

Appendix 1.2.a: Variants in the Illustrations of *The Loves of the Plants*

ED's Correspondence on the Illustrations

There are brief mentions of the illustrations to *LOTP* in Darwin's correspondence.

A letter to Josiah Wedgwood dated 29 January 1788 (King-Hele, ed., *Letters* 88-3) suggests that Susannah Wedgwood (who would later marry ED's son Robert and give birth to Charles Darwin) may have had a hand in the Cupid design at the end of the Proem as well as the images of *Gloriosa* and *Vallisneria*.

In this letter, ED thanks "Miss Wedgewood" for "the pleasure and improvement we all had from her short visit," and says, "I am much obliged to her for the Cupid, which as she sais, is too formal a figure – it would have suited better if cupid had been inflaming a flower." It is unclear whether her image, or an adaptation of it, was used even though it was unsatisfying, or was revised, or passed over for another. King-Hele is of the opinion that it was not used (*Letters* 88-3 n.3). ED continues, "If Miss W. has a colour'd print of *Gloriosa* or of *Vallisneria* – or even an uncolour'd one – I should be much obliged to her for a copy of it or them." Presumably, Susannah would be the collector rather than the designer of such prints. They could have been colored by Susannah or by the producer of the prints. At the end of the letter ED adds, "I thank Miss W. about her name, but as I shall not put my own to the work, I could not think of putting hers, unless she would invent something, as Miss Crewe is to do one for me for a title page" (or, rather, a frontispiece: *Flora at Play with Cupid*). If Susannah has not "invent[ed]," that suggests the designs in question are not original. It could be that botanical illustrations, or drawings of existing artworks (if the Proem's Cupid design was modeled on an "antique gem" or cameo: see below) are not counted as artistic compositions like Crewe's frontispiece.

On 8 March 1788 (King-Hele, ed., *Letters*, 88-9), ED again tells Josiah Wedgwood that he is "much obliged to Miss W." and proceeds to mention Crewe's drawing (cryptically, he says it "is got into the Kingsbench – the British purgatory. When it returns, I shall be glad of having it made into a plate"). He must have been obliged to Susannah Wedgwood for something to do with illustrations, either for providing some, or perhaps for facilitating Crewe's contribution.

Through Crewe and Josiah Wedgwood, ED got estimates from different artists for engraving Crewe's frontispiece design. ED's letter of 7 April 1788 (King-Hele, ed., *Letters* 88-10) indicates that Wedgwood's estimate was cheaper and asks him to "employ this artist," but he does not name the artist. The 1789 frontispiece was engraved by Samuel Alken (see *LOTP* Frontispiece, editor's note).

ED was thinking about improvements to some of the illustrations soon after the first edition of *LOTP* came out in April 1789; the next edition would be published less than a year later, in January 1790 (King-Hele, *Life*, pp. 232, 248). ED tells Wedgwood (21–27 June 1789, King-Hele, ed. *Letters* 89-11), "I have written to Alken about making *Flora* and *Cupid* smile, but have yet had not answer," and subsequently updates (18 July 1789, King-Hele, ed., *Letters* 89-12), "Alken writes me word, He can not well alter the faces, but can retouch the other parts for 5 or 6

guineas. I shall consult my bookseller [Joseph Johnson] about it.” Comparing examples of the illustration from 1789, 1790, and 1791, it appears that some retouching may have been done for 1790 (of “the other parts” such as the bushes behind Flora), while there are more visible alterations (especially to Flora’s face) in the 1791 version, which seems to have been re-engraved.

In the same two 1789 letters, ED addresses the illustration of Cupid. In the first, he writes, “remember you are to send me a drawing of Cupid warming a butterfly, and also to tell me, what Engraver I should apply to do it not excellently, but tollerably, because the other was done intollerably.” The 1789 Cupid is signed, “E Stringer, Lich.d, Sculp. 1788 Sclp.”, identified by King-Hele as “the Lichfield topographical artist Edward Stringer (1749–1809)” (*Letters* 89-11, n.6). “Sclp.” indicates he engraved the image, but not that he designed it.

Wedgwood sent ED the replacement Cupid design in July 1789, but his accompanying letter does not specify its creator: again, it is unclear whether it might be Susannah Wedgwood’s design. This second version of the Cupid came with an alternative, as Josiah Wedgwood explains:

A thought occurred to me after the Cupid was finished, that, as the Cupid of your botanic garden, he should rather be warming a vegetable than an animal into the passion of love. You will therefore see a detached hand, just sketched with a pencil, holding a flower instead of a moth. You will decide which of the two shall be engraved. But perhaps you will say, that in singing the loves of the plants, you suppose them to have minds capable of the passion; & a moth being the orthodox symbol of mind, it may serve equally for that of a flower, as of an animal of a higher order. Well, as I said before, you will determine (Josiah Wedgwood to ED, July 1789, in *Correspondence of Josiah Wedgwood*, ed. Katherine Euphemia Farrer (Morten, 1903–1906) Vol. 3, p. 91).

