British Colour Linocuts in the 1920s and 1930s and *Ukiyo-e* Prints

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Introduction

Ukiyo-e prints became enormously popular amid the vogue for Japonisme in the West in the latter half of the nineteenth century, and a number of Western artists actively integrated the subjects, compositional devices, and motifs of *ukiyo-e* prints into their own works in the early phase of Japonisme. The period after the 1890s saw the emergence of artists in Britain and America who adopted not only the above-mentioned elements of *ukiyo-e* prints but also carving and printing techniques, tools, and materials of *ukiyo-e* printmaking[1]. In Britain, it was colour woodcut printmakers who were the first to adopt *ukiyo-e* printmaking methods[2], but in the 1920s and the 1930s, linocut printmakers also experimented with some Japanese techniques, tools, and materials. At the centre of such experiments was Claude Flight, who taught linocut printmaking at the Grosvenor School of Modern Art, London, and his former students. There has been a body of research and exhibitions on the colour linocuts by these artists, who vividly depicted the dynamism of modern society by introducing elements reminiscent of Futurism and Cubism[3], but there has been little focus on Flight's interest in *ukiyo-e* printmaking. This article aims to re-examine British linocuts of the 1920s and the 1930s by analysing how Flight and his followers adopted elements of *ukiyo-e* printmaking to promote linocut as a medium for expressing 'modernity'.

In considering this issue, this article compares these linocut printmakers with the woodcut printmakers who earlier adopted the techniques, tools and materials of *ukiyo-e* printmaking. Previous studies on British linocuts of this period emphasized Flight's severe criticism that the woodcut printmakers imitated Japanese printmaking techniques, thereby taking little account of the fact that Flight also incorporated some aspects of Japanese printmaking. In fact, close examination of his discourse on printmaking reveals that he did not entirely oppose incorporating some aspects of *ukiyo-e* printmaking. It was the way the woodcut printmakers imitated Japanese methods that he criticised. Moreover, there were some common features shared by the linocut and woodcut printmakers, who seem to have had a rivalry. With this in mind, this article analyses the similarities and differences between these groups of artists, and why and how Flight criticised the woodcut printmakers, in order to clarify the characteristics of the linocut printmakers' adoption of some *ukiyo-e* printmaking elements. To this end, the first section of this article overviews the way the woodcut printmakers incorporated *ukiyo-e* printmaking techniques. It then goes on to focus on the protagonists of this article, the linocut printmakers, in the following three sections. The second section looks at the 'modernity' expressed in their works, relying mainly on previous studies. The third section turns its attention

to similarities between the adoption of *ukiyo-e* printmaking methods by the woodcut printmakers and by the linocut printmakers. The fourth section focuses on the differences between these groups of artists, and describes the characteristics of Flight's interest in *ukiyo-e* printmaking, and how it was geared to the expression of 'modernity' in his works and those of his followers.

In these analyses, this article focuses on Flight's discourse rather than on the visual elements of the linocuts. In fact, it is difficult to detect the influence of *ukiyo-e* prints merely by analysing the formal qualities of the linocuts. As will be shown, Flight himself did not try to imitate the appearance of *ukiyo-e* prints but to find modes of expression that could only be attained with the newly invented medium of linocut. Also, he was interested in non-visual aspects of *ukiyo-e* prints, that is, the social context in which *ukiyo-e* prints had existed as 'art for the people'. These aspects of Flight's interest in *ukiyo-e* printmaking cannot reveal themselves only through visual analyses. By analysing hitherto overlooked discourse on the linocut, this article attempts to shed new light on the unprecedented flowering of colour linocuts in Britain during this period.

1. The adoption of *ukiyo-e* printmaking techniques by woodcut printmakers

In 1889, at the request of the Smithsonian Institution in the United States, the Bureau of Engraving and Printing of the Japanese Ministry of Finance compiled a report in English about the techniques of *ukiyo-e* printmaking, which was published by the Smithsonian in 1893[4]. The report, which was described as 'the first authoritative statement on this subject made by a native of Japan thoroughly qualified for the task'[5], was featured in *The Studio* in Britain only a year after it was published[6]. The pioneering figures in introducing Japanese printmaking techniques to Britain were two artists, John Dickson Batten and Frank Morley Fletcher (Fig. 1), both of whom were members of the Art Workers Guild and exhibited at the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society. It is possible that they gained knowledge about Japanese printmaking techniques from sources such as this one.

