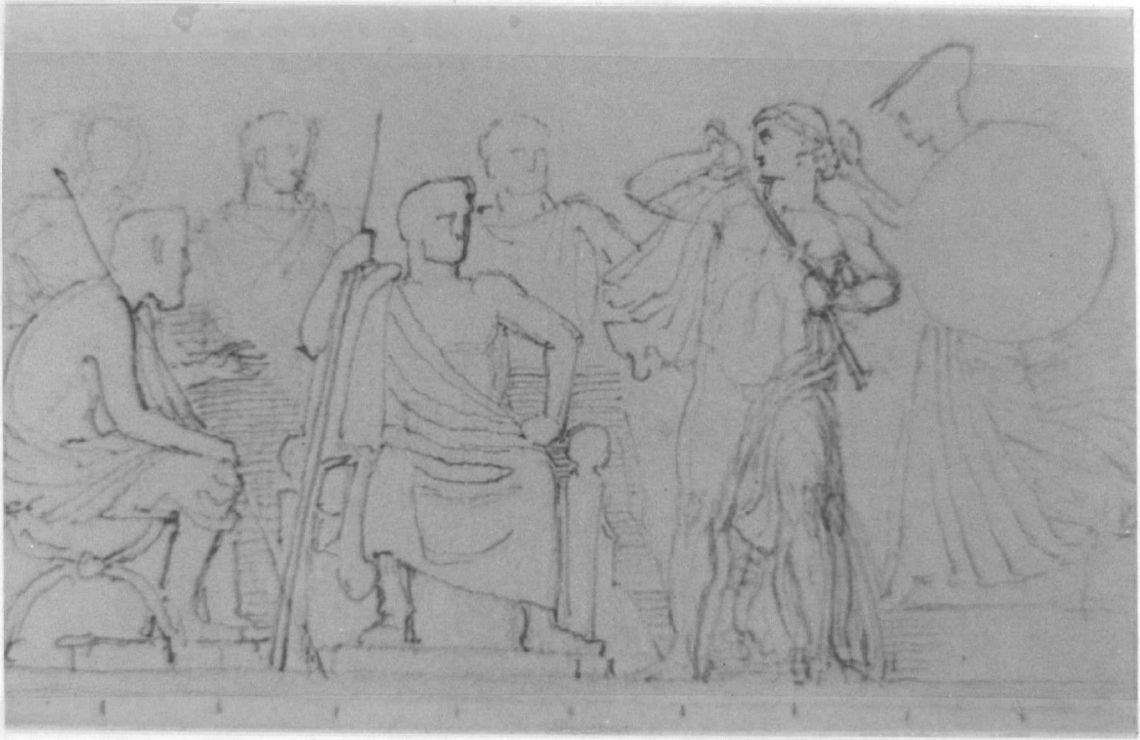
41 Two preliminary drawings for Minerva Repressing the Fury of Achilles, Iliad 2. Pencil (top) : ink over pencil (bottom) sheet 26.7 x 21 cm. Huntington Library and Art Gallery.



42 Preliminary drawing (lower) for Minerva Repressing the Fury of Achilles Iliad 2. Ink over pencil. Sheet 25.4 x 20.7 cm. Huntington Library and Art Gallery .



43 Preliminary drawing (lower) for Minerva Repressing the Fury of Achilles, Iliad 2. Pencil, partially erased.



44 Preliminary drawing for Minerva Repressing the Fury of Achilles, Iliad 2. Ink over pencil. 8.8 x 13.6 cm.



FORTH FROM HER SNOWY HAND NAUSICAA THREW,
THE VARIOUS BALL, THE BALL ERRONEOUS FLEW.

Pope's Homer's Odyssey B. 6. Line 155.

191

45 Nausicaa Throwing the Ball. Engraving after Flaxman by James Parker. Odyssey, 1805, Plate 10.

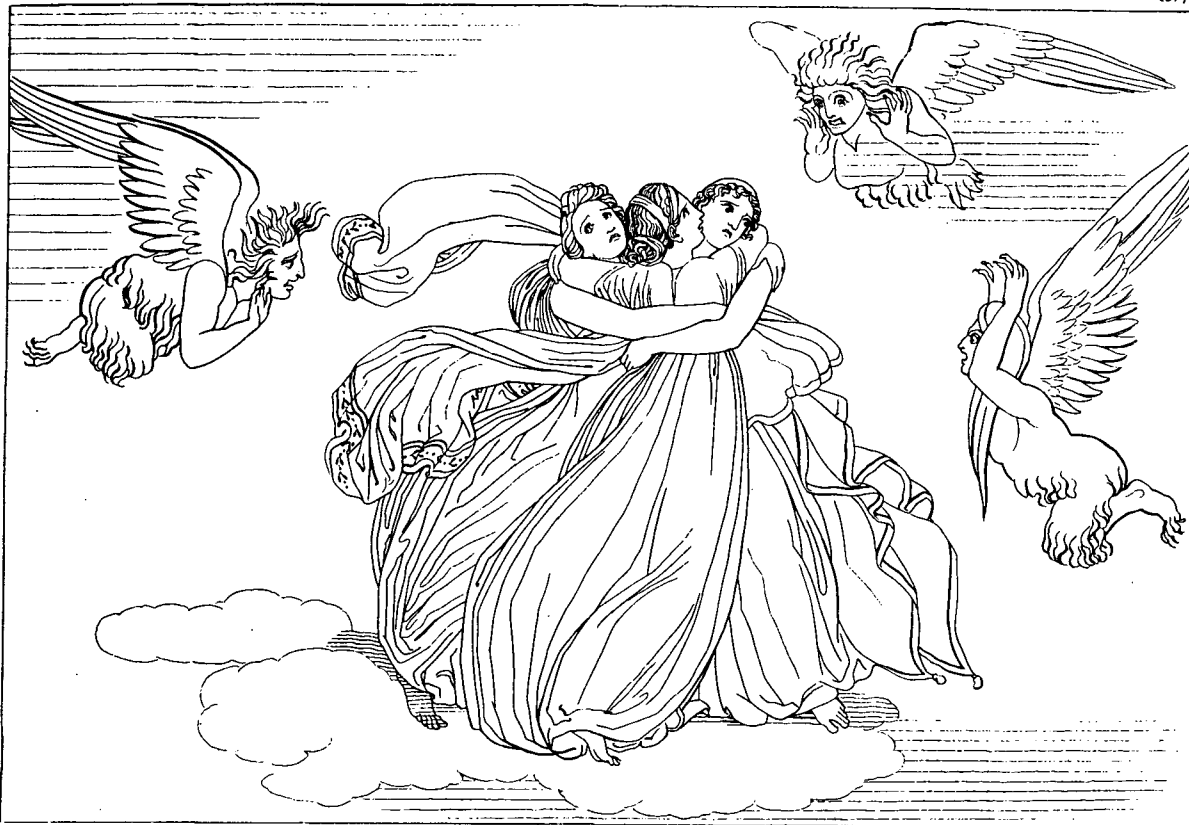


OUR SWIFT APPROACH THE SIREN QUIRE DESCRIBES,
CELESTIAL MUSIC WAIVES FROM THEIR TONGUES.

Pope's Homer's Odyssey B. 12. Line 220.

162

46 The Sirens. Engraving after Flaxman by James Parker.
Odyssey, 1805, Plate 19.



WINDS HARPIES SNATCH'D TH' UNGUARDED CHARGE AWAY.

Pope's Homers Odyssey B. 20. Line 82.

163

47 The Harpies Going to Seize the Daughters of Pandarus.
Engraving after Flaxman by James Parker. Odyssey, 1805,
Plate 29.

