

3. "Illiterate Monuments": The Ruin as Dialect or Broken Classic

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A libertine anticlassic and antiacademic aesthetic is documented in the attitude expressed toward so-called Druidic monuments. Focusing on the dispute—revived during the first quarter of the eighteenth century—between the Palladian Inigo Jones and the Epicurean Walter Charleton concerning the interpretation of Stonehenge, I will develop the important antithesis for architectural and sculptural monuments between classical, or "literate," monuments and barbaric, Gothic, or "illiterate," memorials. This polemic hinges on an associative and speculative etymology for the term *rune*.

My point will be that from this debate arises the opportunity for conjoining conceptually, visually, and linguistically *runae* with ruins, that is, for bringing together "worn-out" and "forgotten" letters with fragmented stone monuments that were not "absolutely dumb," but that spoke in a "more obscure dialect." By extension, the powerful aesthetic challenge to classicism of the grotesque, multiple, shattered form will be seen as undermining the legible, fixed, static articulation susceptible to a single, undeviating interpretation—a fundamental tenet of academic theory both in France and in England.

Finally, I will indicate that this is the nub of a much larger issue, namely the rise of modern landscape painting to the forefront of the pictorial arts from its traditional lowly position in the academic hierarchy of the genres. This ascent is due to a dynamic view of nature, one in which matter creates in a libertine, humanly uncontrolled fashion. Further, this free and vitalistic behavior heralds the birth of a deanthropocentrist worldview in which each thing—both natural and artificial—is permitted to speak its own individual vernacular.¹

In 1797, the German writer and critic Friedrich Schlegel, in his synoptic assessment of ancient and modern poetics, *Die Griechen und Römer: Historische Versuche*

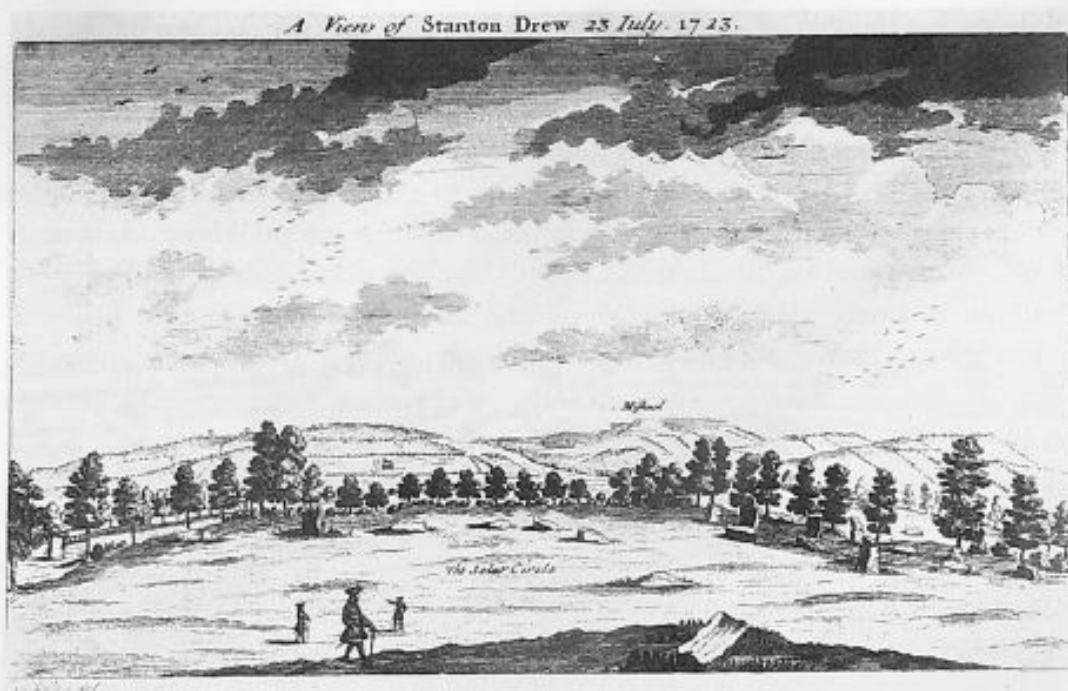


Figure 1. William Stukely, *A View of Stanton Drew*, July 23, 1723, from *Itinerarium Curiosum*, (1776), vol. 2, pl. 77. Photograph of engraving by the author.

über das klassische Alterthum, extended the language of seventeenth-century skeptics and Epicureans to the sphere of art. In contrasting the immutable "wholeness" of Greek poetry with the "fragmentary," "interesting," "piquant," and "individual" qualities of national or vernacular literature, he avails himself of a fundamental metaphor. Schlegel states that if one surveys the entirety of modern aesthetic production, "its mass appears like an ocean of battling forces (*Kräfte*) in which the elements of ruined Beauty, the fragments of ruptured art, make themselves felt confusedly as the melancholy debris of a former unity." Echoing Johann Joachim Winckelmann on the question of the imitation of nature, Schlegel, like his distinguished predecessor, maintains that the ancients inhabited a different landscape: an intact, perfect moral and physical topography, whereas the moderns had to be content with a "chemically dissolved," anatomized, and "separated" reality.²

Schlegel's "Synfonismus der Fragmente," his praise of potentiality, chaos, the ugly, and "das Nichts," is fundamentally related to his radical distinction between the grotesque and the naive or classical. In other words, in a series of essays published in the *Athenaeum* (1798–1800), he opposes an "empirical, Lockean" modern style, predicated on change, the eternally arbitrary, and the accidental, to a normative canon based on the principle of *utile et dulce* and on the belief that form and matter match naturally, harmoniously.³

Schlegel's definition of metamorphic modernism attacks one of the most important and codifying documents in the Renaissance classicizing tradition: the chapter titled "The *Idea* of the Painter, the Sculptor, and the Architect chosen from the Higher

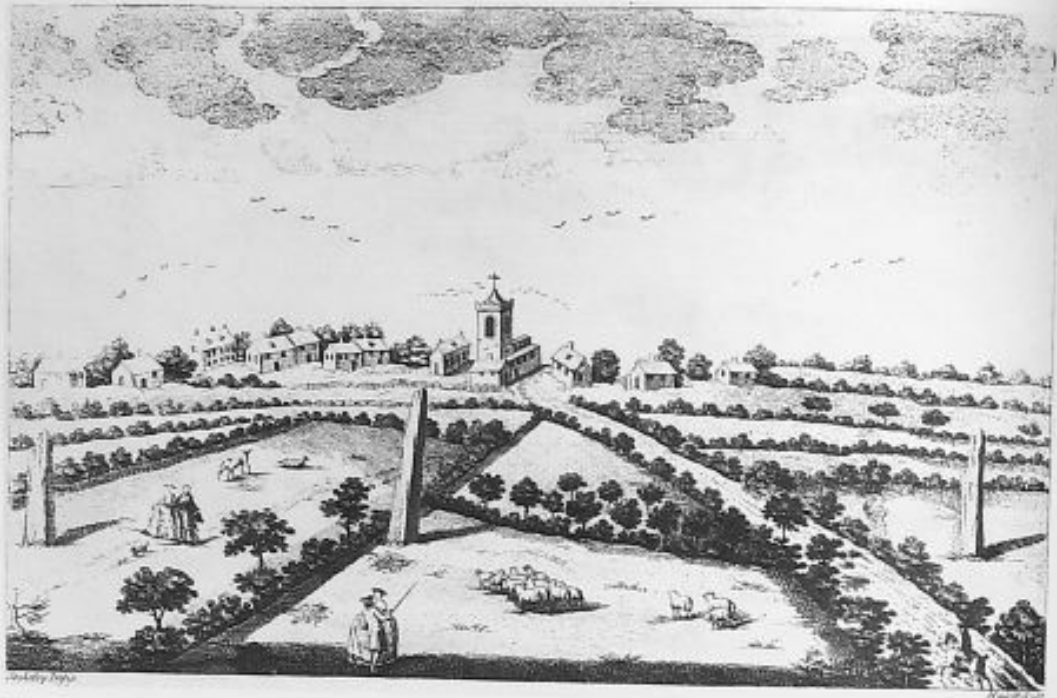


Figure 2. William Stukely, *Devil's Arrow*, 1725, from *Itinerarium Curiosum*, (1776), vol. 2, pl. 90.

