Hogarth is so familiar through his prints that we often wrong him by forgetting that he was the first great English painter. But even his prints, as usually seen, do not do him justice, for the plates were reprinted and reworked so often that early, fresh impressions like those in the Museum's collection are little known.

Apprenticed as a boy to a silver-plate engraver, Hogarth soon began to support himself by designing and engraving book illustrations and topical prints. He taught himself to draw by observing and memorizing the appearance of people and things and at times attended the art school conducted by the painter Sir James Thornhill, with whose daughter he eloped. Finding his early painted portraits and conversation pieces not "sufficiently profitable," he thought up the sensationally successful scheme of "painting and engraving modern moral subjects, a field not broken up in any country or any age." As he explained it later: "This I found was the most likely to answer my purpose; provided I could strike the passions, and by small sums from many, by the sale of prints, which I could engrave from my own pictures, thus secure my property to myself." After painting the six subjects that told the continuous story of A Harlot's Progress, he reproduced them in prints which he advertised and sold by subscription at a guinea a set. More than 1,200 subscribers were entered for the first publication in 1732, and reprints from the plates were a source of income to Hogarth and his widow for many years. The paintings remained on his hands until 1745, when he sold them at a self-conducted auction for fourteen guineas apiece.

Though the field of social satire in paintings and prints was hardly so new as Hogarth claimed, he approached it in a manner all his own. With his extraordinary ability to draw individual, living characters and his shrewd, observing eye for significant details in crowded interiors and swarming streets, he produced a popular novelty that took England by storm. Scenes from the prints of the Harlot's Progress were used on fan mountings and on teacups. In fact, Hogarth's prints were copied so frequently that he helped push the Act of Parliament of 1735 which provided a copyright for engravers.

Among his early conversation pieces Hogarth had painted a number of scenes from plays, including several from The Beggar's Opera which were done about 1728 or 1729. In his painted and engraved moral series he worked in the same genre; for his object was "to compose pictures on canvas similar to representations on the stage." His pictured dramas without words, continued in the Rake's Progress and Marriage à la Mode, became the subjects for explanatory stories in verse and prose and for pantomimes at Drury Lane. They appeared just at the mo-
ment when the public was eager for contemporary narratives and just in advance of the first English novels. Richardson’s *Pamela* came out in 1740-1741 and *Clarissa Harlowe* in 1747-1748. Hogarth’s good friend Fielding used several of Hogarth’s figures as models for characters in *Joseph Andrews* (1742) and *Tom Jones* (1749).

For the rest of his life Hogarth went on issuing up-to-date social comment in prints. Sometimes he made scoops with biting portraits of notorious characters like the Jacobite rebel
Simon, Lord Lovat, on his way to prison and execution or John Wilkes on trial for seditious libel. He followed up the Act restricting the sale of spirituous liquors with etchings of Beer Street and Gin Lane. His vehement sympathies were deliberately addressed to a wide public; the prints of The Four Stages of Cruelty, he wrote, were made with "neither minute accuracy of design nor fine engraving, as the latter would render them too expensive for the persons to whom they were intended to be useful." Though professedly a moralist, he was too genial to censure severely any vice but cruelty, which he hated, and he usually made his points with entertaining variations on the practical theme that crime does not pay.

Turner profited by catering to another kind of public taste—the insatiable English fondness for landscape prints. Etched and engraved views of city streets and country estates had been published continuously in England since Hollar’s time (1639-1677), and the romantic movement that began in the eighteenth century sent Sandby and other artists traveling to supply views of wild mountains in England and Wales. Sketches were brought back from Europe, America, and the East to be etched and aquatinted. The idyllic Roman school of landscape painting was represented in engravings like those of Woollett after Wilson.

While Turner was still a student at the Royal Academy, he began to make the annual summer trips on which he filled notebooks with sketches that were to be worked up later into finished watercolors for exhibition and sale. The first of these to be engraved appeared in The Copperplate Magazine in 1794, when Turner was nineteen. Further commissions to draw for topographical engravings in this magazine and other publications added to his income from year to year.

In 1806, when Turner had been an R.A. for four years, had traveled in France and Switzerland, and had opened his own exhibition gallery, his friend Frederick William Wells suggested that he advertise his abilities to the public and to posterity by publishing a series of landscape prints. In the manner of the popular drawing books of the period, it was to demonstrate the various types of landscape composition under the headings Architectural, Pastoral, Marine, Mountainous, and Historical.
In rivalry with Boydell’s recent publication of mezzotints by Earlam after Claude’s Liber Veritatis, Turner’s series was titled Liber Studiorum.

In this work Turner planned to publish a hundred engravings after his sepia drawings, issuing them serially to subscribers in parts of five prints each. He assumed all the expenses of the project, employing Charles Turner, a fellow student at the Academy, and later other engravers to make the mezzotints. This long and tedious undertaking proved a financial loss. Turner was inept at the advertising and marketing of a kind of venture that even experienced publishers often found disastrous. Besides business details, the work involved preparing the drawings, incising the etched outlines, and repeatedly correcting the engraver’s proofs. In addition, Turner engraved nine of the mezzotint plates himself. In 1819, after issuing seventy-one prints, he gave up the publication.

