This exhibition takes a look at three series of prints by major artists, published in 1816, the year of the founding of the Fitzwilliam Museum: books eleven and twelve of J.M.W. Turner’s Liber Studiorum (published in England), Goya’s Tauromaquia (published in Spain), and Peter Cornelius’s large-scale Illustrations to Goethe’s Faust (made in Italy but published in Germany). These are not normally works or artists displayed together but the conjunction is intriguing and suggests the range and variety of responses to the artistic climate of 1816.

On 10 April 1815 Mount Tambora on the island of Sumbawa in Indonesia (then the Dutch East Indies) erupted. It has been called the most destructive volcano in human history, due to the worldwide climactic and socio-economic effects that followed in the three years it took for the volcanic dust cloud to disperse. Thousands were killed in the immediate vicinity, and an incalculable number of people across the globe were affected by the temperature drop and disruption to the growing seasons. 1816 was a year of widespread famine and civil unrest and is now known as the ‘Year Without a Summer’.

During the eruption, swaths of volcanic ash and sulphate gas were thrust 40km skywards into the stratosphere, far above any rainclouds that could have sped up their dispersal. These gases and particles circled the planet and played havoc with the world’s weather systems. Although some parts of the planet were largely unaffected in the summer of 1816, other expanses - in particular parts of North America and most of central Europe - were devastated by ‘uncommonly violent’ storms, heavy and incessant rainfall (sometimes accompanied by a sulphurous smell), bitterly cold temperatures or periods of extended drought. Reports in newspapers were filled with accounts of the ‘extraordinary’ weather.

The foreign papers continue to inform us of the damage done by storms of hail and thunder, in almost every part of Europe. Whole districts have been ravaged and laid waste; houses have been blown down, the labours of the husbandman destroyed, rivers have burst their banks, and inundated vast tracts.

Caledonian Mercury, 25 July 1816

The volcanic aerosol veil also had an effect on the appearance of the sun, making it look red, fiery and enlarged. It was widely noticed, however, that its powers seemed weakened: for instance, sunlight would not melt the five-foot snow drifts that fell in July. Astronomers in America and Europe associated the aberrant weather not with the distant and invisible volcanic aerosols, but with the appearance of a large spot on the surface of the sun (the two phenomena are not, in fact, related: sunspot activity follows predictable cycles). For the most apprehensive observers, however, the sunspots combined with the unexpected change to the weather seemed to presage the apocalypse. An astronomer in Bologna (sometimes referred to as a ‘mad Italian prophet’) caused hysteria by suggesting that the end of the world would occur on 18 July. Byron’s apocalyptic fantasy poem ‘Darkness’, the literary work most closely associated with that summer, was written after he witnessed first-hand the settling of volcanic ash on 5 July, which temporarily blocked out the sun. In the poem, which begins ‘I had a dream, which was not all a dream. / The bright sun was extinguished, and the stars / Did wander darkling in the eternal space / Rayless, and pathless... ’, the poet goes on to imagine cities razed to the ground, and humanity ravaged by famine and war: ‘All earth was but one thought - and that was death / Immediate and inglorious’. Byron was sharing a rented villa in Geneva (very close to the Swiss views depicted by Turner in nos. 9-12, 14-15) with Percy Bysshe Shelley and Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin (she and Shelley did not marry until December of 1816). The ghost stories they told during the thunderstorms and their scientific discussions about Galvanism (the principle of using electrical shocks to bring an inanimate object into life) are the well-documented creative sparks that helped to bring Mary’s novel Frankenstein into fruition (see no. 14).

The term of reference in the English language, ‘The Year Without a Summer’, has lost some of its impact in our time, especially after the short, moderate summers of the last decade. The phrase masks the seriousness of the phenomenon for those alive in 1816, meaning as it did ‘no food’ for hundreds of thousands of people. It became clear in the summer of that year that the autumn harvests would be a disaster. In England riots broke out in May. In Ely, Littleport and towns in Norfolk,
labourers with banners that read ‘Bread or Blood’ held magistrates hostage and fought against the militia. Many countries, including Britain, afflicted by this new climate disaster had only just emerged from hostilities with France. Britain had not yet marked its one-year anniversary of the Battle of Waterloo, a victory that finally brought to an end the protracted series of conflicts against Napoleon (1803–15). In the aftermath, the population had to contend with high taxation, escalating food prices and unemployment, due to the arrival home of discharged soldiers.

In Germany and Switzerland, however, the crisis was particularly acute. ‘There is no longer any hope for agriculture’, reported the Morning Chronicle on 24 July, writing about the Rhine Valley area, ‘the calamity appears almost general; all travellers assert that it is very experiment in Turkey, Hungary, Italy, Germany, and throughout all the East of Europe’. Poor harvests led very quickly to mass starvation. The French and German expressions for the period, ‘L’Année de la misère’ (The Year of Misery) and ‘Das Hungerjahrr’ (The Year of Hunger), better capture the social crisis across central Europe, as brought on by the relentless extreme, weather of 1816-18.

By the 19th century, amateur meteorologists had made some advances in better understanding links between atmospheric measurements and changes in the weather, but record keeping was localised and usually private. The impossibility of transferring data speedily to a central location prohibited major advances in atmospheric science. The idea that a volcanic eruption could cause such havoc had been mooted twenty years earlier by Benjamin Franklin, whose paper ‘Meteorological Imaginations and Conjectures’, looked back to the altered climate of 1783-4, following the explosion of the volcano Laki in Iceland in 1783. His theory was not widely believed. In 1816, however, one of the many manifestations of threatening natural phenomena was attributed to an eruption. ‘It is the general opinion of scientific men,’ ran a piece in Plymouth and Cornish Advertiser on 12 September 1816, ‘that the extraordinary gale of wind from the north on Saturday night last, was occasioned by some dreadful volcanic explosion in the south’. In general however, even if they believed that it was the cause of their woes, this was not helpful to the vast majority of people, many of whom were living in a parlous state after having endured such a politically tumultuous period. What most people craved above all was peace and repose. A cruel twist of fate in the form of a cataclysmic event halfway across the world was about to bring about another era of chaos and confusion.

Selected further reading

D’Arcy Wood, Gillen, Tambora, the eruption that changed the world (Princeton University Press, 2014)

Klingaman, William K. and Nicholas P. Klingaman, The Year without a Summer: 1816 and the volcano that darkened the world and changed history, (St Martin’s Press, 2013)

Harris, Alexandra, Weatherland: Writers and artists under English Skies (Thames & Hudson, 2015)

CATALOGUE

All measurements are in millimetres, height preceding width.