Natural Beauties of Nature," from Giovanni Pietro Bellori's *Lives of the Modern Painters, Sculptors, and Architects* (1672). Bellori's faith in the perfection of ancient art is expressed with fervor. The modern architect

[m]ay be certain to find the Idea established and based on the examples of the ancients, who as a result of long study established this art; the Greeks gave it its scope and best proportions, which are confirmed by the most learned centuries and by the consensus of a succession of learned men, and which became the laws of an admirable *Idea* and final beauty. This beauty, being one only in each species, cannot be altered without being destroyed. Hence those who with novelty transform it, regretably deform it; for ugliness stands close to beauty, as the vices touch the virtues. Such an evil we observe unfortunately at the fall of the Roman Empire, with which all the good arts decayed, and architecture more than any other; the barbarous builders disdained the models and the Ideas of the Greeks and Romans and the most beautiful monuments of antiquity, and for many centuries frantically erected so many and such various fantastic phantasies of orders that they rendered it monstrous with the ugliest disorder.⁴

This uniformitarian notion of beauty—safe from historical change—had considerable influence on the thinking of the Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture in France (founded in 1648) and, even earlier, on the Palladian theories of Inigo Jones and his followers in England.

In contrast to Bellori, Schlegel's ironic stance vis-à-vis the monotony of Absolute Beauty, and his thesis that only the supreme formal agility of the arabesque/grotesque

(functioning as a principle of structure) can be adequate to the infinite diversity of nature and the varieties of lived experience, may be taken as exemplary for a larger class of Romantics: E. T. A. Hoffmann, Jean Paul Richter, Victor Hugo. Especially noteworthy is John Ruskin's construct of the natural grotesque, which for him is close to a total, comprehensive art capable of bringing into conjunction the multiple oppositions of this world: the one with the many, the divine with the monstrous.⁵

Significantly, the anticlassical and, hence, antiacademic aesthetic, which simultaneously negates anthropocentrism because it questions the existence of an ideal, superimposable canon based on perfected human form, can be documented in the attitude expressed toward so-called Druidic monuments. These "pillar" and "rocking" stones, menhirs and cromlechs, baetyls, herms, and dolmens litter the downs of Cornwall, Wiltshire, and Brittany. Henry Rowlands in *Mona antiqua restaurata* (1766), William Borlase in *Antiquities of Cornwall* (1769), William Stukeley in *Itinerarium Curiosum* (1723), Baron d'Hancarville in *Recherches sur l'origine, l'esprit, et le progres des arts de La Grece* (1785), Richard Payne Knight in *Symbolical Language of Ancient Art* (1818), and Baron Grimm in *Teutonic Mythology* (1835–36) all discuss unfabricated or rude rock memorials and circles as if they were inseparable from the chaotic continuum of the desolate districts from whose depths they seem to surface.⁶

Moreover, I would like to suggest that there is an additional, an etymological, clue as to why the particular reality of such unimproved monuments remained mute



Figure 3. Godfrey Higgins, *Celtic Druids, Brinham Craggs*, 1829, pl. 35, lithograph.



Figure 4. Godfrey Higgins, *Celtic Druids, Monument of Carnac*, 1829, pl. 43, lithograph.

for a classicizing sensibility. On this point, Walter Charleton, in his *Chorea Gigantum; or, The Most Famous Antiquity of Great Britain, vulgarly Called Stone-Heng, Standing on Salisbury Plain, Restored to the Danes* (first published in 1663 and subsequently in a second and then in a third edition in 1725), takes up arms against Inigo Jones's *The Most Notable Antiquity of Great Britain*.

At this point, I would like to pause in order to introduce the somewhat confusing cast of characters in this acrimonious debate. John Webb, Inigo Jones's pupil and relation by marriage, compiled after Jones's death in 1651 a book on Stonehenge, written as if by his revered master but actually reconstructed by Webb on the basis of "some few indigested notes." At the core of Jones's architectural thinking is the belief that design is a rational affair of number, of procedure by natural subdivision. To this absolute mathematical control all invention and, therefore, the art of building are subordinate. The ancient orders were and continue to be controlled by the module. Hence Jones's curious elucidation (via Webb) of the rebus of Stonehenge. When challenged by James I, who was staying, on a progress through the country, with the earl of Pembroke at Wilton in 1620, Jones declared Stonehenge to be Roman. Having surveyed the monument and plotted its plan (he was surveyor-general of England at the time), he had found it to be based on four intersecting equilateral triangles. Not surprisingly, given his affections, this was precisely the diagram that Palladio had deduced, from Vitruvius's account, to be the basis of the ancient type of Roman theater. Therefore, Stonehenge, notwithstanding the barbaric crudity of its masonry, issued, according to Jones, from a Roman mind.⁷ This theory, as I mentioned, was developed and published as a book by John Webb with a syncretistic overlay of his own scholarship.

Shortly after the appearance of Webb's compilation of Jones's notes (*Stone-Heng*