In his response, ED tells JW, “I like the Cupid better as an antique gem, and as giving warmth or love to a Butterfly, than as a modern one inspiring or inflaming a flower; because the former - - - now I think of it, I don’t know why” (King-Hele, ed., *Letters* 89-12). Nonetheless, the design with the flower appears in all editions after 1789.¹ The new design was engraved by Thomas Holloway (see *LOTP* Proem, editor’s note). In addition to the change from butterfly to flower, other major differences include a reverse orientation (Cupid faces left in 1789 and right in the revised version); a dark background substituted for a blank one; and, under Cupid’s feet, what is probably earth in 1789 becoming a platform (which, without a base, appears to be floating).

The design with the butterfly may be interpreted in light of ED’s mentions of the myth of Cupid and Psyche in *The Economy of Vegetation* Additional Note XXII.—Portland Vase, and in his later poem *The Temple of Nature*. ED explains that “A butterfly was the ancient emblem of the soul after death as rising from the tomb of its former state, and becoming a winged inhabitant of air from an insect creeping upon earth. At length the wings only were given to a beautiful nymph under the name of Psyche, which is the greek word for the soul, and also became afterwards to signify a butterfly probably from the popularity of this allegory” (*TON* II:223n; see also *EOV* (1791), Additional Notes, p. 57). He adds, “Many allegorical designs of Cupid or Love warming a butterfly or the Soul with his torch may be seen in Spence’s *Polymetis*, and a beautiful one of

their marriage in Bryant's Mythology" (*TON* II:223n). Priestman finds that "Spence does not in fact include the one in the 1789 *Loves*, which might have come from Darwin's own cameo collection" mentioned by Thomas Young, a 1794 visitor to ED's home (Priestman, *The Poetry of Erasmus Darwin*, p. 50n.; King-Hele, *Life*, p. 288). In the note on the Portland Vase, ED writes of "the beautiful gem representing the marriage of Cupid and Psyche, as described by Apuleus" (*EOV* Additional Notes, p. 54).

Wedgwood's July 1789 letter also emphasizes the need to improve the engraving of the frontispiece, and three other plates. "The two first plates", the illustrations of the botanic classes at the end of the Preface, "besides being so wretchedly engraved, are blundered in the numbering [...] & the Meadia is as bad as bad can be" (p. 92). In 1789, the botanic classes are signed "E. Stringer Lich^d. ScIp1788." On the first plate the numbers are ordered in reverse, from right to left. The 1789 Meadia engraving has no signature. Both Meadia and the botanic classes in 1789 are smaller in size than the other full-page illustrations.

In his response, ED assures Wedgwood, "The other three bad plates I have sent to have reengraved by Nodder, who did the other flower-plate[s]" (King-Hele, ed., *Letters* 89-12).

Lucy Peltz, in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* entry for Frederick Polydore Nodder (fl. 1773-1800), suggests that he designed the plates he engraved for *The Botanic Garden*. However, this must exclude the botanic classes, since as ED mentions in the text (Preface, p. iii), they are taken from *Dictionnaire élémentaire de botanique* [Elementary Dictionary of Botany] (1783) by Pierre Bulliard (1752–1793). The design of the unsigned engraving of Meadia in 1789 is broadly similar to its later replacement, but with significant differences, particularly in the disposition of the flowers, which clearly indicate that it was redesigned for the new engraving. (For further discussion of Nodder's re-engraving, see Dahlia Porter, "Epistemic Images and Vital Nature: Darwin's *Botanic Garden* as Image Text Book," *European Romantic Review* 29.3 (2018): pp. 295–308.)

Variants in the Illustrations

1789

As discussed above, the botanic classes, Cupid, and Meadia illustrations used in 1789 are different from the re-engraved versions used in later editions. The 1789 *LOTP* Frontispiece (*Flora at play with Cupid*) was retouched for 1790 and apparently re-engraved for 1791 and 1794.

Of these plates, only the Frontispiece and Meadia have inscriptions.

The Frontispiece inscription is the same as 1790.

The 1789 Meadia inscription reads:

E.StringerScI.^p

Meadia.