Harris, Tomás Harris, Goya: engravings and lithographs, Oxford 1964.

Lugt: Frits Lugt, Les marques de collections de dessins et d'estampes.. Amsterdam, 1921

England and Turner (nos. 1-17)

On 1 January 1816 Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775-1851) published Parts XI and XII of his large print series, the Liber Studiorum (Book of Studies). The enterprise had been in production for the best part of a decade (Part I had been issued in June 1807). The initial prospectus for the series that accompanied the second part, issued in 1808, announced that Turner intended to ‘attempt a description of the various styles of landscape, viz. the historic, mountainous, pastoral, marine and architectural’, a classification system that had not previously been imposed on landscape art. Each plate was lettered correspondingly at the top with a letter or letters (‘A’, ‘H’, ‘P’, ‘M’ or ‘Ma’ – to which Turner added ‘EP’, which is usually understood to stand for ‘Elevated Pastoral’ or ‘Epic Pastoral’). At the outset Turner had intended the series to comprise 100 plates (offered to subscribers in twenty parts of five prints each); although in the end only 71 were published.

Turner turned 41 in April 1816, and had already secured his place as one of the most successful artists of the day. He had been an elected member of the Royal Academy since the age of 26 and had been named ‘Professor of Perspective’ in 1807. By creating a series of prints that demonstrated the breadth of his talent as a landscape artist, Turner hoped to enhance his position and breathe new life into the genre of British landscape painting. Turner intended to fund the series himself and could not have embarked on such a costly undertaking before this point in his career, as it was a considerable financial risk. The price for each print doubled over the period of production, demonstrating the tough market forces of the time in terms of inflation, but perhaps also the struggle to make a profit. There was a three-year gap before parts XIII and XIV were published on 1 January 1819, at which point the publication was abandoned. The reason or reasons for this are not known but speculation has included Turner’s declining interest and financial

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considerations. In the decade that followed 1816, Turner became involved in other projects: the 'Little Liber', a series of twelve mezzotints engraved by Turner himself (c. 1820-26) and two further series, The Rivers of England (1824) and Marine Views (1826), in collaboration with Thomas Lupton (see cat. no. 6).

The link is often made to an earlier influential and respected series of landscapes, the Liber Veritatis (published in 1777), comprising mezzotints by Richard Earlom after pen and sepia drawings by Claude Lorrain (1600-82). There is no doubt that Turner was inspired by its success, and its influence can be seen not only in Turner's choice of title, but in the selection of mezzotint as the reproductive technique. However, the two series are different in several important respects. Claude's Liber Veritatis was published in two volumes by John Boydell (1720-1804), the leading print publisher of the day, whereas Turner planned to fund his venture by subscription, topping up funds with income from the sale of drawings. Whereas the Liber Veritatis was a record of Claude's existing work, Turner intended his series to contain a number of entirely new compositions. Turner's Liber is also different in function to the earlier series, since it was to be a collection for study and learning (as indicated by the title), aimed in particular at other artists. Each plate offered something different to the viewer in terms of subject matter, composition and atmosphere, as well as the formal aspects of line and tone.

The series has been seen as marking a turning point in Turner's experience of overseeing the interpretation of his work. 'Interpretation', referring to printed copies after another artist's work, had been a hot topic at the time Turner started out on the project. The engraver John Landseer (1769-1852) had given a series of lectures at the Royal Academy in 1806, which were published a year later as Lectures on the Art of Engraving delivered at the Royal Institution of Great Britain. Landseer gave an impassioned plea for printmakers to be admitted to the Royal Academy as full members, saying that: 'Engraving is no more an art of copying Painting than the English language is an art of copying Greek or Latin'. That year and for the first time, one of Turner's paintings was published in engraved form as a large mezzotint entitled A Shipwreck (570 x 810 mm). To ensure that the print was produced under his direction, Turner drew up a contract with the engraver, Charles Turner (no relation). The print, again funded by subscription (two guineas for a published print; four guineas for a proof), was a success and this must have helped spur Turner to embark upon the Liber, with Charles as his chief engraver.

In A Shipwreck, as in the plates for the Liber, etched lines are integrated with mezzotint (some of the plates also feature aquatint, but none of those in Parts XI and XII exhibited here). In mezzotint the printmaker works from dark to light, gradually creating highlights by polishing (or burnishing) a roughened plate that would print black if untouched. Evidence shows that Turner had been interested in the technicalities of printmaking since the early 1790s.a He experimented not only with etching (the easiest technique for a non-professional printmaker to master), but also aquatint, soft-ground etching and mezzotint. Turner became extremely proficient in the latter, capable of rendering passages of light and shade with great dexterity, exemplified in the 'Little Liber' series. The first plate in the Liber for which Turner was wholly responsible was Junction of Severn and Wye in Part VI, issued on 1 June 1811 (at the same time as Part VII). He understood what was achievable in the medium. For the Liber plates assigned to one of the other printmakers he employed, there are a number of working proofs that show he acted as their director, asking the men to correct passages he found unsatisfactory.

Turner did not intend the Liber to be a diary of contemporary events, and the series is generally considered as a whole, since documentary evidence suggests that Turner had developed an overarching plan for the sequence early on in its formation.iii However, it is interesting to look at the prints of Parts XI and XII from the point of view of the contemporary audience, who had waited two years since the publication of the last two parts, and who were witnessing these familiar landscapes transformed by the weather emergency in the summer of 1816.

Footnotes
iv Herrmann, ibid, p.44

Selected further reading


Footnotes
1. Tenth Plague of Egypt
Etching (J.M.W Turner) and mezzotint (William Say, 1768-1834) printed in brown ink, issued in Part XII, dated Jan 1 1816: 208 x 291 (plate); Finberg 611 Bequeathed by Charles Brinsley Marlay, 1912 (P9905-R)
This scene illustrates a passage from the book of Exodus in the Bible, describing the killing of the first-born sons of the Egyptian people as divine punishment for their enslavement of the Jews. It is one of a number of biblical or historical subjects belonging to the ‘Historical’ category of the Liber (as denoted by the capital letter ‘H’ at the top of the print). The composition is based closely on a painting that Turner had exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1802, although in the print he introduced a shaft of lightning, adding yet another threatening atmospheric element. It is by far the least peaceful of the five prints of Part XII of Turner’s Liber Studiorum, and is an auspicious choice for an English audience in the early months of 1816, about to feel the brunt of the extraordinary weather, brought on by the cataclysmic volcanic eruption of Mount Tambora in Indonesia in April 1815.