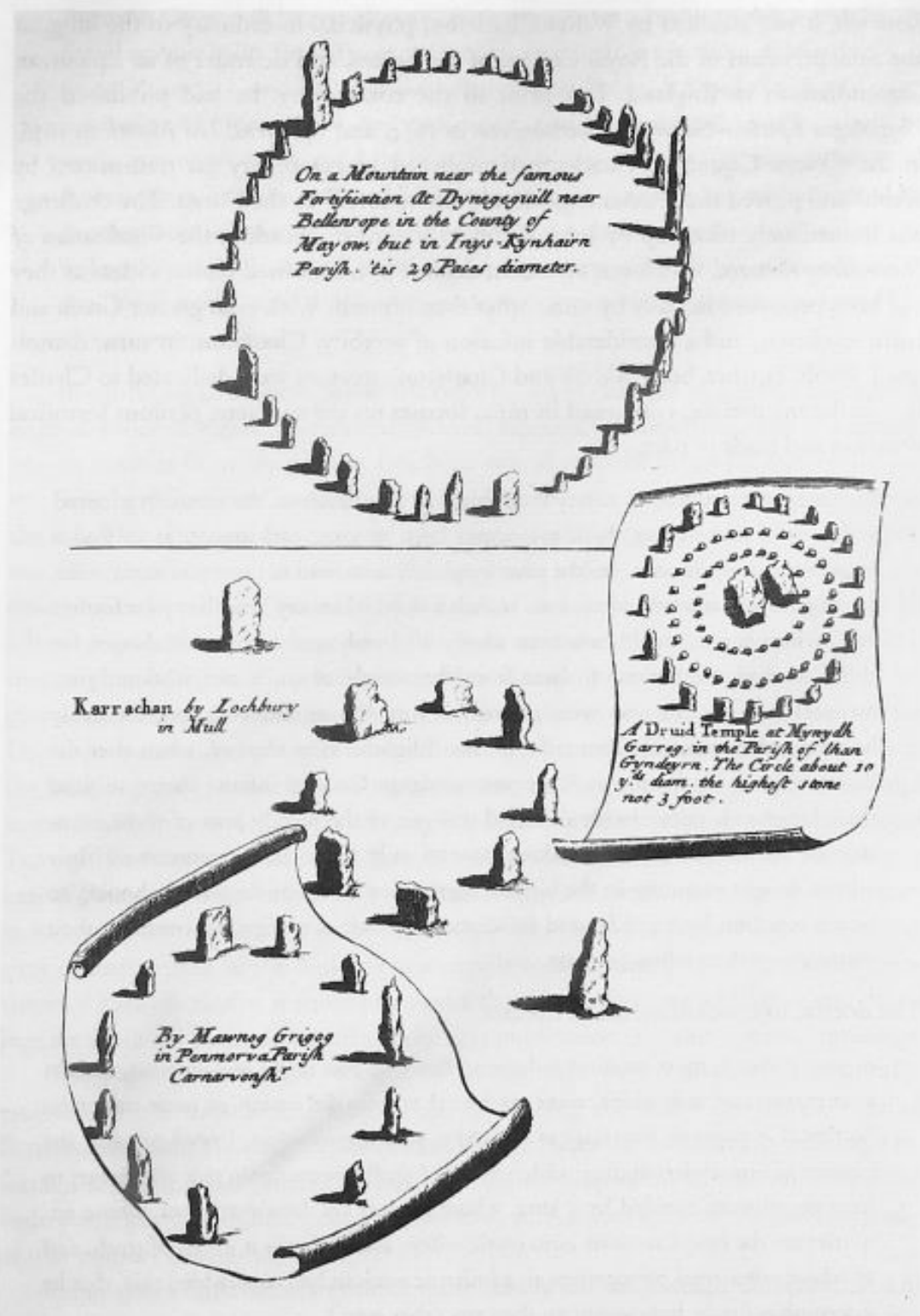


Figure 5. William Stukely, *Plans of Druid Temples*, 1723, from *Itinerarium Curiosum* (1776), vol. 2, pl. 80.

Restored), it was attacked by Walter Charleton, physician-in-ordinary to the king, at one time president of the Royal College of Physicians, and defender of an Epicurean Gassendianism in England. Just prior to the controversy, he had published the *Physiologia Epicuro-Gassendo-Charltoniana* in 1654, and *Epicurus, His Morals* in 1656. In the *Chorea Gigantum*, Charleton demolished Jones's theory (as transmitted by Webb) and proved that Stonehenge should be "restored" to the Danes. The challenge was immediately taken up by John Webb in a third publication, the *Vindication of Stone-Heng Restored*, which was an ardent defense of his idolized master's ideas as they had been presented initially by none other than himself. With even greater Greek and Latin erudition, and a considerable infusion of acerbity, Charleton, in turn, demolished Webb. Further, both Webb's and Charleton's treatises were dedicated to Charles II. Charleton's preface, composed in 1662, focuses on the concrete, perilous historical situation and reads in part:

Your majesty's curiosity to survey the subject of this discourse, the so much admired antiquity of Stone-Heng, hath sometimes been so great and urgent, as to find a room in your royal breast, amidst your weightiest cares; and to carry you many miles out of your way towards safety, even at such a time, when any heart but your fearless and invincible one, would have been wholly fill'd with apprehensions of danger, for as I have had the honour to hear from that oracle of truth and wisdom, your majesty's own mouth, you were pleased to visit that monument, and, for many hours together, entertain Your self with the delightful view there of, when after the defeat of your loyal army at Worcester, almighty God, in infinite mercy to your three kingdoms, miraculously delivered you out of the bloody jaws of those monsters of sin and cruelty, who taking counsel only from the heinousness of their crimes, sought impunity in the highest aggravation of them; desperately hoping to secure rebellion by regicide, and by destroying their sovereign, to continue their tyranny over their fellow-subjects.

The doctor, in conclusion, leaves his case

to your majesty's most excellent judgment, in which you are no less supreme, than in your power; and than which, none can be either more discerning, or more equitable. So that if it prove so fortunate as to receive your approbation, I need not fear the censure of any understanding reader; If not, I shall however gain this advantage, to have my mistake rectify'd by a king, whose reasons are demonstrations, whose enquiries are the best directions unto truth, whose assent always is a sign of truth, and to whose other regal prerogatives an admirable wisdom had superadded this, that he is less subject to be imposed upon than any other man.⁸

In spite of the flattery, the emphasis is on the persuasiveness of rational argument, not on the naked power of unquestioned authority.

But Webb was not going to be outdone if unstinted praise could move the king. He begins his dedication thus and in a characteristic universal and *Latin* vein:

Augustus Caesar will be ever glorious, for leaving Rome a city of marble, which he found ignobly built. Titus, Trajan, Adrian, are eternized for practising all liberal sciences. Henry Le Grand, your heroic maternal grandfather, designed as well palaces as battels, with his own hand. And your majesty, without doubt, will be no less glorious to future ages; for your delight in architecture, esteem of arts, and knowledge in design, which must be confessed so great as no prince, now living, understands a drawing more knowingly: Not of architecture civil only, but that that conduceth to make your empire boundless, as other your fame immortal, military and maritime also. This I deliver in the simplicity of truth, from experience, by your majesty's royal encouragement of late.⁹

In confuting Charleton, Webb felt constrained to exalt the experience and knowledge of Jones in regard to architecture and, especially, antiquities. Note the ancient bias so obvious from the preface. It is here, too, that Webb terms his master not just the "English Vitruvius," as Charleton had done, but the more timeless "Vitruvius of the Age." He also attempts to explain Jones's potentially incongruous (given his rigorous classicism) admiration for the Tuscan Doric order—the most primitive of the canonical orders (Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian) and the closest to the vernacular. This affection helps to explain his positive attitude toward that even more raw and primitive, or almost "natural," construction of Stonehenge. Jones's apologia (à la Webb) begins by rejecting the traditional association of the mysterious monoliths with the Druids, a pastoral people with no architecture to speak of. Both the proportions of the building and the mechanical sophistication necessary to move and erect its huge stones lead him to conclude that its origin is Roman and its original order, the favored Tuscan. His interpretation stems from a profound conviction that Britain is the true heir of Roman culture, that even in its darkest epoch it continued to speak, as it were, in a classical idiom. This is a point to which I will return. He devised a severe and elegant reconstruction of the building as a temple to the oldest god of the classical pantheon.¹⁰ Parenthetically, it should be noted that in the first two editions, these drawings are rendered by crude woodcuts; the 1725 publication contains elegant engravings.

The purest and noblest example of Roman architecture is thus, paradoxically, established in Britain. Jones's thesis about Stonehenge contains a striking assertion of Renaissance faith. He both classicizes and Christianizes the monument, creating a reformed and purified edifice consecrated to the worship of an autonomous God the Father and the concomitant single, absolutist, ruling authority of the classical tradition in matters of building style.

Let us now examine the argument more closely and understand the seriousness of its implications. To date, the major modern critics who mention this polemic (Sir John Summerson, Roy Strong, J. Alfred Gotch) dismiss it as an aberration in an otherwise impeccably rational career. As we have seen, Jones, the first professional English architect, the founder of academic theory in Britain, the passionate proponent of Vitruvian classicism, sees "beautiful" Roman proportions, a commingling of the rude



Figure 6. Godfrey Higgins, *Celtic Druids*, Stonehenge, 1829, pl. 5, lithograph.

Tuscan and the elegant Corinthian orders, evident in Stonehenge. Comparing these “mighty and unwrought” stones to the remnants of Diocletian’s Baths, the Theater of Marcellus, and the Circus of Maxentius, he asserts that these “lofty ruins” must once have constituted a stately round temple (*tholos*) that lay uncovered without roof and portico (*dipteros hypaethros*) and that was dedicated to the god Coelus (Uranus).¹¹ Far from being “a huge and monstrous piece of work, such as Cicero termeth *insanam substructionem* [outrageous, excessive foundation],” Jones concludes that the aspect of these ruins perfectly reveals “the magnificence of the stately empire of the Romans,” not the barbarism and illiteracy of the British Druids.¹²

The contrast between the Italianate architect committed to a worldview based on “good authority,” “sound judgment,” “undoubted truth,” and the Epicurean-Gassendian outlook of the sometime president of the Royal College of Physicians could not be plainer. Whereas Jones sails, as he says, “in the Vast Ocean of Time, amongst the craggy rocks of Antiquity, steering [his] course betwixt anciently approved customs, and convincing arguments,”¹³ at home with an idealized vision of the perfection of the past, Charleton, as a cultural relativist in the tradition of Epicurus, Lucretius, Montaigne, and the French skeptics and libertines,¹⁴ discusses its present appearance, from which he inductively arrives at its past purpose as indigenous monument and as an ancient Court of Parliament. It is notable that, although Jones surveyed Stonehenge, he rarely mentions its current ruinous condition. Whereas Charleton refers to Charles II’s specific and historic visit to the monument, Jones con-

jures up the memory of Alexander the Great, thus looking through a transparent present into a significant past.

