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Blake's Derbyshire: A Visionary Locale in Jerusalem

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Tyrrell seems to be imitating, was not himself an Augustan in the Roman sense: he died nearly thirty years before Octavian took the title of Augustus. Tyrrell's version is surprisingly faithful to Blake, if we allow for the vast difference in philosophic and stylistic assumptions between Rome of the first century B.C. and late eighteenth-century England. After being in contact with so much translation and imitation, I could not resist giving my own line-by-line version of Tyrrell's Latin: it is much more literal than it may appear at first sight.

Pluck the Day

Unlucky little fly, just lately fluttering
brashly in the sun, you perished
caught in my hand, and I never thought of this till
now:
you and I have the same life style
and are involved in each other's fate.
I too dance and sing often at parties
till a blind hand clip my wings.
But if mind be the soul and strength of the living
creature
and when it's dead we're gone for good,
then I'm going to enjoy the rest of life
and wait for gloomy death without a qualm.

Note: The Todhunter imitations are in *Kottabos*, 1 (1869-73), 228-29. "The Fly" and "Carpe Diem" appear on facing pages: *Kottabos*, 2(1873-77), 266-67.

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In the design to *Jerusalem* 23 where Albion utters "his last words, relapsing! / Hoarse from his rocks, from caverns of Derbyshire & Wales / And Scotland" (J 23:26-28, E 167), Blake shows a series of separate, enclosed human forms who are apparently the inhabitants of these caverns. If Blake is making a specific reference here it is probably to the Devil's Arse cavern in Derbyshire (see Damon, *Blake Dictionary*) which was inhabited by the poor during Blake's lifetime.¹ Charles Leigh's *The Natural History Of Lancashire, Cheshire, And The Peak, in Derbyshire*, Oxford, 1700, has a large, unsigned engraving of the Devil's Arse showing "the Area where the Persons and the Houses are, where a great many of the poor Inhabitants live" (Bk. 1, p. 192). Blake's knowledge is accurate then, but what of the "fables" of the "caverns in Cornwall, Wales, Derbyshire, and Scotland" which had been the subject of his "visionary contemplations" in *A Descriptive Catalogue* (40; E 533)?

The absorption of the Peak, East Moor and the caverns and mines of Derbyshire (see *Blake Concordance*) into Blake's myth in *Jerusalem* may stem from his imaginative reading or recollection of another of Leigh's plates which illustrated the interior of Pooles Hole in the same county. This plate shows a guide and a pair of tourists undergoing



Illus. 1, "The Devil's Arse," from Charles Leigh's *The Natural History of Lancashire, Cheshire, And The Peak, in Derbyshire*, Oxford, 1700.

Illus. 2, "Poole's Hole," from Leigh.



"the Diversion of beholding various Representations produced by the petrifying Water continually dropping from the Roof and Sides of the Rock" (Bk. 3, p. 43). The shapes produced are stalactites and stalagmites plus the strong visual fancy of the beholder. Leigh explains their popular interpretations as (E) a lion; (F) the "Queen of Scots Pillar"; (H) and (I) as globes of "Alabaster Sparr" called "the Font" and "Mr. Cotton's Haycocks"; (K) "the Flitch of Bacon" and (L) "the Chairs" (Bk. 1, pp. 189-90).

The most interesting figure from the Blakean point of view, however, is that of (G) "the Figure of a Human Corps, formed likewise by the Dropping of the Water from the Top of the Arch and the Sides." It is probable that B. knew of this figure in Leigh's plate² and associated its identification by the local people as a memorial or "fable" of Albion who, in *Jerusalem*, is also "petrified" (J 34[38]:1, 7, E 177-78; J 46[32]:5, E 193) but awaiting revival: "Albion mov'd. . ./ His stony members" (J 95:2-4, E 252). With this interpretation the solitary pillar now standing beside the human figure can be recognized as a remnant of the sixteen pillars erected when:

the merciful Saviour in his arms
Receiv'd him, in the arms of tender mercy and
repos'd
The pale limbs of his Eternal Individuality
Upon the Rock of Ages. Then, surrounded with
a Cloud:
In silence the Divine Lord builded with immortal
labour,
Of gold & jewels a sublime Ornament, a Couch of
repose,
With Sixteen pillars: canopied with emblems &
written verse. (J 48:1-7, E 194)