1790, 1791, 1794

As well as the alteration of the frontispiece, and the replacement of the botanic classes, Cupid, and Meadia, as outlined above, the illustrations of *Amaryllis formosissima* and *Hedysarum gyrans* are added in 1790 and continue to be included in subsequent editions.

1791, 1794

Flora attired by the Elements, by Henry Fuseli (1741–1825), is generally considered to be the frontispiece to *The Economy of Vegetation*, and the Directions to the Binder consistently indicate that it should be placed “to face the Title of Part I.” However, those directions were not always followed for this and other plates. Sometimes (for example, in the copy reproduced in this edition) *Flora attired by the Elements* is placed before the collective title page, making it appear to be the frontispiece to the whole *Botanic Garden*.

The inscription reads:

FLORA attired by the ELEMENTS.

*Published June 1st 1791, by J. Johnson, in S.^tPauls Church Yard London.
Design'd by H. Fuseli; Engraved by Anker Smith.*

Anker Smith (1759–1819) was employed from 1787 by John Boydell (1720–1804) and made engravings for Boydell's Shakespeare Gallery (1789–1805). He exhibited engravings and miniatures at the Royal Academy from 1796 to 1800. He became one of the original governors of the Society of Engravers established in London in 1803.

As discussed above, the frontispiece of *LOTP* that appears in 1791 and 1794 appears to be a re-engraving.

The inscription reads:

FLORA at play with CUPID.

Emma Crewe inv.^t Published June 1.st 1791, by J Johnson, in S.^t Pauls Church Yard, London. S. Alken fecit.

1799

1799 contains all previous images, but the full-page illustrations would have had to be re-engraved on a smaller scale for this octavo edition: all previous editions were quarto. The re-

done plates do not include inscriptions to indicate who engraved them. They are all based on the versions used in 1790, 1791, and 1794, with some slight differences: for instance, in the botanic classes, example VIII is centered, no longer reclining on the bottom of the frame; the detail of *Vallisneria* is moved from the top right to the bottom center; and the details of *Hedysarum* are similarly rearranged from the bottom left to being centered around the stem.

The inscription for the re-engraved *Flora at Play with Cupid* reads:

London: Published June 1st 1799, by J. Johnson S.^t Paul's Church Yard.

The Cupid cameo at the end of the Proem was not re-engraved; it is the same image as the revised version of 1790, 1791, and 1794, and has the same measurements.

Two illustrations were added to the 1799 edition: Barometz (opposite p. 37) and Fuseli's *Nightmare* (opposite p. 126).

In the note on Barometz (*LOTP* I:284n.), ED mentions two images of the plant, one in an article by Sir Hans Sloane, and another in Dr. Hunter's edition of the *Terra of Evelyn*. The latter illustration was first included in the 1786 edition of *Terra* (in Volume 2 of Hunter's edition of Evelyn's *Silva: or, a Discourse of Forest-Trees*) and was the basis for this almost identical illustration added to *LOTP* 1799.

The *Terra* plate has the inscriptions,

J:Halfpenny fecit.

The Tartarian Lamb.

BAROMETZ.

Joseph Halfpenny (1748–1811) was a topographical engraver and watercolor painter best known for publishing several volumes of engravings of medieval details on buildings in York.

The *LOTP* plate does not indicate the engraver; the inscription reads,

The Tartarian Lamb.

Barometz.

The inscription on the plate of Fuseli's *Nightmare* reads:

H Fuseli R A Pinxit.

T. Holloway Sculp^t

Nightmare.

London, Published June 1:1791. by J. Johnson S.^tPauls Church Yard.

Though the edition was published in 1799, some of the plates in Vol. 1, *The Economy of Vegetation*, have similar captions dating their publication to “June 1st 1791” (*Flora attired by the Elements*) or “Dec.^r 1st 1791” (*The Fertilization of Egypt* and two of the three Portland Vase images), as in the original versions of those plates.

Though there was a famous 1783 print of Fuseli's *Nightmare* by Thomas Burke (1749–1815) that featured some of ED's verses (see *LOTP* III:51, editor's note), this engraving by Thomas Holloway added to 1799 is not after Burke's, but rather Fuseli's 1790–1791 version of the painting, now held in the Goethe Museum, Frankfurt-am-Main. Among several other differences (the most obvious being that the image is reversed), this later version has a portrait rather than a landscape layout and so is suitable for the octavo page.

¹ Curiously, there is at least one copy of *LOTP* 1789 that has the revised Cupid, held in the Osler Library of the History of Medicine, McGill University (call number folio D2284B 1789–1791), bound with a 1791 *Economy of Vegetation*. In this copy only the Cupid is updated: the other “bad plates” that would be re-engraved for later editions remain the 1789 versions.