Charleton "restores" these "rudely magnificent structures" to the barbaric Danes when they held England in subjugation. This *lèse-majesté* outraged Webb, who derisively termed the coarse Scandinavian stone circles "tennis balls" and—alluding to Charleton's Epicureanism—"meer atoms." How could this venerable pile of noble lineage be compared to something that looks like that rubbish? Charleton, persisting in obstinacy, returns this type of building to the larger class of "speaking" monuments (significantly prior to late-eighteenth-century discussions of *architecture parlante*) to which it rightfully belongs. Opposing Jones's classical certitude and citing Festus (Sextus Rufus, *De Historia Romana*), Charleton notes that monuments are "inanimate remembrancers," infinitely varied according to the diversity of peoples and customs and the various circumstances of time, place, fortune, and occasion, "so that no wonder if these (as all the works of man) are vastly different among themselves in matter, form, magnitude, artifice, cost, magnificence, situation, and design."¹⁵ Further, citing Varro's *De Lingua Latina*, Charleton notes that the word *monumentum* (translated from the Greek *kenotaphos*) is derived from the roots *moneo* and *memoria*, translatable as "admonition by putting in remembrance." Thus, to be a monument means literally to "speak" clearly to posterity either, first, as memorials declaring that men's "names survive their funerals" (Cicero, *Tusculanum Disputations*) or, second, as a public summons and an ocular testimony "which set before men's eyes" (as a demonstration) the glorious examples of their predecessors.¹⁶

Yet so acute is Charleton's perception of the difference between past and present that he notes that owing to the vicissitudes of time, the mutations of religion, and other revolutions of fate undergone by monuments even of one and the same nation, it is difficult for posterity to search into the intentions of their founders: "History is silent or full of uncertainty concerning their originals." So true it is "that monuments themselves are subject to forgetfulness even while they remain; and that when neither the writings of men in the same age, or not long after their erection, nor uncorrupted tradition has concurred to give them life, they usually stand rather as dead objects of popular wonder and occasions of fables, than as certain records of antiquity." If you harbor any doubt, he continues, gaze upon Stonehenge: "wonderful" in its "strangeness" of form, "vastness" of rocks, yet such is its fate "that it hath outlived itself and buried as well the names as the bones of those worthies to whose memory it was consecrated."¹⁷

It is in this speculative philological context that Charleton discusses an odd inscription found on a metal tablet (now lost) but originally buried near Stonehenge, and which William Camden had described in his *Chorographical Description of Wiltshire* (1610, 1637). The English historian insists that it could not have been left by the Romans, who, wherever they went, generally wrote all their memorials "in their own language" and "whose character hath long outlived their Empire, continuing the same in all ages."¹⁸ In a nutshell, of course, this is the paradigmatic definition of what it

means to be classical: the imposition of a timeless and superior beauty on a faulty, entropic nature. This changeless idiom remains identical to itself and persists over time. On the contrary, Charleton—basing his hypothesis on Olaf Wormius's 1643 illustrated treatise on Scandinavian stone circles and barrows¹⁹ and on the Danish scholar's volume on runic writing, the *De Literis Runicis*—concludes that these marks had to be "barbarous" characters: "Literae runae sive gothicae," in other words, the runic or Gothic characters that took their name, he supposed, from the Cimbrians, Dacians, and Goths called Runians. He states that, in his day, this original language had become a hieroglyphic understood only in Iceland. Then follows a key passage: "Elsewhere they have become unintelligible by the mixture of the language with that of the New Invaders, or now worn out and forgotten as the ancient natives were civilized." We may conclude: as with runic letters, so with ruined stones: "time has left only a piece of antiquity," has allowed only "the skeleton or bones of this giant to stand so long . . . and soon extinguished the life or story of it."²⁰

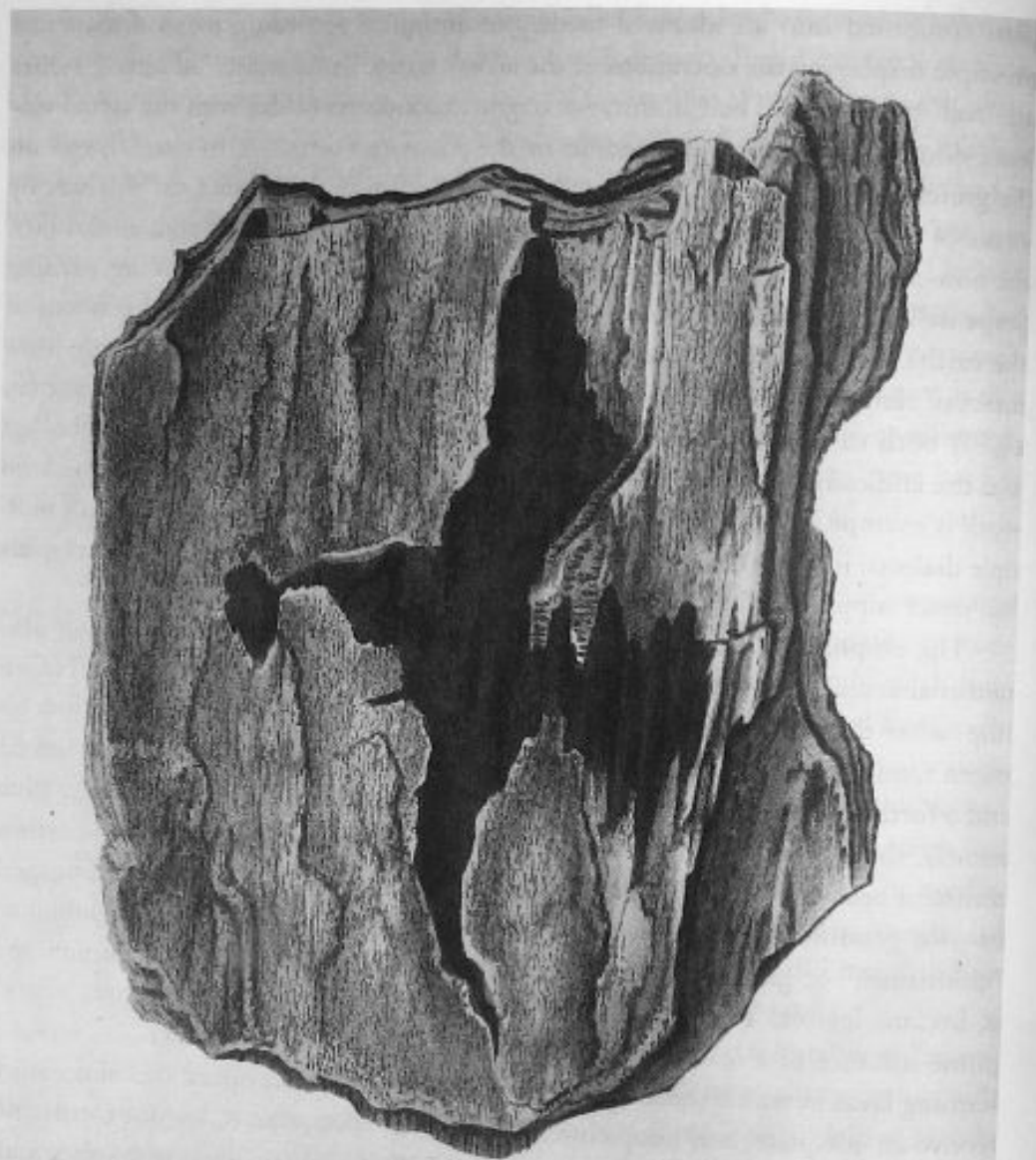
My point is that with this equation there arises the opportunity for conjoining conceptually, visually, and linguistically *runae* with *ruins*, that is, of bringing into contiguity eroded and broken monuments that were not "absolutely dumb" with fragmentary letters that spoke in a "more obscure" dialect of nongeometrical figures. By extension, this association contrasts the barbarous, illegible, monstrous, polyvalent, shattered form with the cultured, legible, fixed, classical articulation susceptible to a single invariant interpretation. Moreover, according to Wormius, this runic script had been employed from antiquity on "rocks, stones, wood, horns, bones, or in needle-works." Stonehenge, however, and its undecorated kin, Charleton insists, have no inscriptions on their upright stones. Therefore, he declares this "forgetful heap" to be a monument "illiterata," that is, inaccessible to conventional formal reading.²¹