These crucial differences between vision and mere degenerate fancy make it clear why the eighteenth century visitor to Poole's Hole saw a similarity between the cave's interior and the interior of a church. Instead of the "Spiritual Verse" of the Decalogue, Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Psalms, Prophets, Gospels and Revelation (J 48:8-11, E 194) which surrounds Albion's sleeping form, they only saw the rock shapes as an "Organ and Choir-work" and Font (Bk. 3, p. 43).

Albion's movements in *Jerusalem* imply that his resting place is a variant of Poole's Hole. After a temporary manifestation of rebellion when his "Great Voice of the Atlantic howled over Druid Altars" and "Round the Rocky Peak of Derbyshire London Stone & Rosamonds Bower" (J 57:5,7, E 205), Albion "fled beneath the Plow / Till he came to the Rock of Ages. & he took his Seat upon the Rock" (J 57:15-16, E 205). The Peak's prophetic elevation (but capable of druid cruelty if reason usurps, J 21:34, E 165) has as its contrary the "horrid Chasm" beneath ("the most terrible Chasm that I ever yet beheld" Leigh on Poole's Hole, Bk. 1, p. 187), where a more deadly liquid drips:

Derby Peak yawnd a horrid Chasm at the Cries of
Gwendolen, & at
The stamping feet of Ragan upon the flaming
Tredles of her Loom
That drop with crimson gore with the Loves of

Albion & Canaan
Opening along the Valley of Rephaim, weaving over
the Caves of Machpelah. (J 64:35-38, E 213)

An intermediate, earthly plain of existence is indicated as East Moor in Derbyshire, a level state with the potential for either reasoning slavery or prophetic independence:

Hyle on East Moor in rocky Derbyshire, rav'd
to the Moon
For Gwendolen: she took up in bitter tears
his anguished heart
That apparent to all in Eternity, glows like
the Sun in the breast:
She hid it in his ribs & back . . .
. . . raving he ran among the rocks,
Compeild into a shape of Moral Virtue against
the Lamb. (J 80:66-69, 76-77, E 235)

The Mothers love of obedience is forgotten
& you seek a Love
Of the pride of dominion, that will Divorce
Ocallython & Elynitria
Upon the East Moor in Derbyshire & along the
Valleys of Cheviot. (J 93:4-6, E 251)

Enitharmon's words in the latter passage unconsciously reflect how the moor of the surface of the physical land of Albion is the level on which the battle for vision is fought.

Blake's use of the three levels of Derbyshire, peak, moor and cavern, illustrates how neatly geographical locale can be adapted for an imaginative purpose.

¹ See James Pilkington, *A View Of The Present State Of Derbyshire*, (Derby 1789), I, 63-68. J. Johnson is given on the titlepage as one of a pair of London Booksellers.

² Another oddly Blakean part of Leigh's plate is (B) "The Child that was born of a Lancashire Gentlewoman with the Representation of a Flame upon its Body, the Mother being affrighted with that terrible Flame when the City of London was burned" (Bk. 1, p. 188).

Blake's Babe in the Woods

by Thomas R. Dilworth

Blake's longest lyric fable, "The Little Girl Lost" and "The Little Girl Found," appears to be influenced, in its plot and illustration, by the English ballad called "Babes in the Wood" or "Children in the Wood."¹ The sixteenth century ballad Blake would have known from the copy he owned of Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765). The ballad, moreover, was popular in contemporary chapbooks. Not many of these survive from the eighteenth century, and few of those that do are illustrated. But we have some chapbooks from the early nineteenth century which contain the ballad "Babes in the Wood" and illustrate it in a manner indicating that Blake's illustration of "The Little