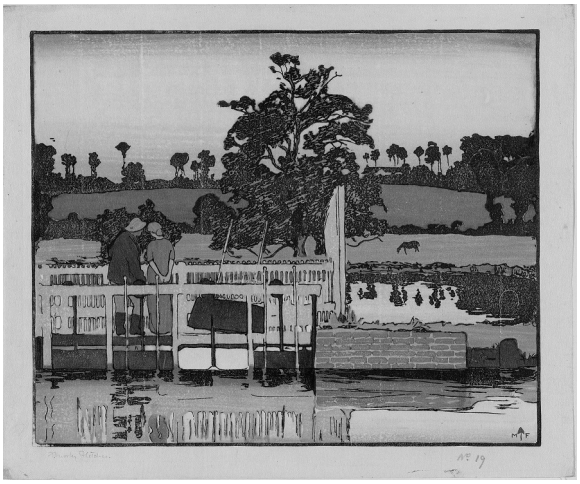

Fig. 1: Frank Morley Fletcher, *Floodgates* (1899), Photograph © 2015 Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

Laurence Binyon and Edward F. Strange, who were the leading scholars of *ukiyo-e* prints in Britain in this period, regarded the way *ukiyo-e* prints had been produced by craftsmen and enjoyed by common people for reasonable prices in Edo Japan as realising the ideals of the Arts and Crafts Movement, such as 'truth to materials', 'artist-craftsmanship' and 'art for the people'[7]. Batten and Fletcher embraced similar views on *ukiyo-e* prints, and adopted the techniques of *ukiyo-e* printmaking. The Japanese method of woodcut printmaking, introduced by these two artists, spread to various parts of Britain by being taught at major art schools including the Central School of Arts and Crafts, the Reading School of Art, and the Glasgow

School of Art as the embodiment of Arts and Crafts ideals from the 1890s to the 1930s. The *ukiyo-e* printmaking method, which requires only simple tools and materials and enables artists to bring out the beauty of materials to their utmost effect by exercising their own ingenuity through designing and hand-printing, was considered suitable for teaching art students how to design, to get an overall grasp of the actual processes of production, and to understand the properties of materials. Through such teaching at art schools, the number of artists who produced woodcuts in the Japanese manner increased gradually, and they began to organize societies of printmakers that held exhibitions at home and abroad[8].

Fig. 2: A set of printmaking tools that were used at the Reading School of Art and are preserved in the Department of Typography and Graphic Communication, the University of Reading (photo by the author)

From the articles and books on the printmaking techniques written by Fletcher, Allen W. Seaby, and John Edgar Platt[9], all of whom used *ukiyo-e* printmaking techniques, and from the set of printmaking tools and woodblocks (Fig. 2) that were used by Seaby and are still preserved in the University of Reading, where he taught printmaking, it is clear that these artists followed the Japanese method of printmaking quite faithfully. However, the way these British artists produced prints had one aspect fundamentally alien to traditional *ukiyo-e* printmaking: while the production of traditional *ukiyo-e* prints was divided into designing, carving, and printing, each process being undertaken by different artists and craftsmen, the whole process was done by the same artist in Britain[10]. It must have been extremely labour-intensive for an artist to do the carving and the printing in the Japanese manner, both of which require a considerable amount of skill, alertness, and discipline.

Whereas printing was customarily done in oil ink with a press in the traditional Western method of printmaking, here pigment mixed with water was brushed onto woodblocks, and printing was done by hand, which made it possible to produce watercolour-like limpidity, gradation of colours, and traces of brushes in prints made with the Japanese method adopted by the British woodcut printmakers. However, the woodcut prints' resemblance to watercolour paintings caused some critics to wonder what was the point of taking great pains to produce in prints the same visual effects as those in watercolour paintings, using such a labour-intensive printmaking method. For example, commenting on prints produced in the Japanese manner and exhibited by the Colour Woodcut Society, a reporter in *The Times* stated: 'it often leaves one wondering why – except for purposes of multiplication – the artist went to the trouble of cutting blocks when he might have got what he appears to be aiming at in a water-colour painting.' As will be mentioned later, the same criticism was repeated by Flight, for whom linocut was the primary medium of expression.

2. Linocut and 'modernity'

Linoleum, which is made from solidified linseed oil and cork dust with canvas backing, was invented as floor covering in the mid-nineteenth century, and, by the 1910s, various artists including German Expressionists and the Russian avant-garde came to experiment with this material for printing blocks. However, while these pre-war linocut prints were produced predominantly in black and white, inter-war Britain saw remarkable developments of the linocut in colour. At the centre of this flowering of colour linocuts were Claude Flight and his students at the Grosvenor School of Modern Art in London.

Claude Flight, after working at various jobs, enrolled at the Heatherley's School of Art at the age of thirty-one in 1912, the year the Italian Futurist artists had their first London exhibition. Flight is believed to have been introduced to the Italian Futurists through C. R. W. Nevinson, the most ardent advocate of Futurism in England, who occasionally attended Heatherley's School[11]. After military service in France during the First World War, Flight spent 'a year in French art schools', which suggests the possibility of his contact with Continental developments in art[12]. It is not certain when Flight first realised the potential of linocuts, but he began to write about them in 1926.