Bearing Varro's derivation of the term *monument* in mind, translatable as "admonition by putting in remembrance," it becomes apparent that from antiquity onward, to be a classical monument signified to be *literata*, that is, to seek to deliver plainly "remembrance of some notable action to future generations" or to "incite men to hazardous undertakings." Bereft of "diverse engravements" and "worn out," or shapeless by any classical canon, Stonehenge and analogous "deformities" are, by contrast, I would like to suggest, doubly ruinous: first, because they are modern, that is, unmoored from the past and, hence, from the Jones-Webb point of view, illegible or extinguished from human memory; and, second, because they are grotesque, that is, not possessing a preestablished formal and rational connotation. Thus they are open to constant interpretation and, therefore, always new.

It is not surprising, then, that such primitive artifacts, for which all evidence that they were worked upon (if at all) by human ingenuity is erased, elicited a new and significant form of representation in the eighteenth century.²² In the combinatorial *capriccio* or *veduta ideata* of Mario and Sebastiano Ricci, Giovanni Paolo Pannini, and Francesco Guardi, classical ruins resemble the disparate letters of the alphabet. Juxtaposed on a unifying surface, they behave as if they were interchangeable and readable

parts combined into an idealized medley of antiquity according to an ornamental principle displaying the operations of the artist's fancy. By contrast, "illiterate" stones are "real" grotesques. Their monstrous fragmentariness coincides with the actual violence done to their initial proportions by the passage of time. Or, to cite Schlegel on the grotesque: they are the ugly details "of a great unity that eludes us."²³ Thus, by virtue of exhibiting itself as a portion of a wholly material and developmental reality, the now-naturalized *macchia*—or artful sketch still in the state of becoming, existing perpetually in the state of the *nonfinito*—and the truly natural ruin or specimens of the earth's history reveal the metamorphic strata lodged within the seemingly most intact of elements. These wild *bozzetti*, existing simultaneously as ruin and as sketch, signify both the destruction of a "mythical" ancient and once complete morphology and the endlessly dissolving processes of nature's temporal operations from which no work is exempt.²⁴ By definition, the world is constituted of divided aspects, of multiple dialects; it is a protean sea of active matter randomly casting off single exemplars but never supplying the total picture.

The emphasis laid in natural history accounts on the barbaric or shifting phenomenal actuality, on the accidental, on disorder, as that which is truly typical of nature rather than on the stasis of the rule-bound or the civilized, establishes a link between sandy flats on which venerable rock fragments of equivocal origin rise and fall and a forthrightly undomesticated landscape. This is the nub of a much larger issue, namely, the development of modern landscape painting and the rise of an environmentalist aesthetic, that is, of a worldview in which each thing is permitted to speak its own genuine dialect. I cite a single, but telling, example of how an inhuman, "monstrous," or grotesque natural phenomenon achieved aesthetic recognition, that is, became legible. The wracked area surrounding Sicily's violent volcanoes offers a prime instance of a seared and fractured field (represented as furrowed by waves of burning lava) in which the savage and uncontrollable creative operations of the world receive an adequate, and nonpicturesque, representation, that is, are not constrained to speak a rational or geometrical language. My point is that, along with other traditionally defined "aberrant" or irrational effects (eclipses, comets, floods, earthquakes, mountains, in short, the entire "deformed" repertory of nature's nonclassical shapes or vernaculars), volcanoes—as "accidents" within an ideal Nature of perfect forms—provide evidence for the shaping power of matter. The clearings lying near the broken foundations of Vesuvius and Etna mirror the Empedoclean battle waged between man-made fertility and indifferent destruction perpetually going on in the seemingly mild South Italian district. William Hamilton's trenchant descriptions and Peter Fabris's handsome aquatints of the eruptions of Vesuvius observed in 1767, 1776, 1777, and 1779 chronicle the heroic dimensions of this struggle between annihilating nature and shattered culture. Patrick Brydone, in his *Tour through Sicily and Malta* (1770), corroborates the British consul's and amateur vulcanologist's awareness of cosmic battle. Atop Vesuvius, he marvels to see "in perpetual union, the two elements that are at perpetual war; an immense gulph of fire forever existing in the midst of



Ex Museo D. Jo. Jacobi d'Annone, Ph. & J. V. D. Basilens.

Figure 7. George Wolfgang Knorr, *Petrified Wood*, from *Recueil des monuments des catastrophes* (1768–75), vol. 3, pl. 3, hand-colored engraving.

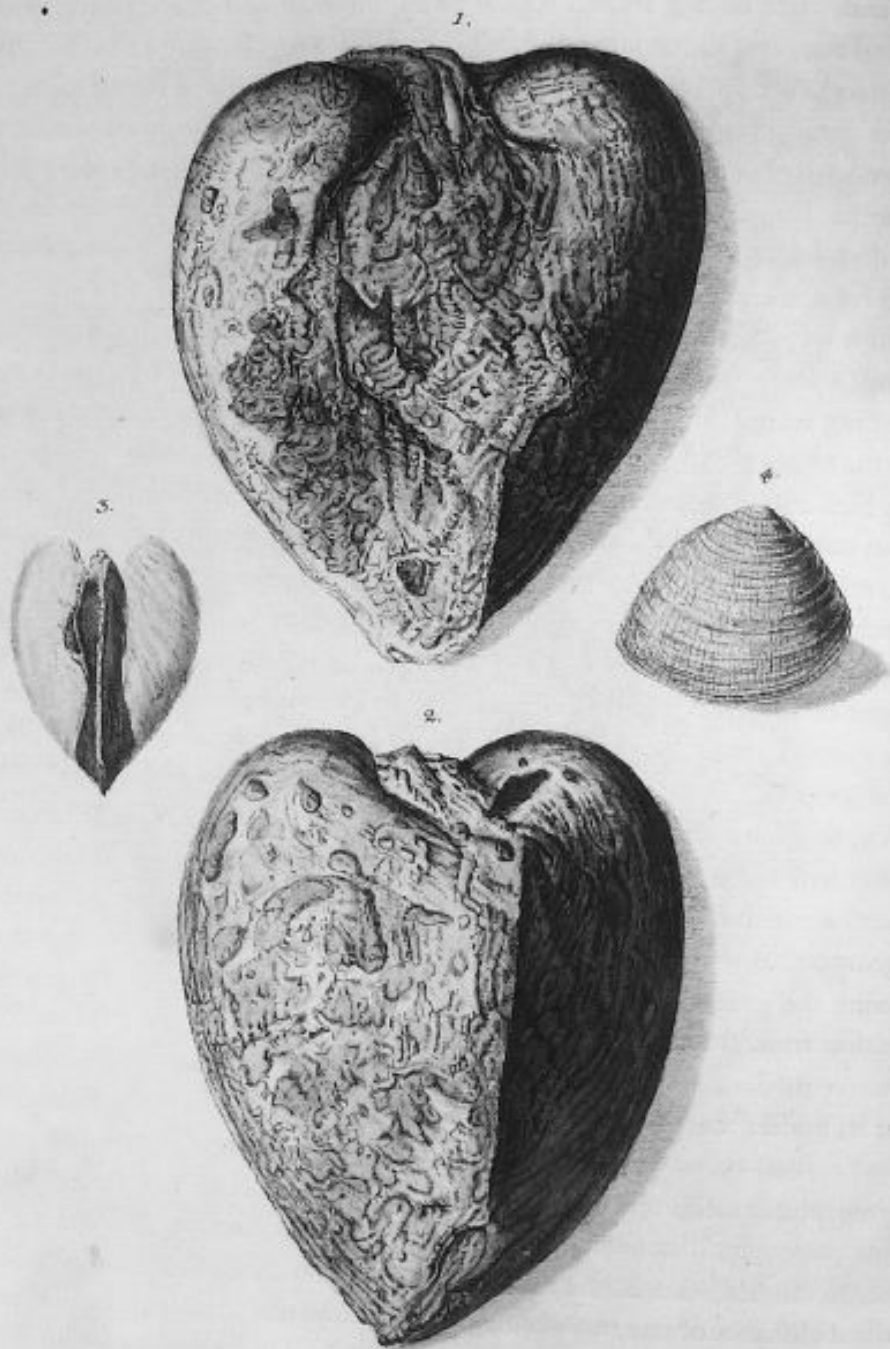
snow that it has not power to melt and immense fields of snow and ice for ever surrounding this gulph of fire, which they have not the power to extinguish." Jean Houel, standing on the same summit, is less paradoxical. He itemizes the different degrees of transformation endured by every earthly substance: "Thus all is change: that solid and sterile ice ceases to be such through the fluctuations of temperature in the atmosphere." Crater walls "shatter and the mouth of the volcano alters its position. . . . Hence this shifting opening spews forth its terrifying issue in all directions, and forms