2. Tenth Plague of Egypt
Etching by J.M.W. Turner (1775-1851), printed in rich brown ink: 206 x 287 (plate); Lugt 1498; Finberg 61 etched state
Bequeathed by Charles Brinsley Marlay, 1912 (P.9904-R)

Preliminary state of no. 1

In this exhibition the finished, published states from the Liber are displayed alongside unfinished states, showing the outlines of the compositions. Turner was responsible for the preliminary etching of almost all the plates for the Liber Studiorum (another artist is thought to be responsible for a small number of the plates, see nos. 5 & 11). These unfinished states were never intended for publication, but a relatively large number of proofs were taken. The printer would prepare a plate for Turner, who would then use an etching needle to draw through the ground. The engraver would then pull a proof from the plate and deliver it back to Turner, together with the plate itself, recovered with etching ground to anticipate Turner’s alterations.

3. Norham Castle on the Tweed
Etching (J.M.W Turner) and mezzotint (Charles Turner, 1773-1857) printed in brown ink, issued in Part XII, dated 1 Jan 1816; 209 x 292 (plate); Finberg 57 I
Given by Arthur Young, 1934 (P.9900-R)

One of Turner’s favourite and most frequently repeated compositions, first drawn in 1797, and a very peaceful scene compared to no. I, with the castle positioned at the centre of the plate, silhouetted against the sky and mirrored in the tranquil water below. Charles Turner was an important early collaborator with Turner on the Liber. Not only had he worked on the first twenty plates, which had appeared in parts I to IV between 1807 and 1809, but he had published parts II to IV from his address in Warren Street, Fitzroy Square.

However, he fell out with Turner over financial issues, and had not worked on a plate for Liber since the publication of Part V, five years earlier. There is a large series of engraver’s proofs for this plate, one with a note written by Turner on the subject of colour, expressing a preference of ‘fine rich bistre’ to ‘bistre’ (i.e. a darker brown to a yellowish-brown) and acknowledging that the same ink will not on all the plates produce the same effect.

4. Norham Castle on the Tweed
Etching by J.M.W. Turner (1775-1851), printed in brown ink: 208 x 291 (plate); Finberg 57 etched state
Bequeathed by Charles Brinsley Marlay, 1912 (P.10431-R)

Turner was interested in printmaking from an early age and tried his hand at most techniques except line engraving, which required years of practice. At an early stage in the planning of the Liber Turner decided to etch the outlines of the designs himself. The lines are etched into the surface of the plates so vigorously that they are easily detectable in the finished, published states, after the mezzotint tone has been added.

Turner made preliminary drawings in pen and ink for most of the Liber subjects. These are the only drawings he made specifically for translation in engraved form to feature brown and grey monochrome washes, thought to be in imitation of Claude’s Liber Veritatis, engraved in the 1770s by Richard Earlam and published by John Boydell, see p. 3 above.

5. Berry Pomeroy Castle
Etching (attributed to Henry Dawe, 1790-1848) and mezzotint (J.M.W Turner), printed in brown ink, issued in Part XII, dated 1 Jan 1816; 214 x 292 (plate); Finberg 58 I
Given by Arthur Young, 1934 (P.9901-R)

One plate of each classification, ‘Pastoral’ (‘P’) and ‘Elevated’ or ‘Epic Pastoral’ (‘EP’), was published in each Part of the Liber. They are thought to have been intended as a pair, representing different ideas of the pastoral: a poetic ideal (‘EP’) and ‘‘the more prosaic realities of British life’ (‘P’). This rule would make this print’s pendant Norham Castle on the Tweed (no. 3).

The first etched state of this plate is very rare, and not thought to be by Turner himself. It is one of two plates in Part XII where Turner was responsible only for the engraving of the plates (the other is no. II). The etching is usually attributed to Henry Dawe.

6. Dunblane (‘Dumblain’). Abbey, Scotland
Etching (J.M.W Turner) and mezzotint (Thomas Goff Lupton, 1791-1873), printed in brown ink, issued in Part XI, dated 1 Jan 1816; 207 x 294 (plate); 289 x 431 (sheet); Finberg 56 I
Given by Arthur Young, 1934 (P.9899-R)
Apprenticed to George Clint, Lupton was one of two ‘new’ engravers to be employed by Turner for the last four parts of Liber. Turner trained his young employees rigorously, annotating stages of proof impressions with instructions or touchings.

This peaceful scene of women working outdoors did not reflect the reality of parts of Scotland in 1816, with many areas receiving a battering of storms as a result of the disruption of weather patterns caused by the volcanic ash cloud. Newspapers were filled with reports of ‘uncommonly violent’ thunderstorms, whirlwinds and torrents of water.

7. Dunblane (‘Dumblain’) Abbey, Scotland
Etching by J.M.W Turner (1775-1851), printed in brown ink: 207 x 288 (plate); Finberg 56 etched state
Bequeathed by Charles Brinsley Marlay, 1912 (P.I0429-R)

Preliminary state of no. 6

There are more engravers’ proofs for this plate than is usual for this late stage of the Liber, a consequence of Turner’s recruitment of younger engravers. Here, Turner was anxious about the balance of lights and darks across the plate, and in ensuring that the women stood out against the cliff face. On one of the proofs Turner wrote to the engraver Lupton: ‘The sky must be much lighter and clearer, and until it possesses both the other parts have not their value ... the figures require to be sharper as to the lights and shadows. Query have you got sufficient ground on the sky to bear scraping down? The parts by the tower look rather doubtful.’

8. Entrance of Calais Harbour
Etching and mezzotint by J.M.W Turner (1775-1851), printed in brown ink, issued in Part XI, dated 1 Jan 1816: 214 x 302 (plate); Lugt 1498; Finberg 55 II
Bequeathed by Charles Brinsley Marlay, 1912 (P.I0343-R)

Eleven of the Liber Studiorum plates are entirely by Turner himself, the first appearing in Part VI. Turner was perhaps spurred on to undertake more work after his quarrel with Charles Turner. This plate seems to have been executed in pure mezzotint without any preliminary etching, although there are some etched lines added over the mezzotint tone.

The composition is based on a painting of c1803, now in the Frick Collection in New York, and is the only marine subject in the Liber. The waves in the gales of 1816 were far more dangerous. Weather reports listed boats being sunk and broken to pieces in hurricanes.