In 1926, Flight was invited to teach colour linocut printmaking at the Grosvenor School of Modern Art, which had just been established in London a year earlier. Various subjects were taught at the school, but Flight's class was by far the most popular and attracted students even from abroad. Exhibitions of linocuts by Flight and his followers were held almost annually from 1929 to 1937 at the Redfern Gallery and the Ward Gallery and sometimes toured abroad, to the United States, China, and Australia[13]. Moreover, Frank Rutter, an art critic who published a defence of the first Post-Impressionist Exhibition in London in 1910, which was to be remembered as a landmark of the introduction of modernist aesthetic ideas to Britain, continued to write favourable reviews on their linocuts in his columns in *The Sunday Times*[14]. Flight's 1934 book was illustrated with reproductions of many linocuts by him and his students, in which he wrote of '"modern art" – and by "modern art" we speak of such prints as are exhibited in this book, prints which express some experience of to-day in the technique of to-day'[15].

By 'experience of to-day', he meant public transport and bustling crowds in the cities, popular entertainment and sports, enthusiasm for speed, and so on (Figs. 3 and 4). He paid attention to the 'speeding up of life in general' as 'one of the interesting and psychologically important features of to-day'[16]. 'Rhythm' and 'movement' were also key themes that often appeared in Flight's writings and were depicted in many of the Grosvenor School linocuts.

> The subjects which I have taken are such things as buses coming down a street, waves breaking on the shore or carrying a ship on the sea, dancing, or the movement in a crowd, swings, or the eddies of the wind and rain: all these have their particular significant rhythm which I have been trying to grasp and place in my colour prints, textiles, sculpture and paintings so as to give the feeling of the universal rhythm in each individual movement[17].

These qualities, which embodied the dynamism of modern society, corresponded to those the

Fig. 3 Claude Flight, *Speed* (1923) Image copyright © The Metropolitan Museum of Art

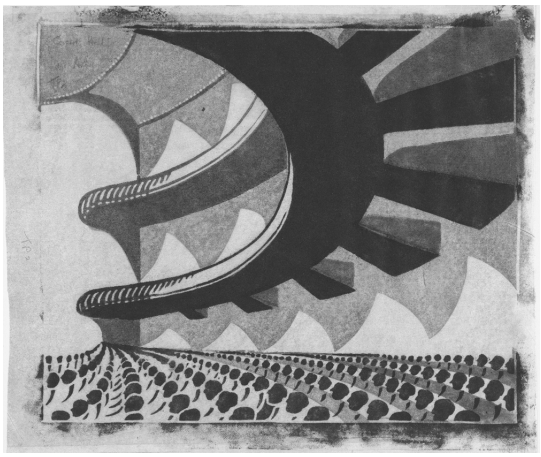

Fig. 4 Sybil Andrews, *Concert Hall* (1929) Image copyright © The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Italian Futurists sought to express through their art. Not surprisingly, contemporary critics often described Flight as representing the tenets of Futurism. For example, James Laver, an art historian and critic, wrote, 'Mr. Flight, in his lino-work at least, is a futurist in the strict sense, that is, he is chiefly concerned with expressing the motion of objects, as opposed to those who merely depict objects in motion'[18]. S. C. Kaines Smith went so far as to call him 'the only true futurist that this country has produced' in his book published in 1934, *Painters of England*[19]. Also, the elements seen in the prints of Flight and his followers, such as geometric compositions, the intersection of lines and planes, and the decorative treatment of bold colours, suggest affinity to Cubism and Art Deco.

Flight himself, however, refused to be categorised in any of these schools of modernism, saying:

> I am a lone figure, belonging to no school…I have been trying to delve below the surface of things and to express the collective spirit of the times in terms of simplicity, unity and harmony…The Cubists missed, partly from lack of humanism, and the Futurists from a lack of order[20].

As has been pointed out in previous studies on Flight and his followers, it was a peculiar combination of modernism and traditional craftsmanship that characterised their linocuts, and their interpretation of 'modernity' was personal and individual, rather than being attached rigidly to any particular school[21].

3. Flight's interest in *ukiyo-e* prints

What kind of printmaking method, then, was employed to express the qualities of 'modernity' as interpreted by Flight and his followers? P. G. Konody, an art critic, stated that 'this new method is nothing more than a labour-saving device to get the same results that were

obtained with greater pain and less quickly by cutting in wood'[22]. It could even be said that Flight's method was a simplified version of traditional Japanese printmaking, or of the woodcut printmaking employed by Fletcher and his followers. Instead of wood, they employed linoleum, which is softer and easier to cut. Also, instead of water-based pigment, they used oil colours or printing inks, which were more familiar to Western artists. Flight explained, 'Many printers, following the custom of the Japanese, who are masters of their medium, use powdered colour and rice paste for printing, but this method is unnecessarily complicated and the results in English hands are never as satisfactory as the oil or ink method'[23]. Colours are applied to blocks with rollers and printed on dry paper in linocut printmaking, while in *ukiyo-e* printmaking, water-soluble pigment is brushed onto a woodblock and printed on damp paper. Flight also recommended the use of the *baren*, a traditional Japanese tool for printing. He modified the Japanese prototype, so that it was easier to make and to handle (Fig. 5). He wrote about this tool as follows:

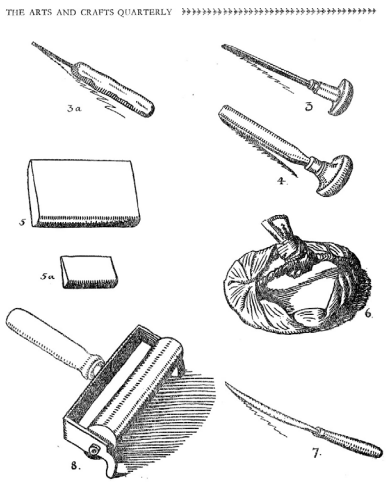

Fig. 5: An illustration of the printmaking tools Flight recommended in Claude Flight, 'Linoleum-cut Colour Printing, Paper No. 2', *The Arts and Crafts Quarterly*, vol. 1, no. 7, 1926, p. 16

> This tool (baren or home-made rubber) is used for rubbing the back of the paper when printing and is adapted from a Japanese model. Unlike the Japanese "baren," which is made of rolled string backed with cardboard in a casing of bamboo leaf, this "baren" is made from two rounds of millboard, one slightly smaller than the other, strongly glued together and covered with the bamboo leaf which has been soaked in water for twenty-four hours...In place of the above the beginner can make shift with a small round box or tin covered tightly with rough linen, or he can work with two rounds of millboard glued together, covered with linen or canvas, the ends being bound with string in the same way as with the bamboo leaf[24].

The technique of cutting register marks at one side and one corner of each block, which was obviously derived from the Japanese technique called '*kento*', made it possible to print from multiple blocks in various colours (Fig. 6). The visual effects resulting from the similarity of methods between linocut and Japanese printmaking led P. G. Konody to comment, 'The same method is, of course, used by the Japanese in printing their woodblocks, and by a few Western

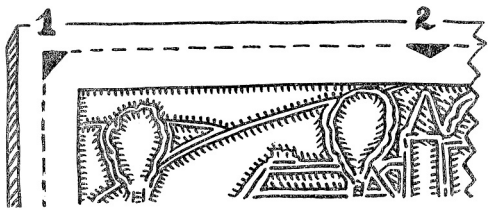

Fig. 6: An illustration explaining how to cut out register marks on the block in Claude Flight, 'Linoleum-cut Colour Printing, Paper No. 3', *Arts and Crafts Quarterly*, vol. 1, no. 8, 1926, p. 29

artists who have adopted the Japanese method. It is thus not surprising that in general appearance the lino-cut is more closely akin to the colour print of the Far East than to the European woodcut'[25].

As is clear from the following statement, Flight himself admitted the connection between his method of linocut and Japanese printmaking, based on his understanding of the techniques and contexts of *ukiyo-e* printmaking:

> Unlike the modern wood-cutter the linoleum-cutter, though sharing grandparents had a different father. This father was a little slit-eyed Asiatic, a man of the people who cut out his own cherry-wood blocks, as many as eight different blocks being used, each printed in a different colour to complete a single picture. These pictures were at first portraits of popular actors and were printed in hundreds and sold for ridiculously small sums among the people. Later the wood-cutters turned to landscapes and subjects of country and town life[26].

Flight's adaptation and simplification of Japanese tools and techniques made linocut, which had been printed predominantly in monochrome, easier to produce in multiple colours. Flight insisted that colour linocuts produced through this method would lead toward the 'Art of Colour', the art form that Flight believed to be the ideal modern art.

> If, as W. H. Wright predicts, the whole movement towards colour from Constable and Turner up to the Modern Art of to-day is towards an 'Art of Colour,' then surely our simple colour prints in every home will prepare us for what he feels will be the outcome of all the century-long strivings between the different schools of thought. And when some "colour-instrument" has been invented and the modern artist's creative conceptions are properly impressed, then 'With the completion of this new medium the art of colour will have entirely dissociated itself from the art of painting, not only in impulse and conception, but in the world's attitude to it.' Whatever our ideas may be as to the future of art the appeal of colour is ever present and can be satisfied so easily by the Modern Colour Print[27].

By using multiple colours, Flight tried to promote linocut as 'Modern Art'. In this respect, it is notable that, though in a simplified way, Flight and his followers adopted some *ukiyo-e* printmaking techniques and tools as the woodcut printmakers did. The Arts and Crafts tradition, carried on in linocut printmaking by Flight and his followers, could also be seen as a common feature shared with the woodcut printmakers. Echoing the laments expressed by John Ruskin and William Morris about the current state of the majority of people, whose surroundings were deprived of beautiful things, Flight deplored the status quo, saying, 'Living in ugly homes, adorned with ugly furniture and hangings, the average man has grown up without training in the arts, and he does not realize that the greatest and most satisfactory of all the pleasures is denied to him'[28]. He saw great potential in colour prints to overcome this situation, and paid particular attention to the possibility that colour prints would be produced cheaply so that they could become available to people with small incomes.