in the end, after having shifted several times, mountainous heaps greatly varied in shape and size, and all the more diverse because the energy that produces them on one side destroys them on the other." Houel's aquatints, like those of Fabris, focus on the battered contours of these colossal fragments that are literally thrust out of, while simultaneously still at one with, an ocean of molten matter and are captured in the very moment of deconstruction. Thus eighteenth-century vulcanology provided additional documentation of the earth's unsettled condition and corroborated the theory that all contemporary phenomena are broken wholes.²⁵

But it was Déodat de Dolomieu—after whom the mineral dolomite was named—who, in *La philosophie minéralogique* (1798), provided the most unequivocal statement concerning stones as secular ruins left by change. Coincident with Schlegel's insights about the characteristic, singular, and segmented creations of modern art—the notion with which this essay began—he asserts that history can express itself not only culturally but naturally. And the expression, in both cases, is fragmentary: modern dialects, notes, tesserae, shards, of an original, pristine language now irretrievable. In fact, like the archaeologist scrutinizing discordant physical remains or the artist observing the tide of human affairs (for which there is no certain beginning or end), what the mineralogist confronts in the field is, according to Dolomieu, a "sea of fragments." One never encounters the perfect crystal, only an imperfectly realized, historically determined specimen.

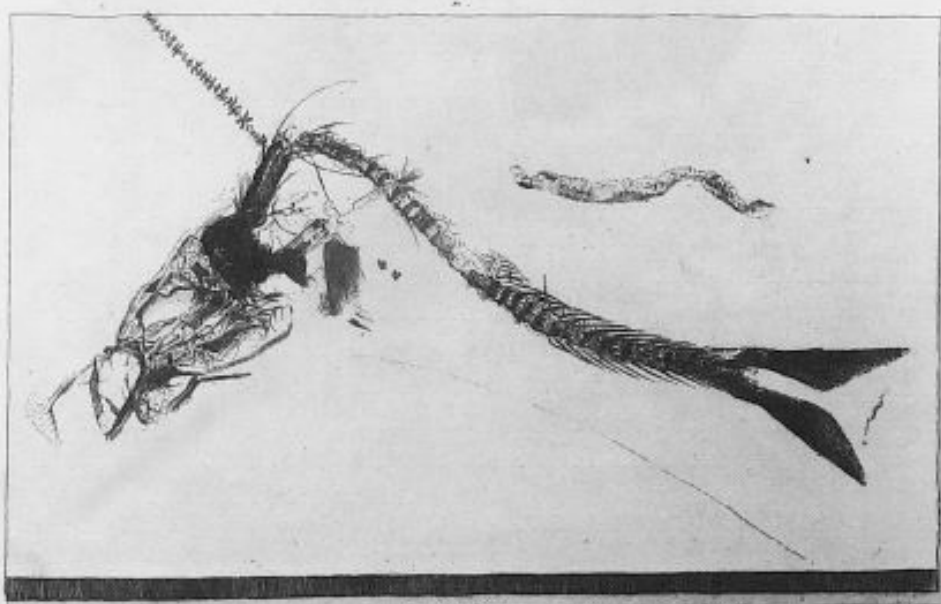
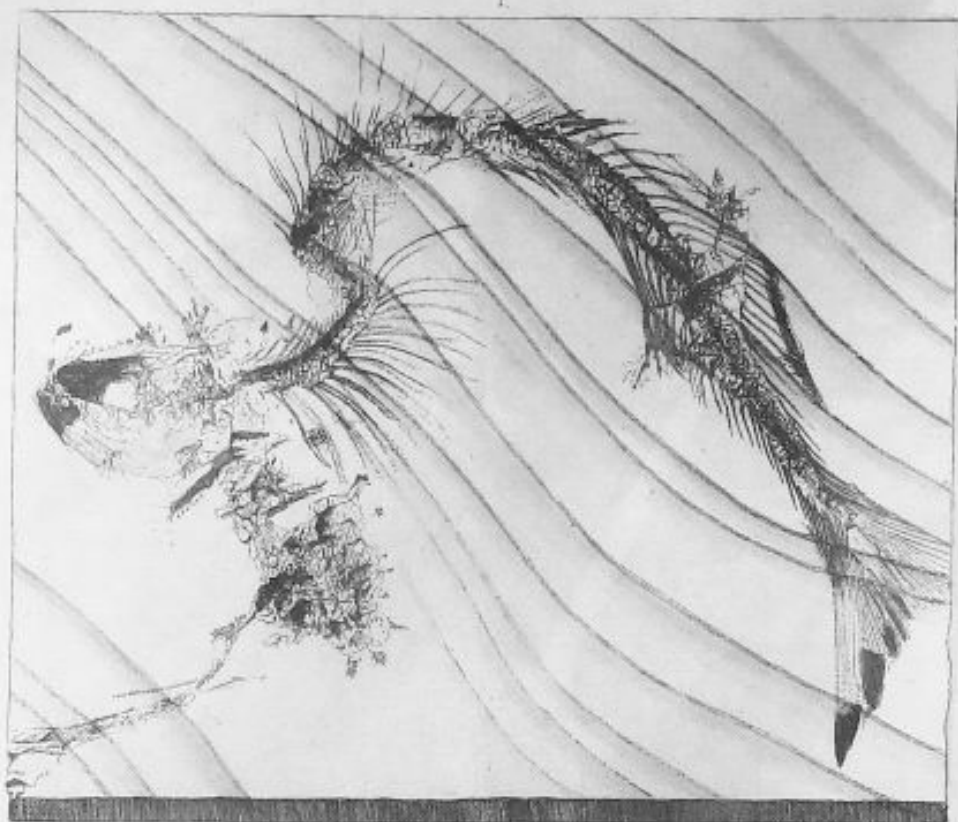
Or, to quote the great French crystallographer, the Abbe Häuy (from the *Essai d'une théorie sur la structure des cristaux*, 1783), although the laws of "crystalline architecture" are such that every substance in crystallizing has a tendency to assume a regular geometrical shape, this particular figure "is liable to be altered by circumstances affecting the process of its formation."²⁶ This want of mathematical perfection, this deviation from the straight line, this digression from the classical atemporal ideal or primitive nucleus and from the rectilinear or rational, produces "pseudomorphoses" (that is, bodies that have a false and deceitful appearance: the shells and fossils mentioned earlier) or, more generally, "amorphous and confused crystallizations."²⁷ The polymorphous solids that result, and that "diverge from a common center" when crystalline molecules disseminated in a liquid experience obstacles that affect their tendency to reunite in conformity to the laws of their mutual affinity, constitute a formal muffled alphabet of mutants whose "edges are blunted, . . . faces are curved, pyramids are obliterated." These "grotesque accumulations" can be fascicular, capilliform, globular, or fibrous. To give such unideal and monstrous aggregates a local habitation one has only to look about in nature, according to Häuy, since they constitute the earth's mutating petrifications and incrustations, the irregular and transversely fractured basaltic columns of Staffa and the Giant's Causeway, the stalactites and tufas of innumerable caverns: "the figures of which vary ad infinitum."²⁸

It is precisely this grasp of a general principle of flux, this sense of the primacy of impediment and error, this skeptical awareness of the remnants of matter and the fragility of human beings viewed as discrete units grounded in the inescapable necessities



Ex Museo Excell. Dn. Dot. & Confil. Aul. Casimir Christoph. Schmidel.