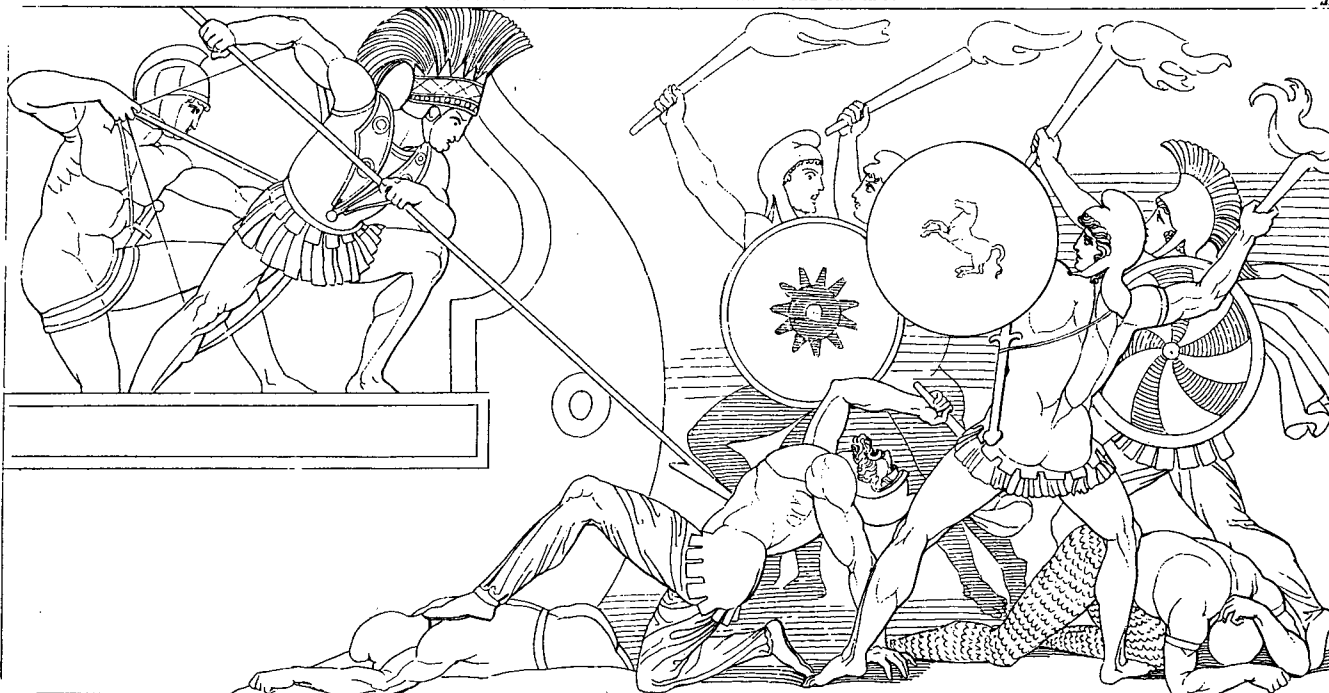


TO THE PROUD SUITORS BEARS IN PENSIVE STATE

TH' UNBENDED BOW AND ARROWS WING'D WITH FATE.

Wm. H. Storer Del. J. B. Kneller Sc.

48 Penelope Carrying the Bow of Ulysses to the Suitors.
Engraving after Flaxman by James Neagle. Odyssey, 1805,
Plate 30.

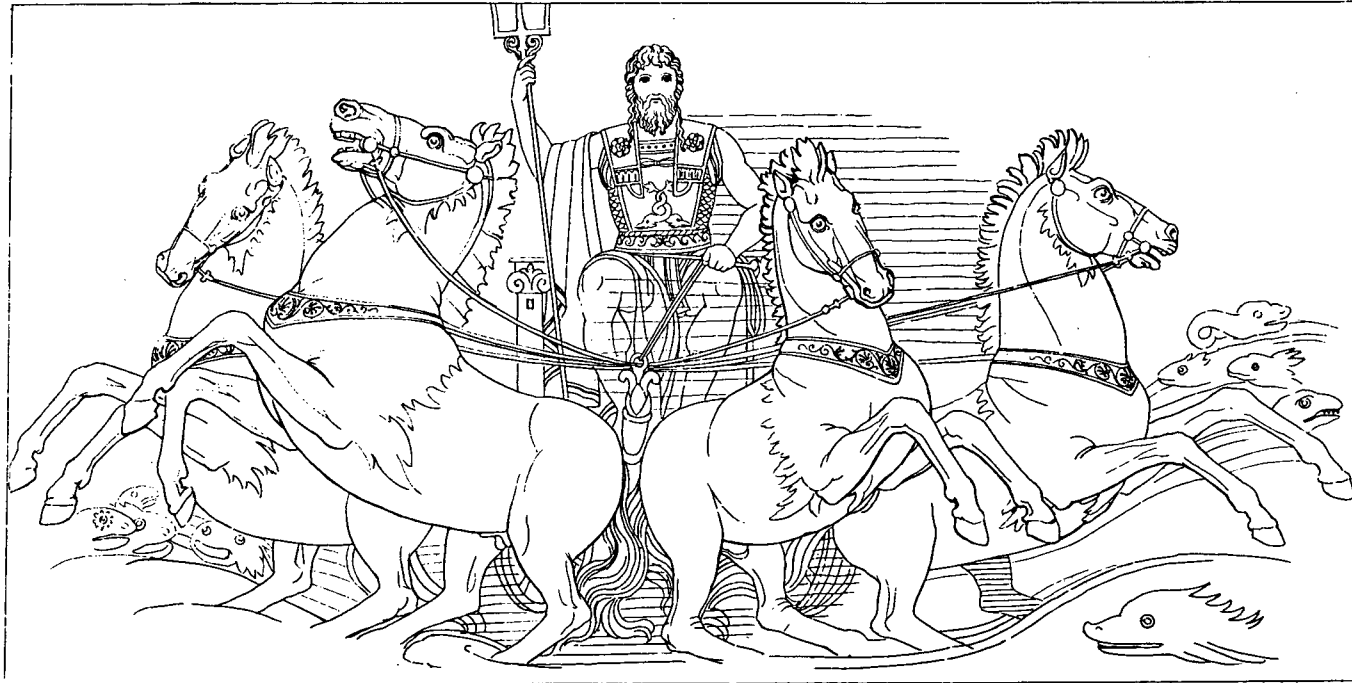


FULL TWELVE THE BOLDEST, IN A MOMENT FELL,
SENT BY GREAT AJAX TO THE SHADES OF HELL.

Figure Shows that Big Line goes

Flaxman del.