> People live in smaller rooms, and the pictures they buy must necessarily be smaller, the price also they are willing to pay for a picture is much less than they were willing to give formerly. Woodcuts and colour-prints can meet this demand, for, in case of woodcuts, one hundred copies are usually printed from each block, and in colour-prints generally fifty. This means that one can afford to sell colour-prints and woodcuts for from one to three guineas, and perhaps when the demand grows greater, at something approaching the prices once current in old Japan, whereas water-colours cost from £5 to £20, and oil paintings fabulous sums which no one can afford to pay[29].

He also wrote, 'the art of colour printing in Japan was only appreciated and the prints only bought by the people; the artists themselves being of the humblest origin'[30]. These statements show his eagerness to establish prints as 'art for the people', the art that had been envisaged by the proponents of the Arts and Crafts Movement. In this respect, he apparently had in mind the original context in which *ukiyo-e* prints were produced and appreciated by common people in Japan. In Edo Japan, the systems for production and retail of *ukiyo-e* prints developed to a remarkable extent, enabling a wide range of people to enjoy prints cheaply. Flight believed that his ideal of 'art for the people' could be achieved by creating a society similar to Edo Japan in which sufficient demand for and supply of prints existed.

With respect to the educational value of colour printing, Flight expressed opinions recalling those held by the woodcut printmakers who used *ukiyo-e* printmaking techniques. Flight insisted that a simple medium like linocut gave students valuable lessons in the essentials of design:

> Here all possibility of niggle and detailed copying of nature is impossible and the student is compelled to express himself in terms of the simple medium, in terms of flat masses of colour superimposed; nothing could be better than experiments in Linoleum-cut Colour Printing to counteract the almost universal confusion in the teaching of the Art Schools of England to-day; this return to simplicity and a search for the essentials of the subject in hand will be found an invaluable aid to design[31].

Moreover, like the woodcut printmakers, Flight also paid attention to the potential of simple tools and materials, which gave artists much discretion for controlled and personal expression. In this respect, he pointed out the advantage of hand-printing with the *baren*. He stated, 'it is absolutely essential that they are printed by hand without the use of a press, the results of press printing – we have unfortunately certain printers who advocated this method – being deplorably mechanical and works of art of a very low order'[32]. By rubbing with *baren* using various pressures, artists could regulate the density and quality of colour and the texture produced by the linoleum, giving the image an especially personal character.

4. Linocut vs. woodcut

As described in the previous section, Flight's views on colour printmaking were similar to

those of the woodcut printmakers in certain respects. However, while many of the woodcut printmakers produced works that showed an affinity to watercolour paintings, Flight tried to dissociate colour prints from paintings. He insisted that colour printmakers should not try to imitate other media, but create visual qualities that could be obtained only through the process of printmaking:

> [C]olour prints which are reprinted from either wood or linoleum blocks should be treated not as either water-colours or oils, but as pictures that are the result of the special labour that is expended on their creation. The special labour in this case being cutting and printing, they should have the quality of something that is (1) cut out, and (2) printed in different layers of colour.[33]

Instead of the gradations of colour that many of the woodcut printmakers created in their prints, with visual effects similar to those in watercolour paintings, Flight and his followers often used the technique of superimposing colours so that their prints revealed the quality of being printed plane by plane.

These statements by Flight show his detachment from and criticism of the woodcut printmakers, who produced colour prints imitating the effects of watercolour painting. It is possible to presume that his antagonism against them became stronger after Frank Morley Fletcher criticised colour linocuts in his article in *The Original Colour Print Magazine*:

> To condemn linoleum printing in itself would be foolish in view of the remarkable work that has been done by its means, especially by the children in Professor Cizek's class in Vienna, or by some of Professor Orlik's pupils, or by the Printing School (Kunstgewerbeschule) in Leipzig, but the best of the work has been in black and white and of a primitive and simple kind. The material is not suited for printing a beautiful surface of colour nor for giving the finer qualities of line, and when it is used for colour the result is poor. Linoleum work illustrates very clearly the rule that when the tools and materials of an Art are made easy, the tendency is for design to deteriorate, and for the Art to become base[34].

Citing the above statement by Fletcher, Flight wrote in his book, *Lino-cuts*, 'The object of this book is to endeavour to disprove this statement and to show that greater fluency of expression is possible both in form and colour in linoleum-cut colour printing if that printing is developed in a European way, the technique being the means to an end instead of almost an end in itself'[35]. Flight emphasised the difference between his method of printmaking and that employed by Fletcher and his followers by calling the former 'European' and the latter 'Anglo-Japanese'. He wrote,

> The Anglo-Japanese wood-cut colour printers in England are a case at point, these printers having been influenced very strongly by the Japanese, so strongly that the colour prints which they create with such cleverness of technique are lacking in any vital motives of expression in keeping with the age they are living in. So much of the work of to-day is based

> on that minute attention to detail of the "Pre-Raphaelites" of the last century, detail which is unnecessary and has no significance and the artist becomes so bound up technically in the difficult processes of the Japanese, those processes which are absolutely suitable to an Eastern people, among whom individual artists are readily giving up their lives to the creation, for example, of a single complicated ivory carving, and the vital experience is lacking[36].