9. Ville de Thun - Switzerland
Etching (J.M.W Turner) and mezzotint (Thomas Hodgetts, fl.1801-46), printed in brown ink, issued in Part XII, dated 1 Jan 1816: 208 x 292 (plate); Finberg 59 I
Given by Arthur Young, 1934 (P.9902-R)

This plate is based on a sketch Turner made during his 1802 Swiss tour. This idyllic scene would have been virtually unrecognisable to an eyewitness in Switzerland in 1816. There was extensive flooding that submerged and ruined crops in low-lying land. This was disastrous for a country whose every family spent half its income on bread. The bad harvests led very quickly to mass starvation, and the Swiss political structure exacerbated the situation with each canton banning exports of grain and flour. Visitors to the country recorded seeing what they described as living skeletons roaming the fields. In Europe 1816 was known as ‘The Year of the Beggar’.

10. Ville de Thun - Switzerland
Etching by J.M.W Turner (1775-1851), printed in rich brown ink: 208 x 290 (plate); Lugt 1498; Finberg 59 etched state
Bequeathed by Charles Brinsley Marlay, 1912 (P.I0434-R)

Preliminary state of no. 9

There is a related drawing in one of the sketchbooks in the 1856 Turner bequest to the nation, held by the Tate Gallery. The figures are stock characters that appear in others of Turner’s Swiss views. He made accurate drawings of the medieval tower but in the pencil sketch and in this print he exaggerated the proportions and made changes to the design. Despite these deliberate distortions, Turner labelled the print ‘A’, which places it within the ‘Architectural’ category of the Liber.

II. The Source of the Arveyron in the Valley of Chamonix, Savoy
Etching (attributed to Henry Dawe, 1790-1848) and mezzotint (J.M.W Turner), printed in brown ink, issued in Part XII, dated 1 Jan 1816: 214 x 291 (plate); 292 x 435 (sheet); Lugt 1498; Finberg 60 I
Given by Arthur Young, 1934 (P.9903-R)

As with Berry Pomeroy Castle (no. 5), the first etched state of the plate is very rare, and thought to be by the young printmaker Henry Dawe, rather than Turner.

The Arveyron is a tributary of the river Arve, close to the Mer de Glace in Chamonix Valley in southeastern France. John Ruskin admired Turner’s portrayal of the natural world: the ‘Other ice is fixed. Only this ice stirs. All the banks are staggering beneath its waves, crumbling and withered as by the blast of a perpetual storm. He made the rocks of his foreground loose – rolling and tottering down together; the pines smitten aside by them, their tops dead, bared by the ice wind’ (Modern Painters, Vol. V, London, 1903, p.105)
Mary Godwin witnessed the ice moving in the summer of 1816. In July she and Percy Shelley passed through the Chamonix Valley with great difficulty on an expedition into the Alps, amidst torrential rain. The landscape, in particular their view of Mont Blanc, was obscured by dark clouds; an avalanche filled them with feelings of horror and exhilaration. Mary wrote that she found the Alpine landscape ‘the most desolate place in the world’, and used the location in one of the climaxes of her novel. The grief-stricken and remorseful Frankenstein goes on an Alpine tour in the hope that these emotions will be eclipsed by feelings of the sublime. However, he discovers that the Valley has become the home of his hideous creation. On the Mer de Glace, his creature spots him and rushes towards him ‘with superhuman speed’.

12. Solway Moss
Etching (J.M.W Turner) and mezzotint (Thomas Goff Lupton, 1791-1873), printed in brown ink, issued in Part XI, dated 1 Jan 1816: 209 x 291 (plate); 264 x 410 (sheet). Finberg 52 I
Given by Arthur Young, 1934 (P.9894-R)

Lupton was the youngest of the engravers to work with Turner on Liber, securing his employment with the success of this plate. It belongs to the ‘Pastoral’ category, thought to represent the realities of rural life, as opposed to the ‘Epic’ or ‘Elevated Pastoral’ category (lettered ‘EP’), representing a poetic, imaginative ideal. This plate’s counterpart in part XI is the untitled plate known as ‘Solitude’ (no. 17 in the table case). Again, seen in light of the extraordinary weather of 1816, this scene takes on a new significance. Dwarfed by the thunderstorm overhead, a herdsman is driving cattle across an estuary during low tide with his arms raised, perhaps in warning.

13. Solway Moss
Etching by J.M.W Turner (1775-1851), printed in black/brown ink: 207 x 289 (plate); Finberg 52 etched state
Bequeathed by Charles Brinsley Marlay, 1912 (P.10337-R)

Preliminary state of no. 12

For the engraving of the plate Turner instructed Lupton in a series of seven engraver’s proofs, one of which is inscribed with a hand written note by Lupton: ‘Sir I have laid the ground all over the copper in case you should wish to retouch any part’. The progress of the proof impressions shows that initially Turner was not happy with the overall darkness of the landscape, prompting Lupton to make lighter the areas of the plate describing the sky and mountains. Lupton wrote later to John Pye that he ‘anxiously laboured at the plate. It was done, and with the painter’s aid successfully done; and placed me at once among my brother scrapers, and artist’.

14. Mill near the Grand Chartreuse - Dauphiny
Etching (J.M.W Turner) and mezzotint (Henry Edward Dawe, 1790-1848), printed in brown ink, issued in Part XI, dated 1 Jan 1816: 207 x 290 (plate); 294 x 440 (sheet). Lugt 1498; Finberg 54 I
Given by Arthur Young, 1934 (P.9897-R)

The French Alps were popular with English tourists in search of the sublime, the sensation aroused in seeing sudden transformative views. John Ruskin praised this plate for Turner’s evocation of height and depth, while others have admired the harmony of man-made structure in a wild environment. In terms of mood, it is one of the most idyllic scenes of Part XI, matched also by Solitude (nos. 16-17).