49 Ajax Defending the Greek Ships against the Trojans.
Engraving after Flaxman by Thomas Piroli. Iliad, 1805,
Plate 24.

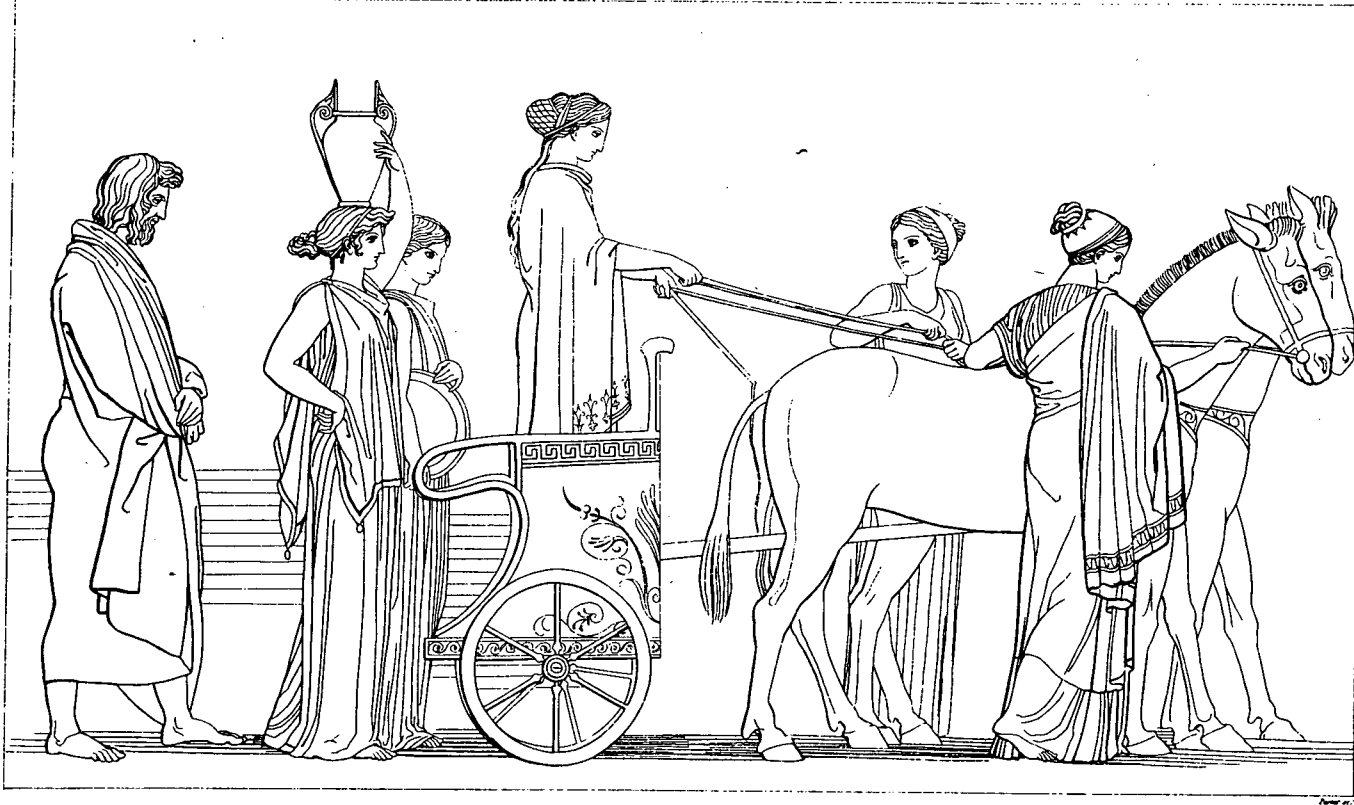


Neptune
HE SITS SUPERIOR, & THIN CHARIOT FLIES.
Pope's Homer, Pl. 4 P. 13. 12- 61.

166

50 Neptune Rising from the Sea. Engraving after Flaxman by Thomas Piroli. Iliad, 1805, Plate 22.

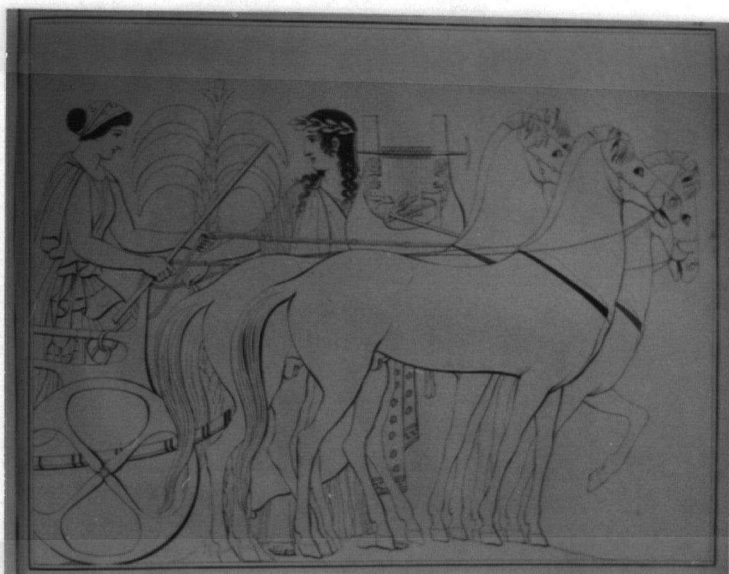
167



WITH SKILL THE VIRGIN GUIDES TH' EMBROIDER'D REIGN,
SLOW ROLLS THE CAR BEFORE TH' ATTENDING TRAIN.

Drap'd HOMER'S ODYSSEY B. G. LINE 375.

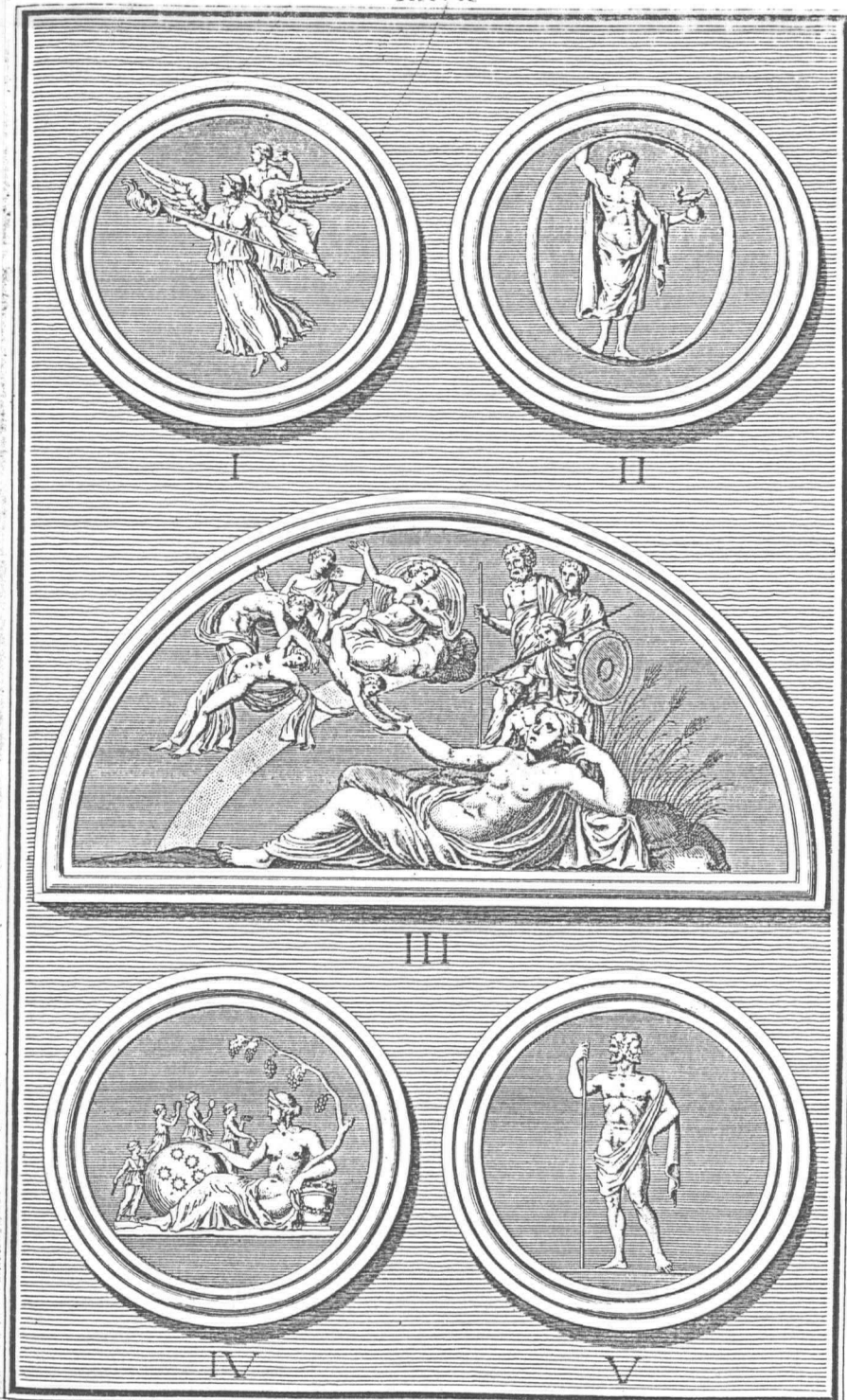
51 Ulysses Following the Car of Nausicaa. Engraving after Flaxman by James Parker. Odyssey, 1805, Plate 11.