As Stephen Coppel remarks, one should consider the contemporary hierarchy of printmaking as a context of such rivalry between Flight and Fletcher. Woodcut printmakers, whose medium had just recently been revived, had to enhance their position in order to emulate etchers, who were at the top of the hierarchy, and tried not to be associated with linocut, which was generally considered a childish form of art due to the fact that linocut was taught to children at some schools[37]. About the situation of British printmaking in this period, Frances Carey and Anthony Griffiths pointed out that 'Each technique was contained in its own world, with its own artists, its specialist societies, and, more often than not, its specialist publishers'[38]. The rivalry between the linocut printmakers and the woodcut printmakers could be seen as one of the conflicts triggered by this situation, in which each group of printmakers tried to differentiate themselves from others.

It should also be remarked that Flight did not criticise the Japanese method of printmaking itself, but the way the woodcut printmakers imitated Japanese techniques even in their minute details without much adaptation. He wrote about the woodcut printmakers as follows:

> Inspired by the work of such masters as Hokusai 1760-1849, Utamaro, 1754-1806 and Hiroshige, 1796-1858, they attempted to get a Japanese feeling as well as a Japanese technique, the result being that their efforts were lacking both in reason and technique, and both the public and the artists themselves not realising the possibilities of this new medium if put to its right uses, the art of the colour print has not yet developed to anything like the extent one would have expected[39].

Instead of just imitating Japanese printmaking, he believed, contemporary printmakers had to put the medium 'to its right uses', adopting only what is useful to express something relevant to their own time. He also cited the following statement from the book by Stewart Dick, *The Arts and Crafts of Old Japan*:

> As S. Dick says in 'The Arts and Crafts of Old Japan', the English man 'demands of the sculptor, painter, engraver, wood-cutter, just that unintelligent, pseudo-realism which the decadence of the Renaissance invented to please his forefathers…demanding light and shade modelling or minutiae of form from a craft only capable of strong line and flat mass of colour'[40].

'Strong line and flat mass of colour' were actually key features of linocuts by Flight and his followers. It is possible that in order to achieve 'vital motives of expression in keeping with the

age they are living in'[41] through such lines and masses of colour, Flight made use of some techniques from Japanese printmaking, but, in doing so, he much simplified the Japanese techniques so that the vitality of expression would not be hampered by technical difficulties. With this hybrid method of printmaking, Flight and his followers vividly depicted the 'modernity' of the contemporary society.

Conclusion

In this way, Flight accused the woodcut printmakers of 'imitating' *ukiyo-e* printmaking techniques. However, the woodcut printmakers themselves insisted that they did not 'imitate' Japanese techniques. Moreover, in insisting so, they presented the theory that a colour woodcut printmaking method had already existed in the form of chiaroscuro[42] in Europe, and that it was rather the Japanese who 'imitated' the method. W. R. Lethaby, one of the leading figures in the Arts and Crafts Movement and the first Principal of the Central School of Arts and Crafts, tried to disseminate craftsmanship embodying the tenets of the Movement by publishing *The Artistic Crafts Series of Technical Handbooks*. As part of this series, a book on the method of colour woodcut printmaking, *Wood-block Printing*, was written by Fletcher. In the preface to this book, Lethaby insisted on the theory that colour woodcut printmaking techniques were originally invented in Europe, quoting Edward F. Strange's words:

> The following account of colour printing from wood-blocks is based on a study of the methods which were lately only practised in Japan, but which at an earlier time were to some degree in use in Europe also. The main principles of the art, indeed, were well known in the West long before colour prints were produced in Japan, and there is some reason to suppose that the Japanese may have founded their methods in imitating the prints taken from Europe by missionaries. Major Strange says: 'The European art of chiaroscuro engraving is in all essentials identical with that of Japanese colour printing…It seems, therefore, not vain to point out that the accidental sight of one of the Italian colour-prints may have suggested the process to the Japanese'[43].

It is also clear from the following statement that Lethaby saw the introduction of the Japanese method of printmaking as a way to revive lost European techniques: 'Sufficient has been said to show that in studying Japanese colour-prints, and working more or less after the same method, we are not trying to adopt anything exotic, but rather readapting an art which belongs as much to the West as to the East'[44].

It is possible to see their encouragement of woodcut printmaking as one of the attempts of the Arts and Crafts Movement to re-create old techniques – 'a profound, creative relationship with the past' as Alan Crawford calls it – a prominent feature of the Movement[45]. The mission to revive lost crafts in a modern society was carried out in various classes at the Central School, such as a class in writing and illumination by Edward Johnston, which was based on his study of medieval manuscripts, and Alexander Fisher's revitalising of the art of enamelling[46]. According to the curriculum of the School, 'Printing of Colour Prints from Wood Blocks by a

method based on the Japanese practice' was taught from 1897 to 1910[47], which can be seen as yet another example of this mission.