Crossing the Alps on their way to Geneva in the summer of 1816 Percy Shelley and Mary Godwin experienced neither the sublime nor the idyllic. In letters to her half sister Fanny in England in May and June Mary described their ascent taking place “amidst a violent storm of wind and rain”, and ‘excessive’ cold, while their descent took place during an unseasonal snowstorm that obscured their view of Geneva and its famous lake. Add Mary’s famous second letter to Fanny, dated 1 June:

’an almost perpetual rain confines us principally to the house ... One night we enjoyed a finer storm than I had ever before beheld. The lake was lit up - the pines on Jura made visible and all the scene illuminated for an instant, when a pitchy blackness succeeded, and the thunder came in frightful bursts over our heads amid the blackness’

15. Mill near the Grand Chartreuse
Etching attributed to Henry Edward Dawe (1790-1848), printed in brown ink: 206 x 290 (plate); 261 x 387 (sheet). Finberg 54 etched state
Bequeathed by Charles Brinsley Marlay, 1912 (P.9896-R)

Preliminary state of no. 14

Turner is not thought to have executed the etched outlines of all the Liber subjects. The etching of this plate is usually attributed to Dawe (see also no. 11 on the wall behind). In his book Turner’s Prints: the Engraved work of J.M.W. Turner (1990), Luke Herrmann wrote that the plate ‘lacks the emphasis of Turner’s etching and the darks in this very tonal composition are somewhat smudged’. It is interesting to compare the print with no. 16 in the adjacent case, a preliminary etched state of the plate entitled Solitude, which is undoubtedly etched by Turner.
16. Solitude (or ‘the Reading Magdalene’)
Etching by J.M.W Turner (1775-1851) printed in black/brown ink: 207 x 288 (plate); 272 x 386 (sheet). Finberg 53 etched state, Bequeathed by Charles Brinsley Marlay, 1912 (P.10539-R)
Preliminary state of no. 17

The prints lettered ‘EP’ (‘Epic’ or ‘Elevated Pastoral’) are the subjects in the Liber that have closest affinity with Richard Earlom’s Liber Veritatis prints after Claude Lorrain (see p. 3), with draped figures reclining in landscapes. Although St Mary Magdalene does not appear elsewhere in Turner’s work, this figure does seem to be lying next to an hourglass and a book, two of the saint’s usual attributes. There is no known direct study for the design, only the preparatory watercolour now in the Tate. It is conceivable that the glowing sunset (that appears in the finished state, after the mezzotint ground was added to the plate), was inspired by the fiery red skies of 1816, caused by the stratospheric volcanic dust cloud.

17. Solitude (or ‘the Reading Magdalene’)
Etching (J.M.W Turner) and mezzotint (William Say, 1768-1834), printed in brown ink, issued in Part XI, dated 1 Jan 1816: 207 x 287 (plate); 300 x 427 (sheet). Finberg 53 I
Given by Arthur Young, 1934 (P.9895-R)

This is the only print in the set with a date other than 1 January 1816. The date 12 May 1814 might suggest an earlier date for part XI was originally envisaged (Parts IX and X had been published in 1812).

William Say was one of the engravers taken on by Turner after his disagreement with Charles Turner (see no. 3). Say engraved eleven plates in total for Liber. These account for almost all his landscape work, since he is known primarily as an engraver of portrait prints.

Goya and Spain (nos. 18–24)

Francisco José de Goya (1746-1828) advertised his spectacular set of prints illustrating the history and practice of bullfighting (known as la tauromaquia) in the Diario de Madrid on 28 October 1816:

‘Collection of prints, invented and etched by Don Francisco Goya, Court Painter to His Majesty, wherein are represented diverse suertes [passes or manoeuvres] with bulls ... an idea being given in the series of prints of the origin, the growth, and the present state of the said fiestas in Spain, which will be self evident without an explanation solely by looking at the plates.’

It was not the first set on the subject. Antonio Carnicerio’s Set of the Principal Maneuvres in a Bullfight (1790) was an important precursor, but Goya’s prints went far beyond the stilted simplicity of the earlier set in their dramatic and emotional impact. Goya worked on over forty plates for the series but only 33 were included in the first edition. The plates can be dated stylistically, and four of the earliest plates are dated 1815, the year after the end of the Peninsular War.

Goya’s only other attempt at commercial printmaking had been even more ambitious. In 1799 he acquired at least 85 expensive copper plates on which he executed Los Caprichos, a book of 80 unconventional scenes including dream sequences, battles of the sexes, scenes of witchcraft, and animals acting like humans, all of which probe into the moral and social illness of society. He succeeded in selling very few prints and the plates were sold to Charles IV in exchange for a pension for his son.

Research shows that Portugal and Spain did not experience weather as dismal and terrifying as parts of Europe further east. Temperatures were lower but most areas were not inundated with the heavy rain or snow that devastated agriculture elsewhere. However, what damage the weather did bring followed soon after the period 1808-14, marked by bloody insurrection and political instability.

In 1816 Goya was in his seventieth year. He had been Court Painter since 1789, almost half his life. His painted works are portraits of aristocrats and large tapestry cartoons on Spanish contemporary life, dominated by scenes of carefree frivolity. Early in the next decade, however, events took a turn for the worse. In 1793 Goya contracted an unknown illness that brought him close to death and left him deaf for the rest of his life. His position at Court became precarious during Spain’s occupation by France in the Napoleonic era. The Spanish monarchy acceded to Napoleon’s demands, King Charles IV was forced to abdicate in 1808, and Napoleon’s brother Joseph was placed upon the throne. The populace rose in revolt. Between 1808-13 the Spanish population fought against the imposed French authorities in a conflict that has been called the first guerrilla war.

Goya managed to hold onto his position at Court but tried to remain neutral. A sombre, bold and satiric touch entered his work during this time. In private he started work on a series of plates that show he was very sensitive to the distress of the populace. Around 1810, after war between Spain and France had commenced, and ten years after his first foray into printmaking, Goya tried his hand at another large series, Los Desastres de la guerra (The Disasters of War), also comprising 80 plates, which focussed on the outrages committed by soldiers and civilians in war. It included depictions of battles, famine and scenes with political, religious and ideological allusions to war, now stripped of all myth and glory. In 1814 Prince Ferdinand, son of the exiled Charles IV, was
brought into power by popular support, but his reign was both repressive and regressive. That year Goya was interrogated in the court of the Inquisition to answer charges of immorality on his deeply personal, erotic painting The Naked Maya, painted for the Queen’s lover, Manuel Godoy. It was Ferdinand VII who promoted bullfighting (banned in 1805 by his father, but relaxed during French occupation) as a national symbol to help maintain control of the lower classes. Under the circumstances it would have been impossible to publish Los Desastres (it was first published long after his death in 1863). However, some of the scenes of carnage in Tauromaquia echo the savage atrocities shown in Los Desastres. It is possible that Goya found in depictions of the more violent aspects of bullfighting a less controversial means of exposing humanity’s inherently barbarous nature.