52 Plate from Sir William Hamilton, Collection of Vases, I, 1791.



53 Achilles Dragging Hector's Body around the Walls of Troy
Engraving by Domenico Cunego, 1766, after a painting by
Gavin Hamilton.



L.P. Boizard Sculp

54 Plate XXVII from the Rev. Mr. Spencer's Polymetis, 1747.



55 Self-Portrait, 1779. College of Further Education, Halesowen.



Hector

Andromache

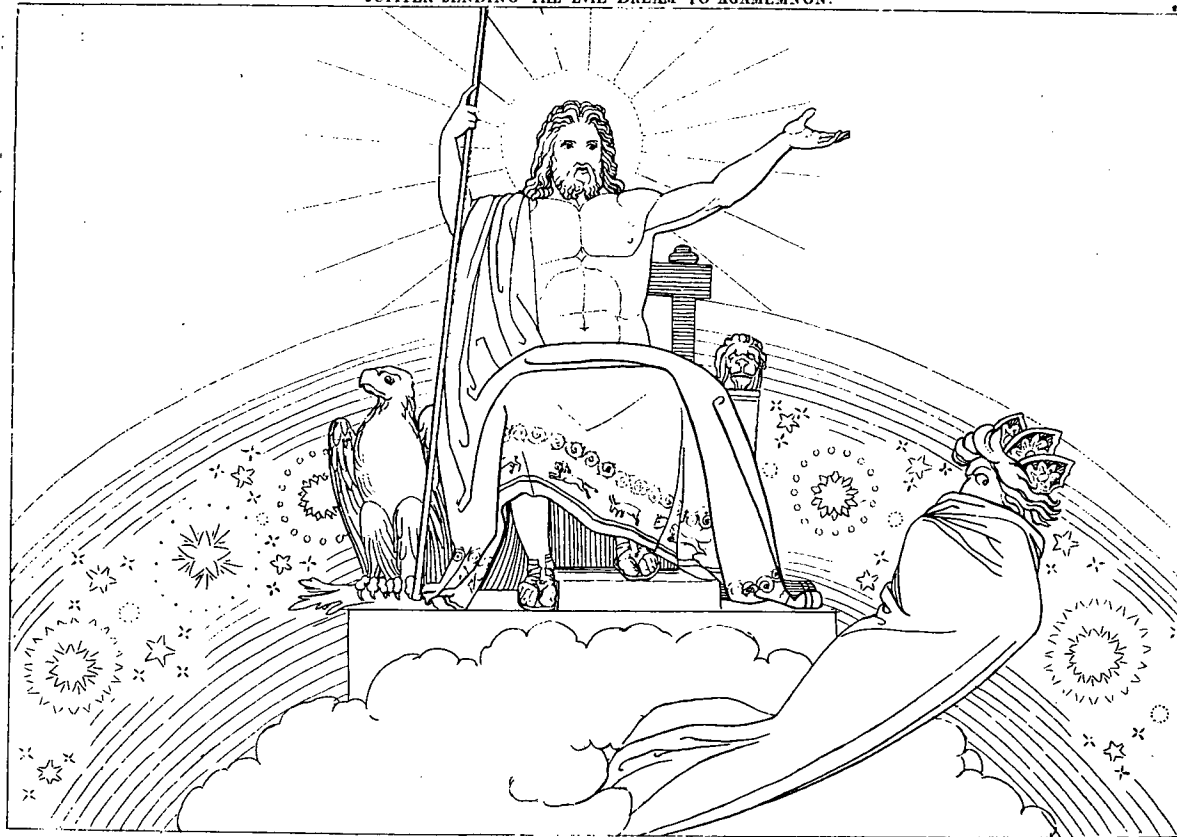
Parker sc.

HUNG ON HIS HAND.

Foyle's Homer's Iliad B. VI. line 506.

171

56 The Meeting of Hector and Andromache. Engraving after Flaxman by James Parker. Iliad, 1805, Plate 14.



Jupiter Evilsome Dream Evil soul.
FLY HENCE DELUDING DREAM AND LIGHT AS AIR,
TO AGAMEMNON'S AMPLE TENT REPAIR. Pope's Homer (Il. Bk. 2.)

172

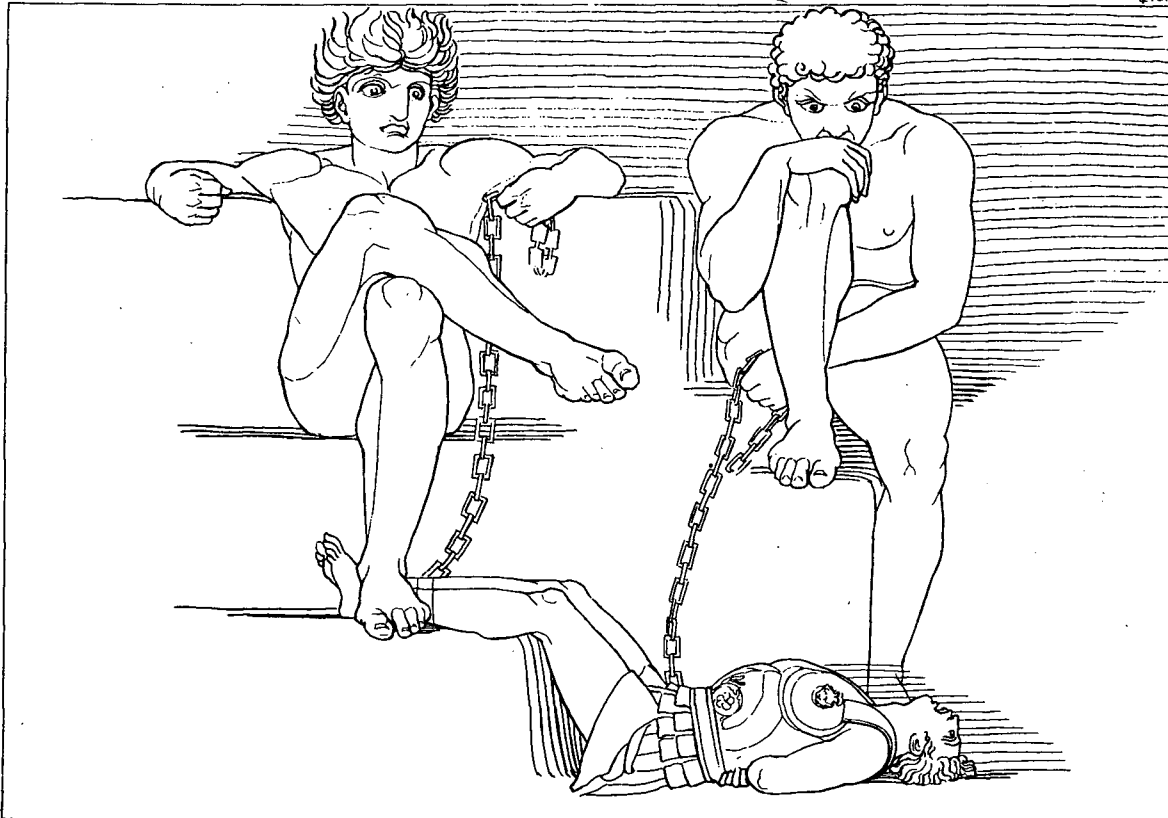
57 Jupiter Sending the Evil Dream to Agamemnon. Engraving after Flaxman by Thomas Piroli. Iliad, 1805, Plate 6.