Meanwhile he was engaged in the more profitable work of making watercolors for other publishers. His growing prestige as a landscape painter made his name an asset in series that came out from year to year, like Cooke’s Picturesque Views of the Southern Coast of England and Whitaker’s History of Richmondshire. About 1830 Turner was commissioned by the wealthy banker and poet Samuel Rogers to illustrate his Italy and Poems with small vignettes. A copy of Rogers’s Italy first introduced Turner’s work to the young John Ruskin in 1832. The success of the book convinced the publisher Cadell that he must have Turner make the illustrations for a collected edition of Sir Walter Scott’s prose and poetical works, by which he hoped to rescue Scott from bankruptcy. Cadell wrote to Scott: “With his pencil I shall insure the subscription of 8,000—without, not 3,000.” Although Scott did not like Turner, he invited him to Abbotsford and, despite the fact that he was in his last illness when Turner arrived, escorted him around the places to be illustrated. Scott died before the edition was published. Turner’s landscape engravings did not illustrate Scott’s mediaevalism, but they provided a vast background of romantic scenery condensed to a tiny scale.

More than seven hundred engravings after Turner, not including the Liber Studiorum, were made during his lifetime. His share in them was not a mere matter of making the drawings and pocketing the fees; it included repeated correction of the engraver’s proofs, which sometimes followed him to remote parts. Some of the prints were mezzotints or aquatints, but the majority were in line, a combination of etching and engraving. In this medium Turner found that, under his supervision, engravers could translate the light and space of his painted compositions with extraordinary success. In fact, some critics preferred the black-and-white prints to the startlingly novel color of his paintings. Among the comparatively few large prints made after his oil paintings were five engravings which he published at his own risk in 1842. Of all his prints those in the Liber Studiorum are now the best known, but the line engravings should soon be due for a revival of interest along with other things from our grandmothers’ parlors. Had the labor-saving process of lithography been as popular in England in Turner’s time as it was in France, he might have turned his hand to it with astonishing results.

Constable’s connection with prints, in comparison with Turner’s, was limited and almost unnoticed by the public. He etched two slight prints himself, and prints from several of his paintings were published during his lifetime. About 1825 the noted mezzotint engraver S. W. Reynolds undertook to engrave The Lock at his own expense, but he died before finishing the plate. Reynolds was also to have engraved some of Constable’s drawings for publication in France. A few years later, in 1829, Constable tried out Reynolds’s young pupil David Lucas with two or three small mezzotints and then engaged him to engrave his English Landscape. This series was issued irregularly from about July, 1830, to July, 1832, in five numbers of four prints each, with a frontispiece and a vignette thrown in. A second edition was published in 1833.

Both as a business enterprise and as an advertisement, the English Landscape was a depressing failure. Constable, who had tried unsuccess-
fully to interest various publishing firms in sharing the expense, estimated that he lost £700 on it. With every number he hesitated on the choice of pictures and eventually left out several on which the engraving had been started. The touching correspondence published in Shirley's admirable catalogue records the delays, worries, and illnesses which attended the production of the prints. Constable wrote to Lucas on March 12, 1831: "I have thought much on my book and all my reflections on the subject go to oppress me—its duration—its expense, its hopelessness of remuneration—all are unfavorable... I can only dispose of it by giving it away."

For many of the engravings Constable gave Lucas small oil sketches to engrave from, then worked up the prints into highly finished compositions by touching and annotating the many progressive proofs which Lucas submitted to him. Fortunately so many of these progress proofs, touched and untouched, have survived that the growth of the plates through numerous states may be studied in several public collections. Constable felt that he sometimes carried his polishing too far. Of one of the prints, A Heath, he wrote: "I have touched and retouched—and trifled away—all the fine sentiment you once had in it." Many of Constable's changes were improvements, but so much retouching was hard on the mezzotint plates.

Twenty more engravings by Lucas after Constable, similar to those in the English Landscape, were published after Constable's death. These included the plates which Constable had rejected from the series but which he had hoped to publish as an appendix. Lucas also engraved six large plates after Constable's paintings, all begun in the artist's lifetime but published at various times.

A critic reviewing the first number of the English Landscape in The Athenaeum wrote: "The subjects are more varied than we could have expected to find in a work taken wholly from the productions of Mr. Constable; who appears to have fed his genius, like a tethered horse, within a small circle in the homestead." In the introduction to the second edition Con-
able justified his choice of a limited area. "The immediate aim in this publication is to promote the study, and increase the love, of the delightful Home Scenery of England, with all its endearments, its amenities, and even in its most simple localities; England with her climate of more than vernal freshness, and in whose summer skies, and rich autumnal clouds, the observer of Nature may daily watch her endless varieties of effect."

A friend had objected that Constable's style depended too much on tone and color to be translated into mezzotint, but this medium was adapted to the aesthetic idea explained in the introduction. "The principal object of this work, as respects the Art, is to direct the attention to the source of one of its most efficient principles, the 'CHIAROSCURO OF NATURE', to mark the influence of light and shadow upon Landscape. . . . The effects selected for these views are transcripts only of such as occurred at the time of their being taken." The prints, he said generously, went far "to embody his ideas (owing perhaps to the rich and feeling manner in which they are engraved)."

Compared to Hogarth's and Turner's, Constable's is a still, small voice that is as clear now as it was over a hundred years ago when it was heard by only a few. His prints, like his paintings, have the timeless quality of Rembrandt's landscape etchings. On our eastern seaboard anyone may walk out into the fields and see a Constable. His landscapes affect us like our own woods and hills. Hogarth lives on because of his warm humanity and rich detail, but his world is a strange, crabbed one that we are glad not to be in. Most of Turner's work is dated with the romanticism of the era in which it was produced. His late, intensely personal paintings, which were too puzzling for contemporary popularity, are exciting to modern eyes, but his prints, whose style has been made too familiar through countless imitations, have temporarily gone out of fashion.


The exhibition of prints by Hogarth, Turner, and Constable, which closes on April 6, was installed on the balcony of the Great Hall to supplement the recent loan exhibition of Masterpieces of English Painting.