The Inscription on Evening Amusement

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Geoffrey Keynes, in his book on Engravings by William Blake: The Separate Plates (Dublin, 1956: p. 64), reconstructs the last line on Blake's engraving after Watteau's Evening Amusement on the basis of that on the companion print of Morning Amusement. However, the discovery of a third, untrimmed impression in red shows that in fact the wording is slightly different. As Keynes' transcription is not entirely accurate even in the first line, I give the full inscription:

"W. Blake fecit / EVENING AMUSEMENT / From an Original Picture in the Collection of M. F. A. Maskin. / Pub. as the Act directs August 21 1782 by T. Macklin. N. 39 Fleet Street."

The punctuation after certain initials and in abbreviations such as "M. F.", which is represented here by two full-stops, is in fact more in the form of two little dashes. It is also found in the inscription under Morning Amusement as can be seen from Keynes' reproduction though not from his transcription (Separate Plates, p. 63). In this connection it should be pointed out that the "s" of "sculp" is lower case, not capital. In addition, at least on the copy of the print belonging to me, there is no full-stop at the end of the last line but there are two little dashes above the stop following "Tho" suggesting a slightly fuller form of the abbreviation for Thomas, though they do not appear to take the form of an "s": "Tho:"

It should be noted that the inscription on Evening Amusement gives the name of the owner of the original painting as "Maskin" without a concluding "s". This is in fact correct. However, even allowing for the fact that the oval format of the engravings does not necessarily represent the shape of the original paintings, it appears that Maskin's paintings are not those now in the Wallace Collection. The provenances of Les Champs Elysées and Le Rendez-vous de Chase are now known to relate to Blake's Evening Amusement and Morning Amusement (see note 2). The circle of Blake's job narrative is now complete, and the engravings have taken place. These remains only the necessity of depicting the principal itself. This is to be the matter of the subsequent and ultimate illustration.

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XX Job and his Daughters

In another copy from the narrative of the Book of Job itself, Job tells his three daughters the story of his life. The following scene seems to show the destruction of his children. (directly behind it is the verse from the wilderness.) The identity of features, God's words, are apparent.

These three sisters represent the matter of Illustrations [11] and [13], art, to speak, with nature; and the spectator (a lady in the lower panel) represents two of the friends, the third being concealed from view by the bench on which Job and his daughters sit. Thus the story of Job has made into art is fundamentally important in view of Blake's more general view of art as a theological fact. "Art," he writes in TheEssays, "is the Tree of Life. And, in the same place, "Christianity is Art!" Figtree grow up both vertical borders and many learn and much fruit remain within all the borders. A pair of angels embrace on the upper left margin, and another pair seem ready to embrace in the upper right margin.

The theme of this Illustration is gracefully and accurately carried out in the circularity of the wall panels, the curve of the room, and the design of the floor. The circle of Blake's job narrative is now complete, and the engravings have taken place. These remains only the necessity of depicting the principal itself. This is to be the matter of the subsequent and ultimate Illustration.