BEFORE THE KING JOVE'S MESSENGER APPEARS.
Figure drawn from the Iliad.

173

58 Iris Advises Priam to Obtain the Body of Hector. Engraving
after Flaxman by Thomas Piroli. Iliad, 1805, Plate 38.

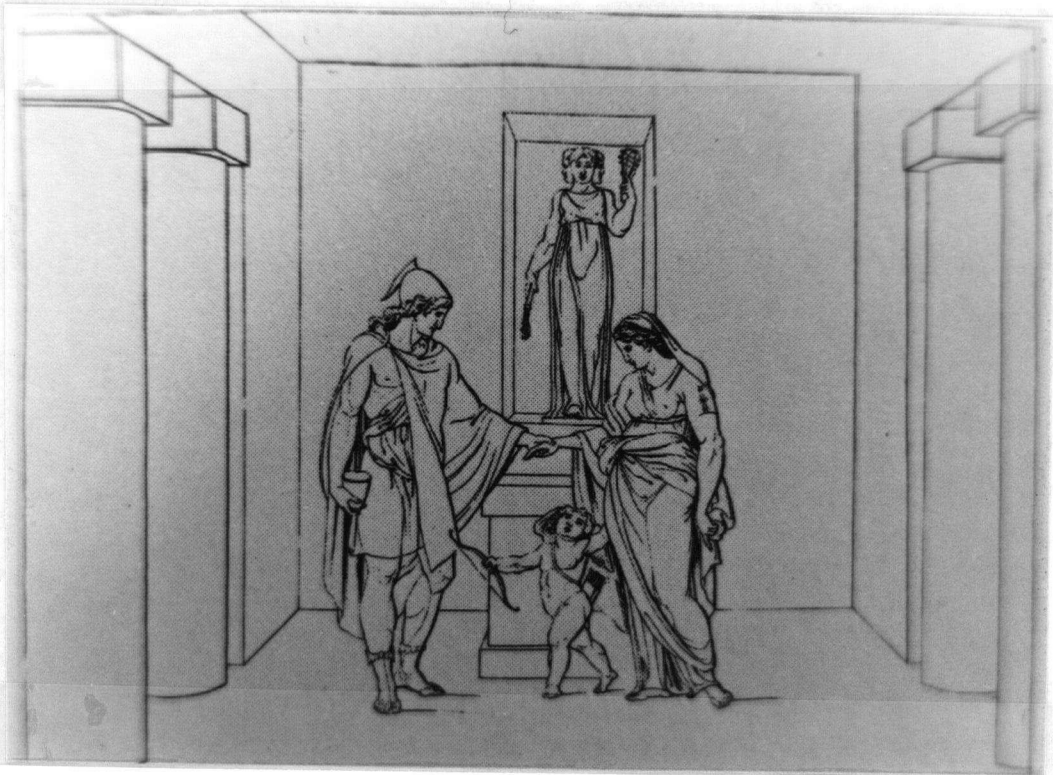


Mars
OTUS & EPHIALTES HELD THE CHAIN.
Pope's Homer's Iliad B. 3. line 478.

Piroli sc.

174

59 Otus and Ephialtes Holding Mars Captive. Engraving after Flaxman by Thomas Piroli. Iliad, 1805, Plate 11.



60 The Voyage of the Argonauts 1799 One of 24 designs engraved by Joseph Koch after drawings by Asmus Jacob Carstens.

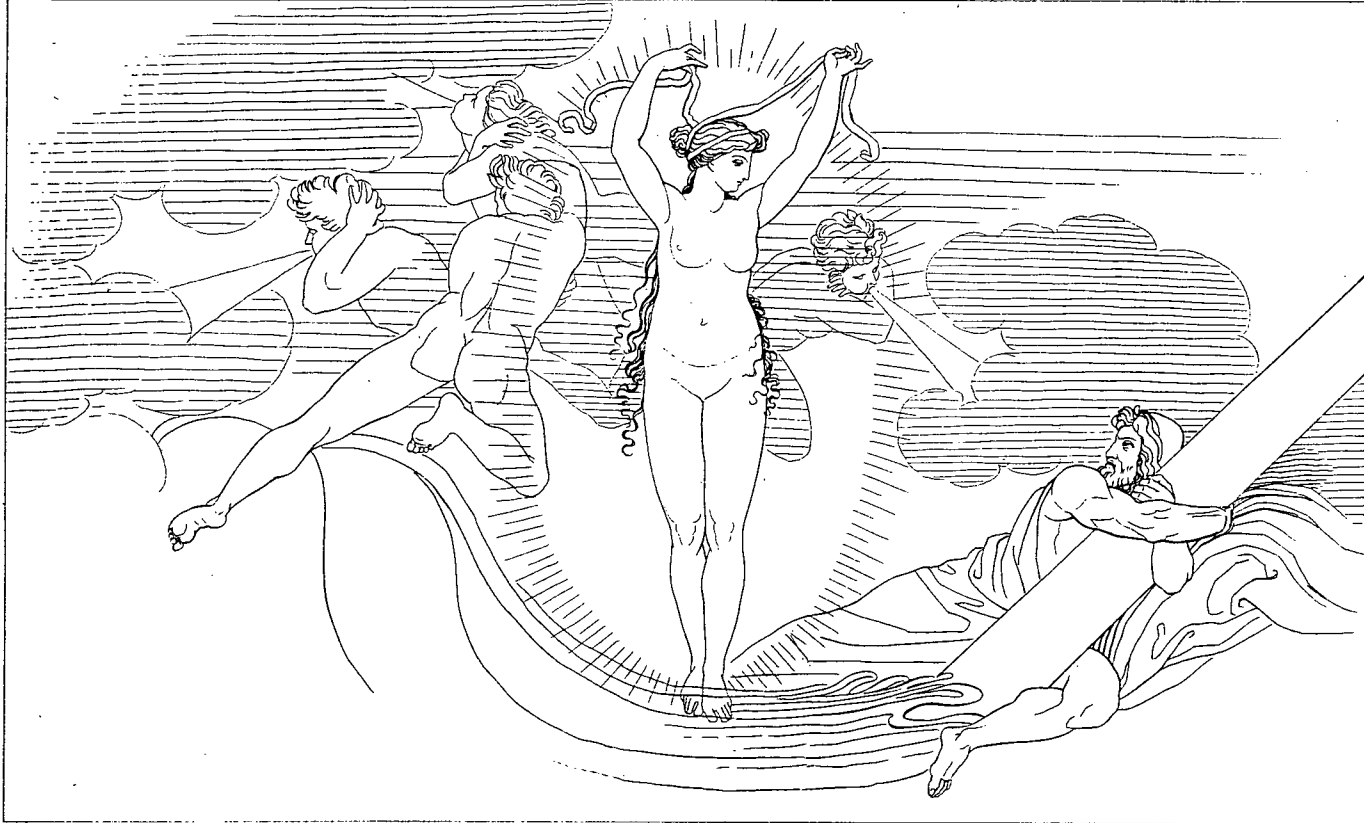


61 Mrs. Mary Blackshaw (Mary Lushington): monument, 1798-99. St. Mary Lewisham, Kent.



CLOSE TO HER HEAD THE PLEASING VISION STANDS.
AND THIS PERFORMS MINERVA'S HIGH COMMANDS.