Figure B. George Wolfgang Knorr, Heart-Shaped Shell, from *Recueil des monuments des catastrophes* (1768-75), vol. 2, pl. 1.



Ex lib. Alton

Figure 9. George Wolfgang Knorr, *Petrifaction*, from *Recueil des monuments des catastrophes* (1768–75), vol. 1, pl. 31, hand-colored engraving.

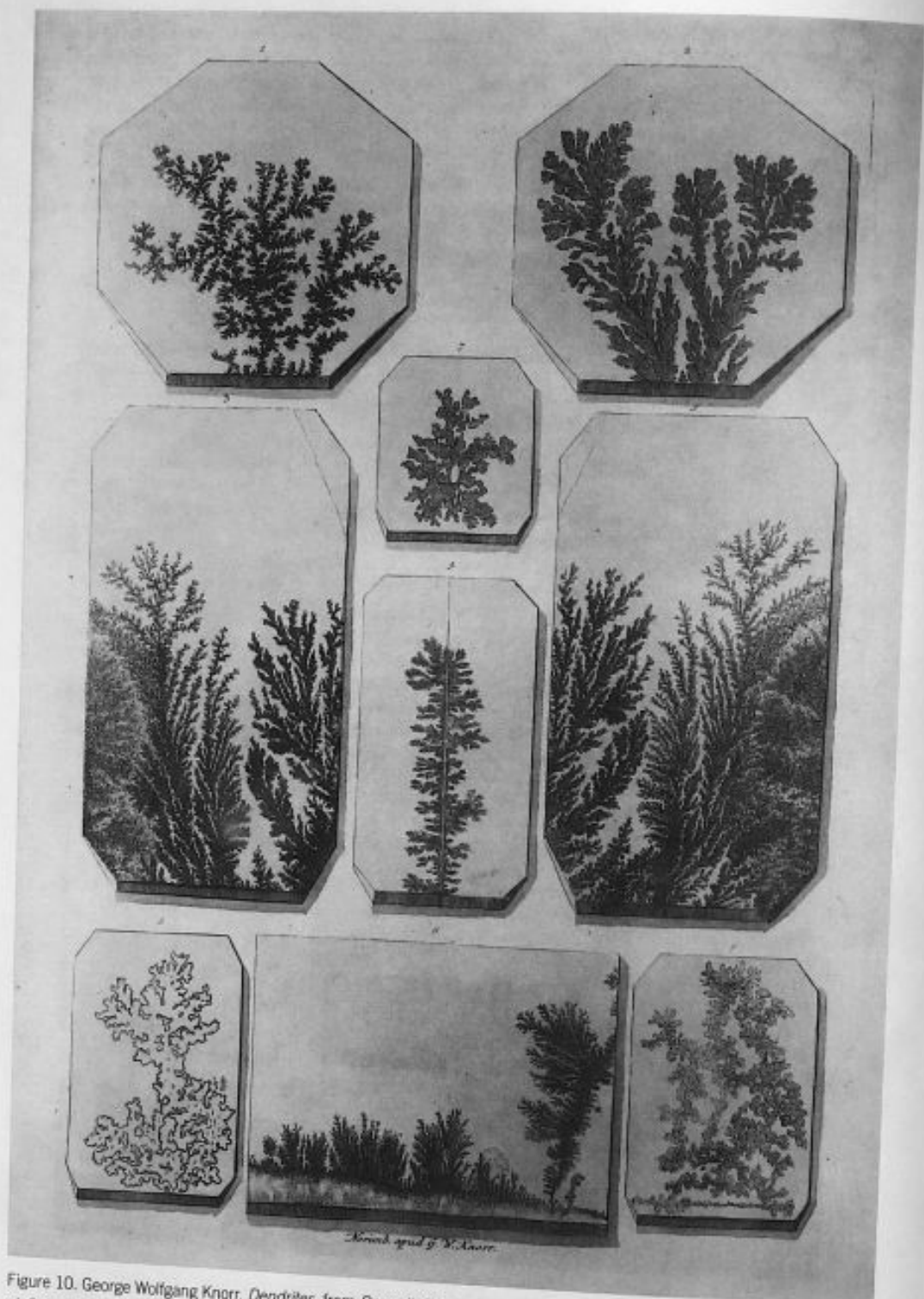
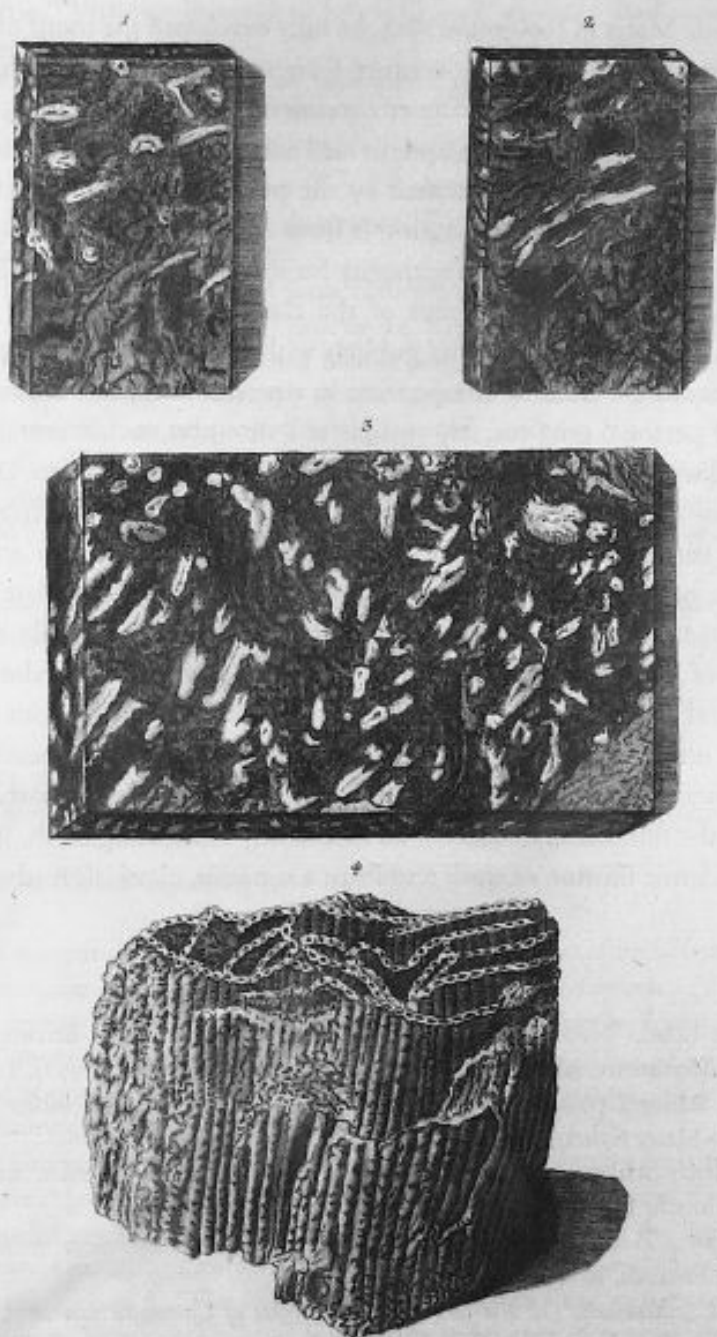


Figure 10. George Wolfgang Knorr, *Dendrites*, from *Recueil des monuments des catastrophes* (1768–75), vol. 1, part 1, pl. 8, hand-colored engraving.



