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NEWSLETTER

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BLAKE’S PASTORAL: A GENESIS FOR “THE ECCHOING GREEN”

Though by no means the most “interpreted” of Blake’s lyric poems, “The Ecchoing Green” has had some significant attention, and critical responses to it have arranged themselves across a wide spectrum, with varying degrees of the proper opposition. What I have to say here will offer a way of reading that spectrum as part of the poem Blake has left us. For the founder of Blake criticism was the poet himself, and in the recoloring process which he enacted through the various editions of his work, we have come to suspect an artistic and perhaps even a conscious purpose. I shall suggest that the designs for this poem can be seen as the vehicles of Blake’s modifying imagination as it responds to and reinterprets the image of rural society and the wider vocabulary of the pastoral tradition within which it has its place. Transformations of the first plate in its later versions are of particular interest, and they may relate not just to a general ethic of renovation but also to a nexus of perceptions which could well have been at the front of the poet’s mind during the last ten years or so of his life. This was a period when England, relieved at long last from making war against France, was turning again to its domestic situation. But the widespread civil discontent produced, not the new society envisaged by the radicals, but the repression typified by Peterloo and hitherto only invoked in wartime conditions by the apparent demands of national security.

It is in this historical context that Blake could have been taking a second look at Albion’s guardian oak and its place in the center of the canonical village green—though this is not to say, of course, that “The Ecchoing Green” was ever intended simply to endorse such guardianship. For it is the image of the tree, and its modifications in the later versions of the first plate of the poem, which will provide the centerpiece to this account.

First, however, it is necessary to acknowledge three extant and detailed critical readings of the poem, those of Hirsch, Gillham, and Gleckner. Hirsch and Gillham, generally speaking, describe it as a vision of innocence. Gillham finds that the characters display a philosophical satisfaction with a continually developing present, accepting also "a movement of time giving significance to that present" (p. 24). There is no friction between the generations. Hirsch’s account is similarly positive, but from a more symbolic perspective:

The natural harmonies of the echoing green are sacramental. Like human guardianship, the pastoral landscape is at once an occasion for and the content of prophetic vision, and just as a transcendent meaning resides within the natural world, so the realm of eternity also resides within the human breast. Eternity is both within and beyond (p. 41).

The gathering together of the generations represents "the full spectrum of earthly existence" (p. 176), and they are identified within the image of life itself as a period of play before the sun goes down. Gleckner, on the other hand, dissent by anticipation from both these views. For him, the poem is
concerned with "the spiritual sterility of living in the past, the sterility of memory which is given such powerful voice by Har and Heva in Tiriel" (p. 91). Old John and the aged have become "bogged down by the cares of the natural world" (p. 92), and memory affords only "vicarious respite from the inner darkness that is symbolized by the external shade of the tree" (p. 93). For the younger generation, the onset of night represents a world of restriction and delusion; they must summon fresh energies to pierce through it, thereby questioning "earthly mother love as well" (p. 94).

The diversity between these three accounts might be taken to signal the caution we should exercise in attributing to Blake's authoritative presence as "writer" any decisions about whether we are seeing golden discs the size of guineas or hosts of heavenly angels. Indeed, this often uncomfortable recognition of our own responsibility for what we see makes the potential solipsistic assumption of or aspiration toward consensus: it involves our denying (except with the momentary distraction of one "Sun" but not the other (p. 40) may offer most food for thought. Sir Geoffrey Keynes has made some very astute observations on these suggestions of sexual initiation in the second plate that young girls appear, for the sporting figures of the first are all apparently

Nor, it seems to me, is there much to be made of the punctuation of this poem. Blake's concept of punctuation is controversial and often clearly indeterminate, and the indeterminacies do not always contribute to a sophisticated "meaning" as I am persuaded that they do in "The Lamb." John Wright's enlarged reproduction of the electrotype for the first plate in Blake Newsletter, 36 (Spring, 1976), 102, suggests that this indeterminacy is fundamental, and not to be resolved even by the closest inspection of the plate itself. In particular, distinctions between commas and full stops are almost impossible to make. For example, to read in a comma after "Sing louder around" in the first stanza is a gesture prompted by the notion (which the syntax does seem to support) of a natural harmony between the singing of the birds and the ringing of the bells; to read in a full stop here would, conversely, argue for an ironic dislocation working against the apparent "flow" of the poem.