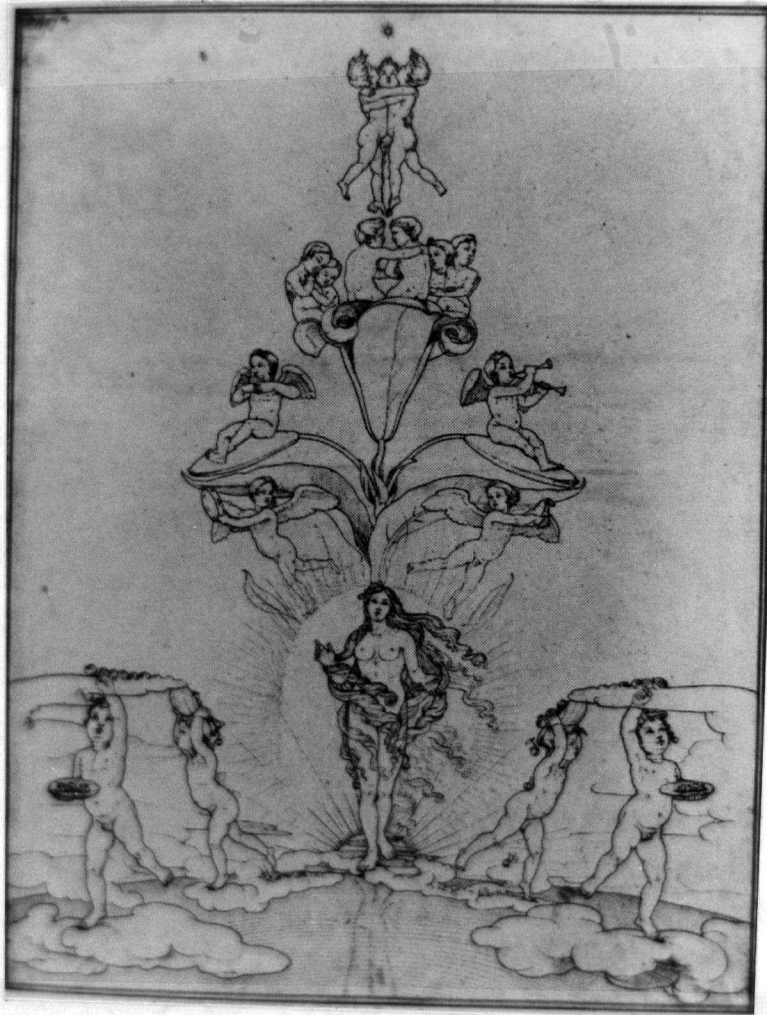
Pope's Homer's Odyssey B. 1. Line 1050.



ALL RADIANT ON THE RAFT THE GODDESS STOOD.

Pope's Homers Odyssey B. 5. Line 429.

63 Leucothea Preserving Ulysses Engraved after Flaxman by James Neagle. Odyssey, 1805, Plate 9.



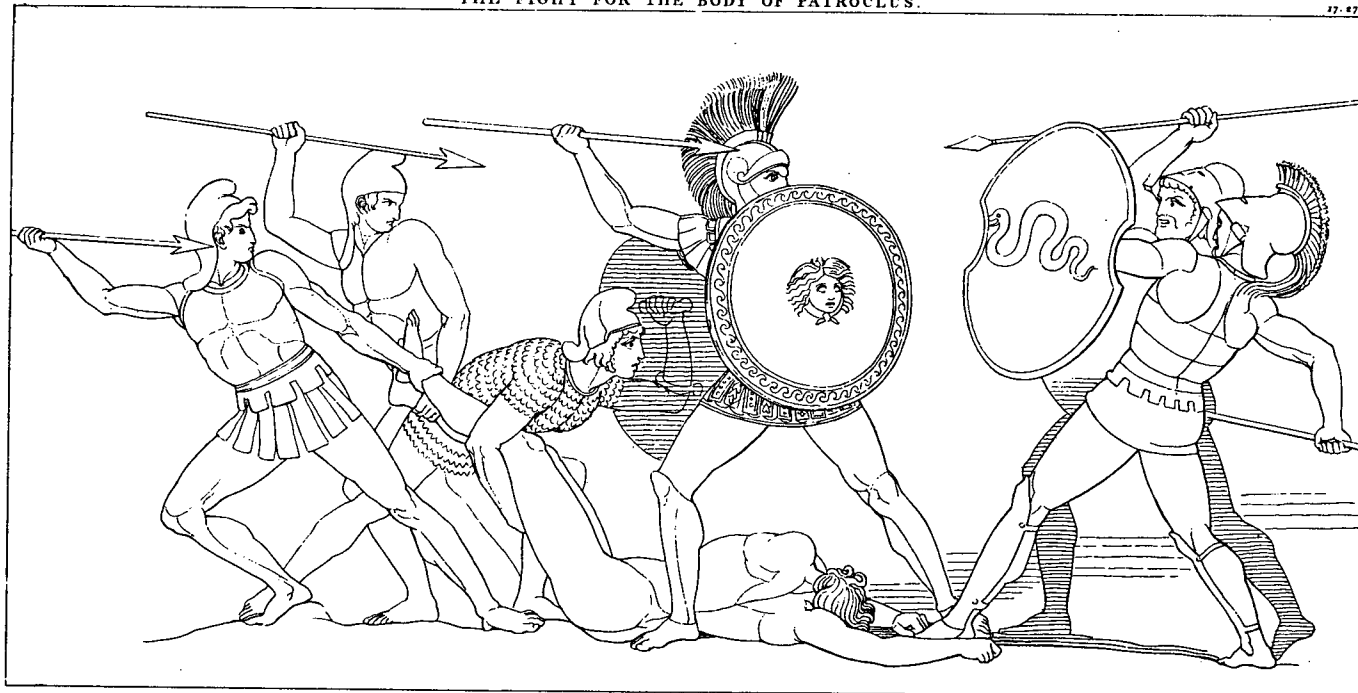
64 Preparatory study for the Kleiner Morgen by Philipp Otto Runge. Pen over traces of pencil.



65 Les Sabines, by Jacques-Louis David. (Musée du Louvre)



66 Warriors, by Jacques-Louis David. From sketchbook. (Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lille.)



Patroclus
THE TROJANS SEIZE THE SLAIN
Engr. after the Iliad B. 17. Line 253.

67 Fight for the Body of Patroclus Engraving after Flaxman
by Thomas Piroli. Iliad, 1805, Plate 26.



68a The Shield of Achilles: drawing. (Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery, San Marino, California)



68b The battle scene in 68a altered to fit the curved format of the Achilles Shield.