*Ex Museo Excell. Dni. Doct. & Consil. Aul. Casimiri Christophori Schmidel.
 Georg. Carol. Lindner ad nat. pinxit.*

Figure 11. George Wolfgang Knorr, *Marble from Salzburg*, from *Recueil des monuments des catastrophes* (1768–75), vol. 2, pl. 2, pl. 9, hand-colored engraving.

of the conditions of existence, that determines Constable's *Hadleigh Castle*. After the death of his wife Maria in November 1828, he fully developed the motif of two vestigial towers of a "worn-out" fourteenth-century fortress overlooking the Thames estuary. The effect of stormy restlessness, of an environment in transformation—involving the use of broken strokes, palette knife, and divided colors (a shattering of classical order at the pigment level)²⁹—is complemented by the presence of "illiterate" fragments, or "whispers" from the past. The derivation is from *ruin-rumor*, an indistinct and informal statement without any known authority for its garbled message. Like runes, these ruins too are the shapeless antithesis of the classical utterance, that well-founded speech which asserts truth clearly and publicly with the full force of antiquity's *auctoritas*. Instead, they have become components in a private language, elusive and allusive metaphors of personal grief scarcely audible at a distance. Architectural remains, still actively being worn down by the ongoing material verge of the present, are also evident in the tumulus *Old Sarum* (1829), in which a once functional and purposed (i.e., literate) city has turned into a naked or monstrous land. Thus human and nonhuman "erasures" are part of the sequence of nature.³⁰ And in the pensive late watercolor of *Stonehenge* (1836), we note again this dynamic mixture—originally recognized by Charleton—of highly individuated forms arising from vicissitudes: the artifact, man, and the natural phenomenon are debris—stray samples cast down from the past, damaged wholes unmoored from a transcendent standard of absolute beauty and from a single canonical authority. They function both as modern and as barbarous vestiges, stammering the illimitable dialects of an incessantly fabricating earth, liberated at last from the academic illusion of stasis and from a superior, classical, ready-made totality.

Notes

1. Paolo Rossi, "Nobility of Man and Plurality of Worlds," in *Science, Medicine, and Society in the Renaissance*, ed. Allen G. Debus (New York: Heineman, 1972), 2:131, 162.
2. The Schlegel passage is cited in H. R. Jauss, *Literaturgeschichte als Provokation* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970), 81–82.
3. Friedrich Schlegel, *Die Griechen und Römer: Historische Versuche über das klassische Alterthum* (Munich: Hauser, 1979), 223–24.
4. Giovanni Pietro Bellori, *Le Vite de' pittori, scultori e architetti moderni*, ed. Evelina Borea (Turin: Einaudi, 1976), 23–24.
5. G. H. Harpham, *On the Grotesque: Strategies of Contradiction in Art and Literature* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1982), 185.
6. See Barbara Maria Stafford, *Voyage into Substance: Art, Science, Nature, and the Illustrated Travel Account, 1760–1840* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1984), chap. 2, "The Natural Masterpiece," and *Symbol and Myth: Humbert de Superville's Essay on Absolute Signs in Art* (Cranbury, N.J.: Associated University Presses, 1979), chap. 6, "Sculpture: From Baetyl to Apollo Belvedere."
7. John Summerson, *Inigo Jones* (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), 15, 71, 73, 89. It should be noted that when, early in 1725, a new edition of Jones's *Stone-Heng Restored* was published, it helped to reinforce the Roman "Rule of Taste" of the neo-Palladians Lord Burlington and William Kent. It also heralded the decline of Colen Campbell's career and of

the more ecumenical tastes evident in the *Vitruvius Britannicus* volumes on native architecture. See Eileen Harris, "'Vitruvius Britannicus' before Colen Campbell," *Burlington Magazine* 127 (May 1986): 345-46.

8. J. Alfred Gotch, *Inigo Jones* (New York: Blom, 1968), 19.

9. *Ibid.*, 20.

10. Summerson, *Jones*, 107-10; John Harris, Stephen Orgel, and Roy Strong, *The King's Arcadia: Inigo Jones and the Stuart Court* (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1973), 185.

11. Inigo Jones, *The Most Notable Antiquity of Great Britain, vulgarly Called Stone-Heng, on Salisbury Plain* (London, 1725), 45-50.

12. *Ibid.*, 21-22; Roy Strong, *Britannia Triumphans: Inigo Jones, Rubens, and Whitehall Palace* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1980), 61-64. Strong connects the Solomonic iconography of Rubens's Banqueting House ceiling (whose program he attributes to Jones) to Juan de Herrera's Solomonic Escorial and, finally, to the mystical geometry of Stonehenge—which Jones supposed was a Roman temple dedicated to the god Coelus.

13. Walter Charleton, *Chorea Gigantum; or, The Most Famous Antiquity of Great Britain, vulgarly Called Stone-Heng, Standing on Salisbury Plain, Restored to the Danes* (London, 1725), 72.

14. Richard Kroll, "Locke's Relation to Gassendi," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 45 (1984): 345-46.

15. Charleton, *Chorea Gigantum*, 3-4. Also see John Webb, *A Vindication of Stone-Heng Restored: In Which the Orders and Rules of Architecture Observed by the Ancient Romans Are Discussed* (London, 1725), 164.

16. Charleton, *Chorea Gigantum*, 2-3.

17. *Ibid.*, 5.

18. *Ibid.*, 22.

19. Olaus Worm, *Danicorum Monumentorum libri sex* (Hafniae, 1643), figures pages 8, 63, 147, 215, 332, 350.

20. Charleton, *Chorea Gigantum*, 10.

21. *Ibid.*, 28.

22. On the monstrous in the sublunar world and the necessity of imperfection, diversity, and error in nature, see Tomaso Garzoni, *Il seraglio degli stupori del mondo . . . cioè de mostri prodigi, prestigi, sorti, oracoli, sibille, sogni, curiosità, miracoli, maraviglie* (Venice, 1613), 64-66.

23. Jauss, *Literaturgeschichte*, 123.

24. Michael Hattaway, "Bacon and 'Knowledge Broken': Limits for Scientific Method," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 39 (1978): 184, 194-96.

25. For the notion that eclipses, floods, earthquakes, comets, and volcanoes are all monstrous effects (*effetti*) generated by matter, which in their ugly imperfection stand in opposition to the Beautiful, see Garzoni, *Il seraglio*, 170. For the inversion of the Renaissance idea that the monstrous is nature unadorned and stands in opposition to the artificial, see Stafford, *Voyage into Substance*, chap. 3, "The Fugitive Effect," in which I argue that such "accidents" were no longer seen as "vices" or "sins" but as the norm and, hence, possessed intrinsic aesthetic value.

26. Frederick Accum, *Elements of Crystallography, after the Method of Häuy; with or without Series of Geometrical Models, Both Solid and Dissected* (London, 1813), 4-5.

27. *Ibid.*, 300-301, 307, 316.

28. *Ibid.*, 299, 305.

29. Malcolm Cormack, "In Detail: Constable's *Hadleigh Castle*," in *Portfolio* (summer 1980): 39-40.

30. Martin Rudwick, *The Meaning of Fossils: Episodes in the History of Paleontology* (New York: Macdonald, 1976), 101.