These seven plates come from a complete set of the first edition of Tauromaquia, bequeathed by Charles Haslewood Shannon in 1937. The set lacks the title-sheet issued in 1816, and the sheets are trimmed to the printed border.

Footnotes

Selected further reading
J.A. Tomlinson, Graphic Evolutions: the Print Series of Francisco Goya, New York, 1989

18. Cogida de un Moro estando en la plaza (A Moor caught by the bull in the ring)
Tauromaquia, plate 8
Etching, drypoint and burnished aquatint; 204 x 316 (sheet, trimmed); Harris 211 III.1
Bequeathed by Charles Haslewood Shannon (P.52-1937)

Goya was a generation older than Turner, turning 70 in 1816. In October he advertised a set of 33 prints illustrating this history and practice of bullfighting. The scenes of the Tauromaquia, representing ‘diverse suertes [manoeuvres] with bulls’, were largely informed by Fernandez de Moratin’s history of bullfighting published in 1777, which also influenced a handbook published under the name of the great matador, Pepe Hillo, in 1816, the year without a summer. Int. J. Climatol., 29, pp. 99-115

Goya’s earliest prints date from 1778, and are etchings and drypoints. The difference in style between these and the plates of Los Caprichos (1799) shows that Goya’s skill had developed dramatically. Figures grew larger and more dramatic and his handling of light and shade grey more abstract: dark bullfighters stand out against white backgrounds.

19. El Cid Campeador lanceando otro toro (The Cid Campeador spearing another bull)
Tauromaquia, plate 11
Etching, burin and burnished aquatint; 216 x 313 (sheet, trimmed); Harris 214 III.1
Bequeathed by Charles Haslewood Shannon (P.55-1937)

Goya gave the technical move of bullfighting a dramatic context and attributed them to defined characters. He traced the history of the sport from ancient Spaniards hunting bulls in the mountains, through the elaboration and finesse introduced during the Moorish occupation, and the appropriation of the pursuit by the King and nobles of Spain. According to Pepe Hillo’s book, the medieval Christian nobility ‘performed their engagements on horseback’. Moratin seems to have invented the notion that El Cid (Rodrigo Diaz de Bivar, c1040-1099) was ‘the first Spanish nobleman to spear bulls with vigour’. This was one of the later prints made for the series, etched on the back of a rejected plate.

20. El famoso Martincho poniendo banderillas al quiebro (The famous Martincho places the banderillas playing the bull with the movement of his body)
Tauromaquia, plate 15
Etching, drypoint, burin and burnished aquatint 201 x 310 (sheet, trimmed); Harris 218 III.II
Bequeathed by Charles Haslewood Shannon (P.59-1937)

Goya’s history moved into the modern era of the professional fighter from the lower classes, with a popular following. Francisco Antonio Basson, ‘Martincho’, was, with The Student of Falces, the leading exponent of the Navarra School. He fought in Pamplona and Zaragoza and came to Madrid in 1775. He was renowned for the tight turns with which he cut short the bull’s charges, and for using dwarf banderillas, which he stabbed into the bull’s withers with a dangerously close suerte (pass).

21. Otra locura suya en la misma plaza (Another madness of his [Martincho] in the same ring [Zaragota])
Tauromaquia, plate 19
Etching, drypoint, burin and burnished aquatint 204 x 317 (sheet, trimmed); Harris 222 III.II
Bequeathed by Charles Haslewood Shannon (P.63-1937)

Martincho fought in Zaragoza in 1759-64. He boasted in 1763 that ‘there is no one to touch me in
my crazy bullfight doings’. Goya’s emphasises Martincho’s foolhardiness. Clad in leg-irons, he is about to leap over the length of the bull. He features in five of the 33 plates for the set. Goya may have witnessed him fight in Zaragoza or Madrid, after Martincho’s move there in 1775. This plate, dated 1815, was among the first group etched for the series.

22. Ligereza y atrevimiento de Juanito Apiñani en la de Madrid (The agility and audacity of Juanito Apiñani in the ring at Madrid)  
Tauromaquia, plate 20
Etching, drypoint, burin and burnished aquatint 202 x 308 (sheet, trimmed); Harris 223 III.1  
Bequeathed by Charles Haslewood Shannon (P.64-1937)

Apiñani and his brother Manuel helped popularise this move, as described by Vargas Ponce in his anti-bullfighting Dissertation, ‘grasping the pike he was seen to fly over the very bull with so much ease and agility that in an instant he planted himself at the other side as firmly as if he had not changed place.’ Juanito fought in Madrid around 1750.

There is some debate as to whether Goya was for or against the bullfight, which had been banned in 1805 but permitted again after 1814. Here, Goya seems to delight in the skilled acrobatics of the fighters.

23. Desgracias acaecidas en el tendido de la plaza de Madrid, y muerte del alcalde de (Dreadful events in the front rows of the ring at Madrid and the death of the mayor of Torrejón)  
Tauromaquia, plate 21
Etching, drypoint, burin and burnished aquatint and lavis; 193 x 300 (sheet, trimmed); Harris 224 III.1  
Bequeathed by Charles Haslewood Shannon (P.65-1937)

Goya noted on a proof of this plate: ‘The bull jumped into the stand and killed two. I saw it’. Such occurrences were common, and according to Vargas Ponce’s anti-bullfighting Dissertation, they were even welcomed by a frenzied crowd; it is not clear which occasion is depicted here. Goya may have been influenced by liberal friends, who thought that bullfighting and its audience were symbolic of all that was vicious and degrading in Spanish society. It recalls closely the depiction of carnage in his Disasters of War.

24. Mariano Ceballos, alias El Indio, mata el toro desde su caballo (Mariano Ceballos, alias the Indian, kills the bull from his horse)  
Tauromaquia, plate 23
Etching, burnished aquatint and lavis; 211 x 314 (sheet, trimmed); Harris 226 III.1  
Bequeathed by Charles Haslewood Shannon (P.67-1937)

Mariano Ceballos, ‘El Indio’ (The Indian), was probably born in Argentina. He fought bulls in Buenos Aires before coming to Spain in the 1770s. He fought in Pamplona, where he was praised for his audacious fighting on horseback or (as in another print in the series) on another bull; he was shown on both bulls and horses in a number of popular prints. He was gored to death in the ring at Tudela. Bullfighting was banned in 1805 but reintroduced and promoted during the repressive regime of Ferdinand VII. It may have been difficult for Goya to publish anything expressly condemning the sport.