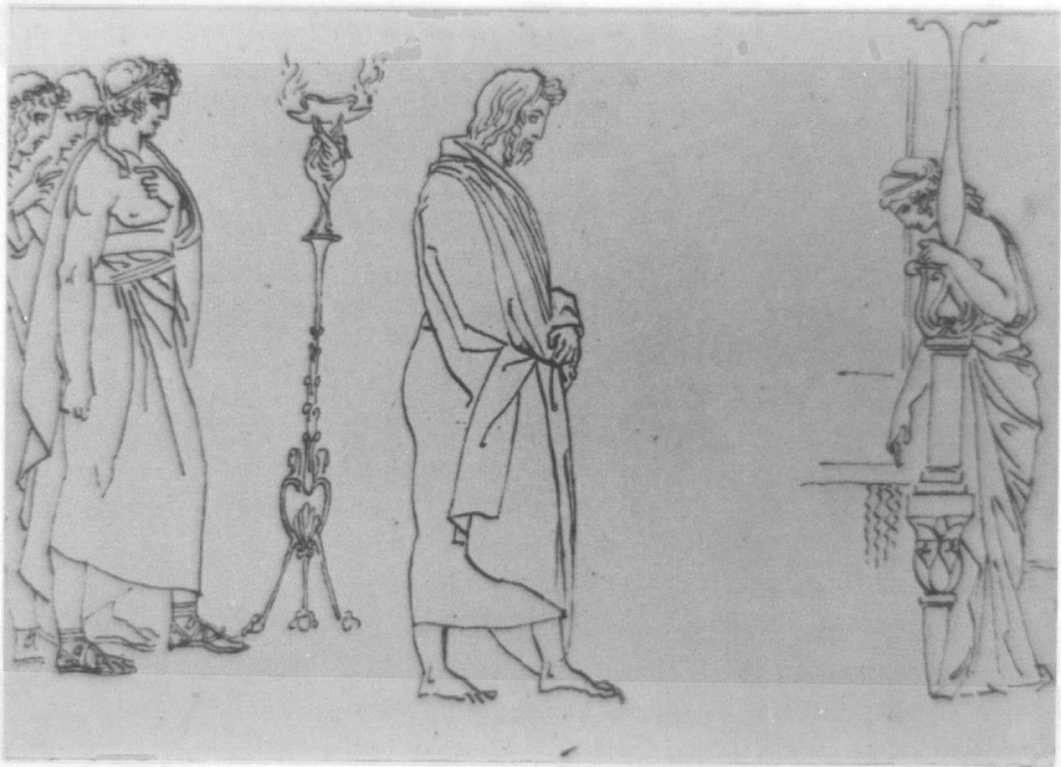
69 Shield of Achilles, 1821. Silvergilt, 94 cms diameter.
Executed after Flaxman by Philip Rundell.



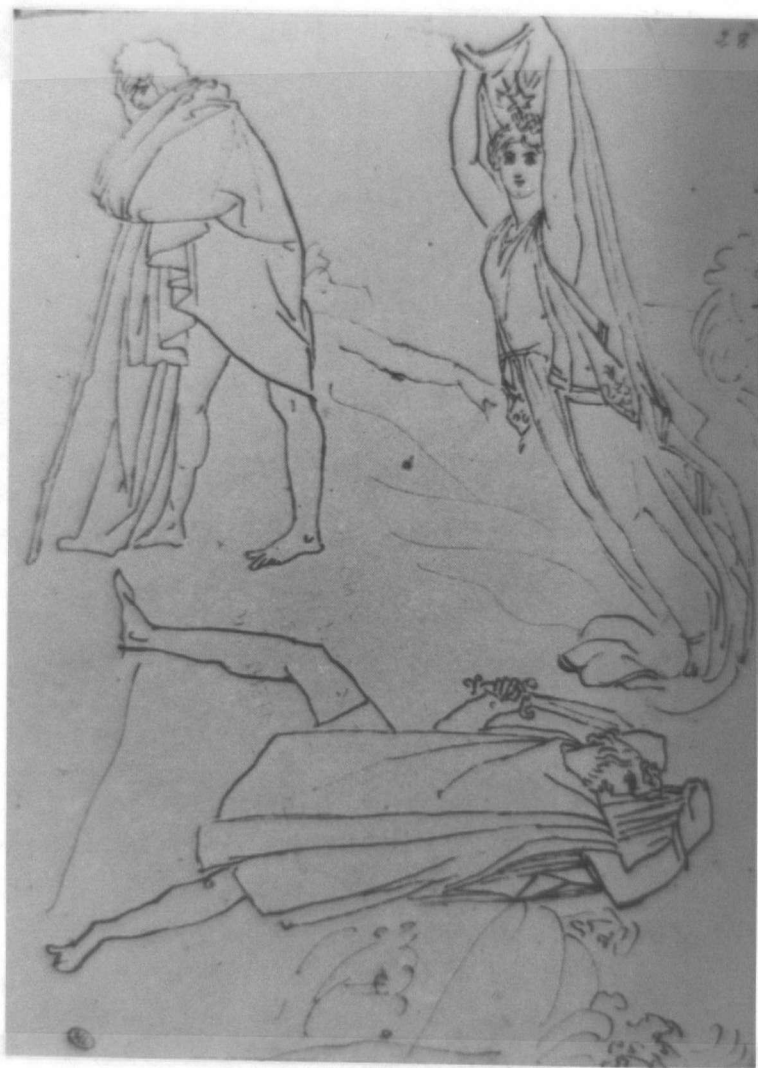
70 Achille deplore l'enterrement de Briseis, by Francois Rude. Plaster relief (Musée Rude, Dijon).



71 Achille deplore l'enterrement de Briseis, by Francois Rude. Pen and ink, 21.5 by 37 cm. (Musée des Beaux-Arts, Dijon)



72 Study after Flaxman's *Odyssey*, by Antoine Gros. From sketchbook, R.F. 29955, f.28v. Pen and brown ink over chalk, 16.3 by 22.5 cm. (Cabinet des Dessins Musée du Louvre).



73 Study after Flaxman's Odyssey, by Antoine Gros. From sketchbook, R.F.29955, f.28. Pen and brown ink over chalk, 16.3 by 22.5 cm. (Cabinet des Dessins, Musée du Louvre.)



74 Studies of Horses, and study after a plate from Flaxman's
Odyssey, by Antoine Gros. From sketchbook, R.F. 29955,
f.20. Pen and brown ink over chalk, 16.3 by 22.5 cm.
(Cabinet des Dessins, Musée du Louvre)



75 Jupiter and Thetis by J-A-D Ingres, Pencil, 32.5 by 24.2
cm (Musée Ingres, Montauban).



THUS THETIS SPOKE BUT JOVE IN SILENCE HELD
 THE SACRED COUNCILS OF HIS BREAST CONCEAL'D.

Page 1. Homer's Iliad VI. 1. 46c.