As we have seen, Flight and his followers, on the other hand, promoted linocut, which was a newly invented medium, and tried to dissociate themselves from 'the past'. Flight stated, 'here in England at the present day is the chance, I think, of creating an art which will appeal to the people, because in colour printing we must create – not copy the past'[48]. Both the woodcut printmakers and the linocut printmakers adopted *ukiyo-e* printmaking techniques. However, while the former tried to re-create 'the past', the latter adapted and absorbed the *ukiyo-e* method in order to create a new medium of expression for 'today.'

Notes

[1] In France, several artists including Henri Rivière, Jules Chadel, and Prosper-Alphonse Isaac temporarily used the techniques of *ukiyo-e* printmaking. *Furansu no Ukiyoeshi: Anri Rivieru Ten* [Henri Rivière : Maître Français de l'Ukiyo-e], ed. by Hagi Uragami Museum (Tokyo: NHK Service Center, 2009), Hélène Goarzan, 'Urushibara to Isakku to Shaderu: Yoroppa ni okeru Japonisumu to Shikisai Mokuhanga' [Urushibara, Isaac and Chadel: Japonisme and Colour Woodcuts in Europe], *Gareria Tsushin* [Nouvelles de l'Estampe], 30 (1996), 7-15. In the German speaking region, Emil Orlik experimented with ukiyo-e printmaking techniques. *Emiru Oruriku, Nihon Dayori* [Aus Japan by Emil Orlik], ed. by Setsuko Kuwabara and Eberhard Friese (Tokyo: Yushodo, 1996). However, the number of printmakers who adopted the *ukiyo-e* printmaking method was by far the largest in Britain and America. For the Amercan printmakers, see Andrew Stevens, 'The Spread of Style: Americans and the Color Woodcut of the Early Twentieth Century', in *Color Woodcut International: Japan, Britain, and America in the Early 20th Century*, ed. by Christine Javid (Madison, Wis.: Chazen Museum of Art, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2006), pp. 44-53, Julia Meech, 'Reinventing the Exotic Orient', in *Japonisme Comes to America: The Japanese Impact on the Graphic Arts 1876-1925*, ed. by Julia Meech (New York: H.N. Abrams, 1990), pp. 101-222.

[2] For British woodcut printmakers who adopted *ukiyo-e* printmaking techniques, see Miya Itabashi, 'The Reception of Japanese Prints and Printmaking in the Artistic Revival of Woodblock Printmaking and the Arts and Crafts Movement in Britain', *Design History*, 8 (2010), 59-82, Nancy Green, 'Temptation of the East: The Influence of Japanese Colour Woodcuts on British Printmaking', in *Color Woodcut International*, ed. by Javid, pp. 30-43.

[3] *Rhythms of Modern Life: British Prints 1914-1939*, ed. by Clifford S. Ackley (Boston: MFA Publications, 2008), Gordon Samuel and Nicola Penny, *The Cutting Edge of Modernity: Linocuts of the Grosvenor School* (Aldershot, Hampshire: Lund Humphries, 2002), Caroline Taylor, 'Flight Power', *Antique Collecting*, (May/June, 1996), 54-59, Stephen Coppel, *Linocuts of the Machine Age: Claude Flight and the Grosvenor School* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1995), Stephen Coppel, *Claude Flight and His Followers: The Colour Linocut Movement between the Wars* (Canberra, A.C.T.: Australian National Gallery, 1992), Lora S. Urbanelli, *The Grosvenor School: British Linocuts between the Wars* (Providence: Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, 1988), Michael Parkin, 'Claude Flight and the Linocut', *Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts*, 6 (Fall 1987), 26-33, *British Colour Linocuts of the 1920s & 1930s* (London: Redfern Gallery, 1985), *Claude Flight and His Pupils* (Colchester: Minories, 1973).

[4] 'Japanese Wood-cutting and Wood-cut Printing by Mr. T. Tokuno (Edited by S. R. Koehler, Curator, Section of Graphic Arts)', in *Report of the United States National Museum of 1892* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1893), pp. 221-244.

[5] 'Japanese Wood-cutting and Wood-cut Printing by Mr. T. Tokuno', p. 221.