Cornelius and Germany (nos. 25-35)

Peter Cornelius (1783-1867), became one of the most important members of the group of German Romantic artists called the Nazarenes and his Illustrations to Goethe’s Faust were a triumph of the group’s revival of German engraving. The Nazarenes rejected Neoclassicism and not unlike the Pre-Raphaelites in England, looked instead to the art of the Middle Ages and the early renaissance for its sense of feeling and spirituality. Cornelius first became well-known not for his frescoes, but for his series of illustrative engravings to Faust published in 1816, eight years after Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832) published Part One of his tragic play (Part Two was not published until 1832). Cornelius was born and trained in Düsseldorf before relocating to Frankfurt in autumn 1809. This may have been an auspicious move as Frankfurt was an important book and print centre. It was here, in the winter of 1810/11 that Cornelius began work on the Faust series. In these pen drawings (Frankfurt, Städelisches Kunstinstitut und Städtische Galerie), he developed a crisp, linear graphic style influenced by German printmakers of the sixteenth century. By April 1811 he had completed five drawings and the following month, Cornelius’ friend, Sulpiz Boisserée, took the drawings to Weimar to show Goethe. Despite working independently, Cornelius was clearly eager to gain the author’s support and advice. In response, Goethe wrote to Cornelius on 8 May 1811:

The episodes are well chosen and the rendering of them well considered, and the ingenious handling of both the whole and the details is to be admired. As you have transplanted yourself into a world you have never set eyes on but which is known to you only through old illustrations, it is quite remarkable how well you have made yourself at home in it, not simply in the costume and other extraneous things, but also in the mentality... May you continue to please all amateurs in this way, and me in particular, for I have stimulated you with my poem. May you form your imagination to these subjects, and persevere in them so as to be an example.”
In addition to his praise, Goethe recommended that Cornelius look at the freedom of invention Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528) demonstrated in his prayer book drawings for Emperor Maximilian I and the work of contemporary Italian painters e.g. Raphael (1483-1520), easily accessible through engravings, to develop 'sensitivity and feeling' in the illustrations. Cornelius dutifully followed this advice and once he had secured Johann Friedrich Wenner as his publisher in Frankfurt, he left for Rome. Wenner allowed Cornelius to dictate his terms which included the series be dedicated to Goethe and Cornelius be paid 100 Louis d'or in advance to complete the work in Rome 'where the environment best stimulates the artist.' Cornelius was also anxious to retain artistic control of the project and demanded all dealings with the engraver would be through him, not the publisher. Cornelius arrived in Rome in October 1811 and found a place amongst the circle of Nazarene artists living in the city. Seven of the drawings were completed by the end of 1811 but the artist was cautious in his choice of collaborator and it was not until 15 May 1813 that Cornelius wrote to Wenner that the German engraver Ferdinand Ruscheweyh had begun work on the first plate. Ruscheweyh followed Cornelius’ pen drawings carefully and the two artists must have worked in close consultation over a long period in order to perfect these large, detailed engravings which are noted for the dramatic narrative force they convey.

Cornelius suppressed the image of the scholarly Faust, instead presenting him in the more obviously heroic guise of a medieval prince or knight. Another of the most striking aspects of Cornelius’ interpretation of Goethe’s tragedy is his decision to devote half of his series to illustrating Gretchen’s tragic narrative. Not drawn from the legend, her story was entirely Goethe’s invention and Cornelius appears to have been drawn to the lovers’ tragedy. This focus provided him scope to portray the different psychologies of the central characters, imbuing his illustrations with a strong sense of characterisation and naturalism. While still in Rome, Cornelius’ turned his eye to another epic characterisation and naturalism. While still in Rome, Cornelius turned his eye to another epic

Footnotes

1 William Vaughan describes how the Napoleonic Wars impacted upon the international print trade, giving Germany the opportunity to develop its own market in major cities e.g. Berlin, as well as established book centres including Frankfurt. Vaughan, W., in Bartrum, Giulia, (ed.), German Romantic prints and drawings, London 2011, p.18

2 ALS Goethe to Cornelius, 8 May 1811 in Gage, John, (trans.), Goethe on Art, Berkeley and Los Angeles 1980, p.235-38

3 ALS Goethe to Cornelius, 8 May 1811, ibid., p.235
Given by the Friends of the Fitzwilliam Museum, 1998 (P.45-1998.1)

The elaborate border decoration illustrates several scenes from the beginning of Goethe's narrative. At the top is a scene based on the Prologue in Heaven. Mephistopheles visits the Lord and bets he can influence Faust, in order to demonstrate mankind's corruption. The Lord agrees to let the devil try and Faust's tragedy commences: 'Very well. Let it be left to you. / Divert this spirit from his spring and source, / Grasp him, if you are able to, / And lead him with you on your downward course, And stand ashamed when you are forced to recognize / A good man, though impelled in darkness, yet / Is well aware of what the right way is.'

Below, we see Faust sitting at his desk with Mephistopheles, disguised as a black dog, at his feet. The illustrations in the left border represent Faust's virtuous learning whereas on the right Cornelius took inspiration from Faust's visit to the Witch's Kitchen. The format and decorative flourishes of the border were inspired by Albrecht Dürer's (1471-1528) marginal designs of 1515 for Emperor Maximilian I's Book of Hours. The designs were little known until 1808 (the same year Faust was published) when they were printed using the new technique of lithography. They caused a sensation and Goethe himself advised Cornelius to look at them for inspiration.

27. Scene in Auerbach's Keller zu Leipzig. (Scene in Auerbach's cellar in Leipzig.) Bildner zu Goethe's Faust, plate 3. Drawn 1811. Engraving with etching; 462 x 414 mm (plate), 580 x 730 mm (sheet; irregular)

Given by the Friends of the Fitzwilliam Museum, 1998 (P.45-1998.3)

After making their pact, Mephistopheles flies Faust to a tavern. Here they encounter four merry drinkers and Mephistopheles tries to convince Faust that these men have found true pleasure and freedom. Mephistopheles then plays tricks on the men and they draw their knives in anger. Before they can attack, Mephistopheles casts a spell over the group, which causes them to forget where they are and experience hallucinations. Cornelius has pictured the men imagining themselves to be in a beautiful vineyard. They raise their knives to each other's noses believing them to be grapes, while Faust and Mephistopheles escape.