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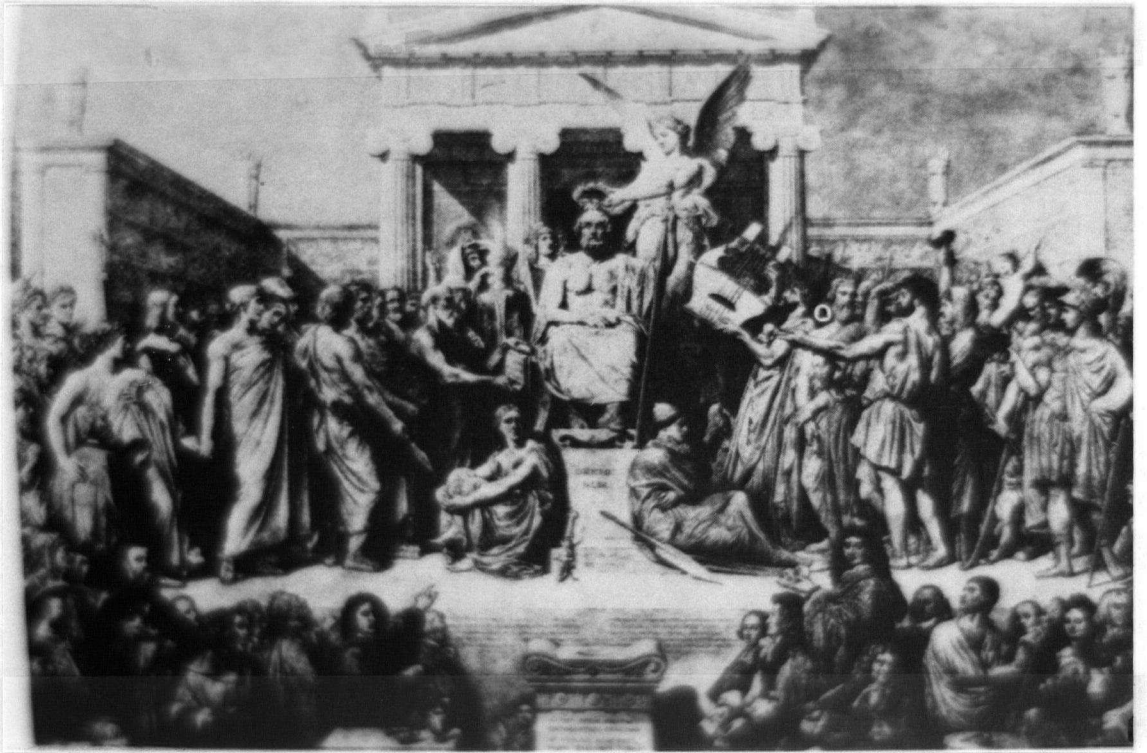
76 Thetis Intreating Jupiter to Honor Achilles Engraved after Flaxman by William Blake. Iliad, 1805, Plate 5.

THE COUNCIL OF THE GODS.

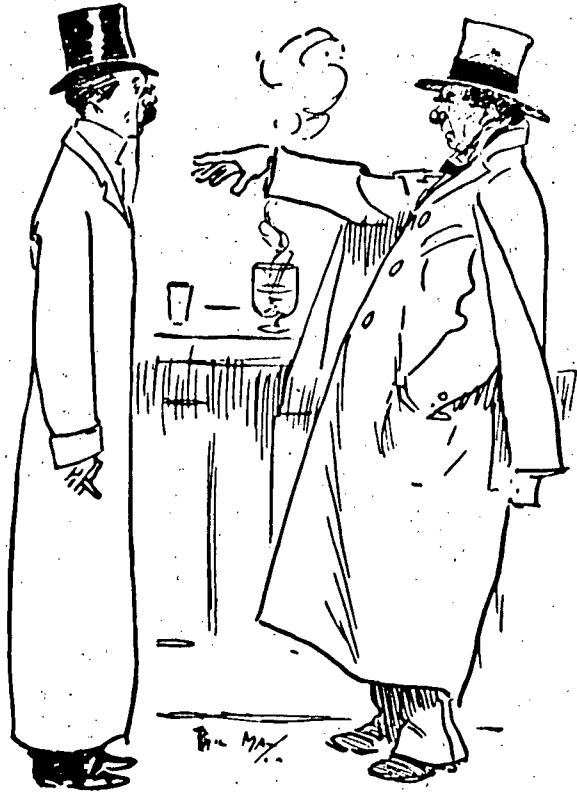


IMMORTAL HERE, FRESH WITH BLOOM DIVINE,
THE GOLDEN GORLET CROWNS WITH PURPLE WINE.

77 The Council of the Gods Engraved after Flaxman by Thomas Piroli. Iliad, 1805, Plate 9.



78 Homère Déifié, by Ingres. Signed Black chalk, pen and ink wash, 21 by 31 cm. (Musée du Louvre, Paris).



Arrangement with W. Thacker & Co., London.

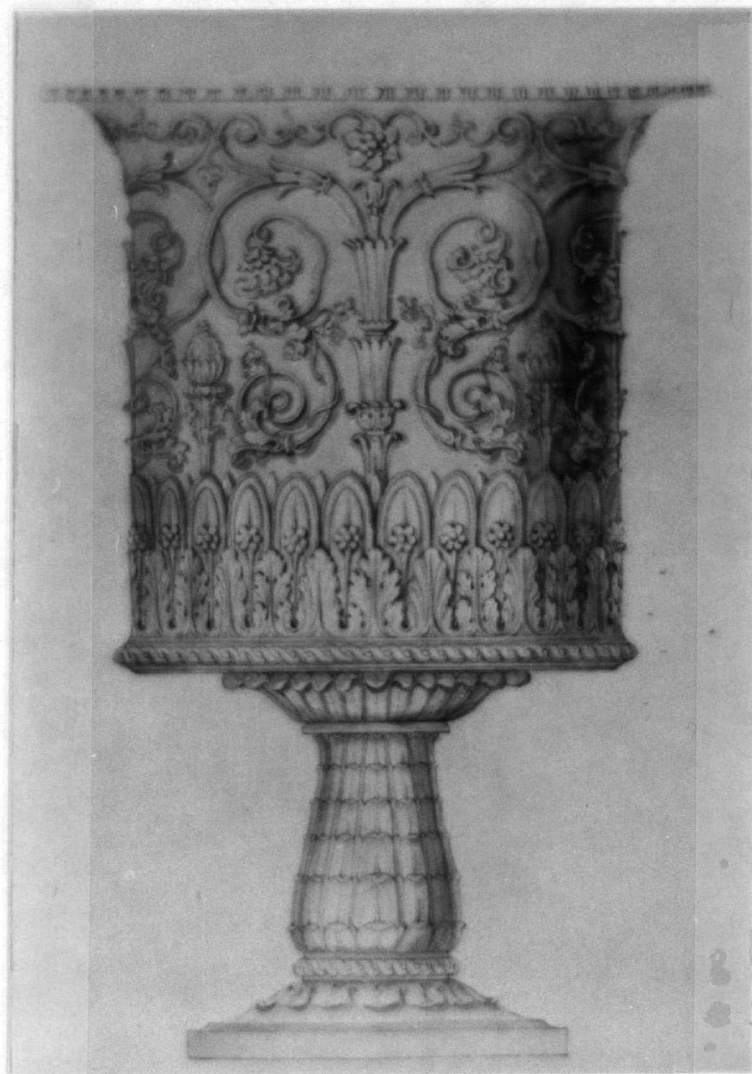
[Drawn by Phil May.]

" I TELL YOU, I KNOW THE WORLD "

79 'I Tell You, I Know the World' by Phil May in F. Berkeley Smith, In London Town London 1907.



80 Design for a wine-cooler by
Thomas Stothard R.A. Pen and
Wash, 25.4 x 20.3 cm. British
Museum.



81 Design for a wine cooler after
Thomas Stothard. Pen and wash,
30.4 x 20.9 cm.



82 Design for a wine-cooler (perhaps after William Theed, R.A. 1764-1817), Pen drawing, 26.7 x 24.7 cm.



83a Wine-cooler, maker's mark of Paul Storr (1771-1844), London Hall-mark for 1809. Silver gilt, height 35.56 cm. Collection of the Marquess of Ormonde.



83b Detail of wine-cooler in 83a.