[6] 'Woodcut Printing in Water-colours: After the Japanese Manner', *The Studio*, vol.3, 1894, pp. 110-116.
[7] Miya Itabashi, 'The Reception of Japanese Prints and Printmaking in Britain, 1890s-1930s', Ph.D. thesis, Royal College of Art, 2008, pp. 118-123.
[8] Among such societies of printmakers were the Society of Graver-Printers in Colour, the Colour Woodcut Society, and the Central Club of Colour Woodblock Engravers.
[9] Frank Morley Fletcher, *Wood-block Printing: A Description of the Craft of Woodcutting & Colour Printing Based on the Japanese Practice* (London: John Hogg, 1916), Allen W. Seaby, 'Colour-printing from Wood-blocks', *The Studio*, vol. 75, 1919, pp. 149-158, *Hand Printing in Colour* (Leicester: Dryad Handicrafts, c1921), John Edgar Platt, *Colour Woodcuts: A Book of Reproductions and a Handbook of Method* (London: Sir I. Pitman & Sons, Ltd., 1938).
[10] In the United States, on the other hand, many artists including Helen Hyde and Bertha Lum had Japanese craftsmen cut and print their designs. Two British artists – Elizabeth Keith, who lived in Japan for many years, and Charles William Bartlett, who stayed in Japan for a while and moved to Hawaii – produced prints in collaboration with professional carvers and printers at Watanabe Shozaburo's workshop in Tokyo. They were, however, exceptional among British artists. For an anecdote in which Keith realised that her method was not in accord with that adopted by other contemporary British printmakers when she returned to Britain in 1924, see Malcolm Charles Salaman, *Elizabeth Keith*, Masters of the Colour Print, IX, (London; New York: The Studio, 1933), p. 3.
[11] Coppel, *Linocuts of the Machine Age*, p. 17.
[12] Letter from Adrian Hill to Michael Parkin, quoted in Parkin, p. 26.
[13] *British Linocuts, the Redfern Gallery* [exhibition catalogue], 1929-1931, *Linocuts*, *the Ward Gallery*, [exhibition catalogue], 1933-1937.
[14] Frank Rutter, 'British Linocuts: A New Colour Art for the People', *Sunday Times*, 14 July, 1929, p. 7, 'Modern Colour Prints: A Democratic Art', *Sunday Times*, 7 August, 1932, p. 5, 'Modern Colour Prints', *Sunday Times*, 29 July, 1934, p. 7.
[15] Flight, *The Art and Craft of Lino Cutting and Printing*, p. 63.
[16] Claude Flight, 'Dynamism and the Colour Print', *Original Colour Print Magazine*, no. 2, June 1925, p. 56.
[17] Claude Flight, 'Mr. Flight Explains Himself', *Arts and Crafts*, vol. 1, no.4, July 1928, p. 184.
[18] James Laver, 'Recent Etching and Engraving', *Artwork*, vol. 3, no. 11, September - November 1927, p. 151.
[19] Quoted in *Claude Flight and His Pupils*, n.p.
[20] The interview with Flight that appeared in 'Golder's Green Artist's Life as "Caveman"', *Golders Green Gazette*, 3 June, 1927, p. 1, quoted in Coppel, *Linocuts of the Machine Age*, p. 17.
[21] Coppel, *Linocuts of the Machine Age*, p. 22, Urbanelli, pp. 18-19.
[22] P. G. Konody, 'Linocuts', *The Observer*, 27 July, 1930, p. 12.
[23] Flight, *The Art and Craft of Lino Cutting and Printing*, p. 48.
[24] Flight, *Lino-cuts*, pp. 29-30.
[25] P. G. Konody, 'British Lino-cuts', *The Observer*, 28 May, 1933, p. 14.
[26] Flight, *Lino-cuts*, pp. 8-9.
[27] Claude Flight, 'The Modern Colour-Print', *Arts and Crafts Quarterly*, vol.1, no.2, April, 1925, p.7.
[28] Flight, *Lino-cuts*, pp. 1-2.
[29] Flight, 'The Modern Colour-Print', p.7.
[30] Flight, *Lino-cuts*, p. 9.
[31] Flight, *Lino-cuts*, p. 43.
[32] Flight, *Lino-cuts*, p. 50.
[33] Flight, 'The Modern Colour-Print', p. 6.

[34] Frank Morley Fletcher, 'The Woodblock Colour-Print, a Democratic Art', *Original Colour Print Magazine*, no. 1, June 1924, p.4.
[35] Flight, *Lino-cuts*, p. 17.
[36] Flight, *Lino-cuts*, pp. 15-16.
[37] Coppel, *Linocuts of the Machine Age*, pp. 14-15.
[38] Frances Carey and Anthony Griffiths, *Avant-Garde British Printmaking: 1914-1960* (London: British Museum Publications, 1990), pp.9-10.
[39] Flight, *Lino-cuts*, pp. 9-10.
[40] Flight, *Lino-cuts*, p. 17.
[41] Flight, *Lino-cuts*, p. 15.
[42] Chiaroscuro was a kind of woodcut colour print that developed mainly in Italy and Germany from the late fifteenth century onward. In chiaroscuro, multiple woodblocks in related colours were used to produce shading.
[43] Lethaby, 'Editor's Preface' in Fletcher, *Wood-block Printing*, pp. viii-ix.
[44] Lethaby, p. xiii.
[45] Alan Crawford, 'United Kingdom: Origins and First Flowering', in *The Arts & Crafts Movement in Europe & America: Design for the Modern World*, ed. by Wendy Kaplan (London: Thames & Hudson, 2004), p. 61.
[46] Theresa Gronberg, 'William Richard Lethaby and the Central School of Arts and Crafts', in *W. R. Lethaby 1857-1931: Architecture, Design and Education*, ed. by Sylvia Backemeyer and Theresa Gronberg (London: Lund Humphries, 1984), p. 22.
[47] The London County Council, Technical Education Board, *Prospectus and Timetable: The Central School of Arts and Crafts*, 1897-1910.
[48] Flight, *Lino-cuts*, p. 12.

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