28. Scene am Ausgang der Kirche. Faust bietet Gretchen den Arm. (Scene outside the church. Faust offering Gretchen his arm.) Bildner zu Goethe's Faust, plate 4. Drawn 1811, engraved 1814

Engraving with etching; 403 x 397 mm (plate), 580 x 730 mm (sheet; irregular)

Given by the Friends of the Fitzwilliam Museum, 1998 (P.45-1998.4)

Upon returning from the Witch's kitchen, where Faust drinks a potion that Mephistopheles promises will soon make 'Cupid stir', Faust, in the guise of a youthful knight, sees a young woman in the street and immediately falls in love with her. His first encounter with Gretchen (short for Margarete) is brief:

Faust: May I offer my arm and accompany / A beautiful lady on her way? Gretchen: Am neither a lady nor beautiful, / Can make my own way home very well.

Faust's seduction of Gretchen, aided by the devil, and its consequences are central to both Goethe's narrative and to an even greater extent, Cornelius' illustrations.

29. Der Spaziergang im Garten. (The stroll in the garden.) Bildner zu Goethe's Faust, plate 5. Drawn 1811, engraved 1813.

Engraving with etching; 406 x 413 mm (plate), 580 x 730 mm (sheet; irregular)

Given by the Friends of the Fitzwilliam Museum, 1998 (P.45-1998.5)

Faust and Gretchen next meet in the garden, by Mephistopheles' arrangement. Cornelius has set Goethe's scene in a walled garden, and both location and costumes evoke medieval Germany. Faust is shown seducing Gretchen and the graceful pair stand in deliberate contrast to the flattened figures of Mephistopheles and Marthe; Gretchen's neighbour, who encouraged her to accept her admirer's gifts of jewels (planted by the devil). Mephistopheles then tricked Marthe into helping arrange the meeting and they appear here as if they are co-conspirators. The demon is clearly identified by his club foot, long fingernails and the feather in his cap.

30. Gretchen im Klosterhofe vor der Meter dolorosa kniend. (Gretchen in the courtyard kneeling before the Mater Dolorosa.) Bildner zu Goethe's Faust, plate 6. Drawn 1811, engraved 1816.

Engraving with etching; 477 x 414 mm (plate), 730 x 580 mm (sheet; irregular)

Given by the Friends of the Fitzwilliam Museum, 1998 (P.45-1998.6)

After consummating her relationship with Faust, Gretchen realises she is pregnant. One day, while collecting water from the town well, her companion tells her of a girl who has 'made a fool of herself finally' by becoming pregnant. The father has abandoned the ruined girl and Gretchen fears she will suffer the same fate. She regrets how harshly she had judged others in the past. Alone, Gretchen turns to the statue of Our Lady of Sorrows, confesses her fear and misery and begs for mercy: 'Wherever I go / Oh woe and woe and woe / Here in my bosom aches. / So soon as I'm alone / I weep, weep, weep / And this heart breaks.'

In this tragic scene, Cornelius depicts the death of Valentin, Gretchen’s brother. Demonstrating his knowledge of Italian art, Cornelius copied the pose of the dead Christ in Raphael’s Deposition (1507; Galleria Borghese, Rome) for his dying soldier. Having learned of his sister’s sins, Valentin attacks Faust but with the help of Mephistopheles, Faust delivers the fatal blow. The pair are shown in the background, hastily escaping into the night. As Goethe describes, a crowd gather around the dying man along with Marthe and Gretchen. Valentin uses his dying breaths to damn his sister for her deeds, denouncing her as a ‘whore’.

32. Die Scene im Dom. (The scene in the Cathedral.) Bilder zu Goethe’s Faust, plate 8. Drawn 1811, engraved 1815. Engraving with etching; 583 x 476 mm (plate), 580 x 730 mm (sheet; irregular) Given by the Friends of the Fitzwilliam Museum, 1998 (P.45-1998.8)

This scene directly follows the death of Valentin. Gretchen attends Mass but is pursued by the Evil Spirit who reminds her of her previous innocence and recent sins. It whispers: ‘Where are you now? / And in your heart / What wrongdoing? / ... / Whose blood is that on your doorstep?’

Overcome by the Spirit’s relentless torments and her grief, Gretchen cries out: ‘I have no room! / The pillars / Hem me in, / The vaulting / Presses on me. / Give me air!’ She reaches out for help but faints before she can be aided. The figure looking out on the far left has been identified as a self portrait of Cornelius.


Mephistopheles leads Faust on a journey across the Harz mountain range in central Germany to its highest peak, the Brocken Mountain, for the legendary annual gathering on 30 April of witches. Cornelius depicts the pair amidst treacherous conditions and surrounded by all manner of fantastic creatures. Mephistopheles summons a will-o’-the-wisp (or jack-o’-lantern) to light the path and help guide their way. Faust exclaims: ‘We have entered, so it seems, / Zones of magic, zones of dreams’. Cornelius’ engraving serves as an evocative interpretation of the scene in which, ‘Each and every creature wakes. / Leggy, paunchy, through the grasses, / Newts are under way / ... / While the trees and rocks pull faces’.

34. Die Erscheinung am Rabenstein. Faust und Mephistopheles auf schwarzen Pferden daher brausend. (The execution at the Raven Stone. Faust and Mephistopheles racing away on black horses.) Bilder zu Goethe’s Faust, plate 10. Drawn 1811, engraved 1814. Engraving with etching; 419 x 523 mm (plate), 580 x 730 mm (sheet; irregular) Given by the Friends of the Fitzwilliam Museum, 1998 (P.45-1998.10)

Faust learns that Gretchen has been imprisoned for drowning her infant child and turns on Mephistopheles. He demands they return to the town to save her. The devil reluctantly agrees and summons ‘magic horses’ that speed them through the air with supernatural speed. On their way, they encounter a coven of witches near a gallows (the ‘Raven Stone’, so-called because the dead bodies attracted the birds). Faust appears as a strong and valiant figure, but the subtle detail of the demon’s clutch on Faust’s horse’s bridle serves as a reminder that the devil is still in control.


In a dramatic end to the tragedy, Faust and Mephistopheles discover Gretchen in her prison cell, awaiting execution. Driven insane with guilt, she first mistakes Faust for her executioner. Even when she realises who he is, full of guilt and without hope, she refuses to leave and cries: ‘Court of God, I give myself up to you!’ Mephistopheles is shown urging Faust to leave before he is discovered and arrested for the murder of Valentin. As the devil pulls him away, a heavenly voice, here represented as an angel, announces to Gretchen she will be saved. The final lines of Goethe’s play are Gretchen calling after the departed Faust.