This situation seems worth detailing if only to point out the genuine insecurity of overdeterminate "editing" of the text. Punctuation is generally sparse in Songs of Innocence, perhaps for this very reason. Similarly, Hirsch's point about the capitalization of one "Sun" but not the other (p. 40) may be related to its occurrence in the first line of the poem as the first noun, as much as (or as well as) to any symbolic purpose. The one viable semantic ambiguity that I can find, the "care" which Old John laughs away, in fact contributes to the idea of a benign relation between the generations. "Care" can be read as "supervision" (of others) or as "anxiety" (in the self-referring sense); but these options support rather than conflict with one another, since the "care" is anyway being superseded by laughter.

As I have said, it is the iconography of the designs as they provide a context for the text which offers most food for thought. Sir Geoffrey Keynes has made some very astute observations on these designs in the notes to his popular facsimile edition. He comments on the ambivalence of the oak tree in Blake's later work (more of this later) and sees suggestions of sexual initiation in the second plate, as the boy hands down the grapes to the girl below (with the largest bunch yet to be picked), behind the back of the adult figure. It is only in the second plate that young girls appear, for the sporting figures of the first are all apparently.
male. This exclusiveness is perhaps echoed, again in the second plate, by the motif of the two boys with bat and kite, redundant sexual symbols based for their owners on no signified experience, since they are held by members of the same sex who are themselves being ushered home. For the lingering older children, indeed, the final lines

And sport no more seen [...]
On the darkening Green [...]

might have a meaning quite different from that which the adult of the design (or indeed of the readership) might assume. Instead of describing the end of the sport, they might describe the fact that it is no longer seen, though continuing nevertheless; and extending this suggestion by introducing a different audience for the last lines, they can be read as an imperative, "don't let your sports be seen."

Leaving this possibility at the point where we have to decide about the pros and cons of such secrecy, if we indeed credit its presence, I want to discuss the image of the tree, which is one of the leading purposes of this essay. Gleckner finds this "tantalizingly vague" (p. 92) but, as we have seen, generally negative, a reading which he expands and qualifies in his fine account of "The Little Black Boy" (p. 106). It is certainly a forceful image, and Eben Bass has noted that "Old John" in the second plate "is in the central authoritative position of the oak tree of the first drawing," a metonymic substitution which can be seen as either benevolent or repressive. There is indeed some connection between the two as images of age and perhaps of mutability, the tree being just as perishable as the old man, albeit on a grander time-scale.

1 "The Ecchoing Green;" electrotype of the first plate, showing the tree as it appears in the earlier versions. Reproduced by permission of the Syndics of the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.

Indeed, the tree seems to perish somewhat in the historical time-scale of Blake's own vision, for in his recoloring of the later versions of the first plate it is presented quite differently. Early copies depict the bottom edge of what we take to be a fully canopied tree, its upper portions cut off from view by the edge of the plate itself (illus. 1). Copy B of Songs of Innocence and copies I and T of Songs of Innocence and of Experience (the latter watermarked 1815) all show the tree in this way, and this is in accordance with the details of the electrotype, which shows finely articulated foliage and a naturalistically ragged edge to the bottom of the canopy. In short, there is nothing about this tree which suggests that it is not the "oak" described in stanza two.

By the time of copies V, W, Z, and AA, however, the canopy of the tree has been flattened and rounded into an umbrella shape (illus. 2), so that the whole tree is now depicted within the frame of the plate, and the bottom edge of the canopy has been straightened (most strikingly so in the Z copy). This disturbs the naturalism of the representation. If this is an oak tree then it is a very odd one, by no means the monarch of the green but a squashed and somewhat stinted relic of the tree of the earlier versions. In addition, there is in the late copies a clear gap between the bottom of the canopy and the top of the hedgerow in the distance. This is variously filled in with vegetative tracery in various copies; in the V copy, for example, the detailing is very fine, and has the effect of locating the tree firmly in the middle distance. In other copies, however, a great deal of sky is showing (yellow-pink in W, pale blue in Z and AA), and the net effect is to suggest (if no more) the image of a face, with the trunk representing a nose, the rounded canopy a forehead, and the lateral patches of sky providing the "eyes."  

I think that we should consider at least three possibilities here: (1) that the tree in its later versions is not an oak at all, but some other species; (2) that it is an oak in some way modified or distorted; (3) that no particular species of tree is signified, or, to put the case in a more inclusive way, that the image is not to be exhausted by any specific signification, but is intended to reflect back upon the observer, challenging him or her to substitute spiritual for corporeal vision (the suggestion that the tree images a face could obviously have a place in such a challenge).

The appeal of the third option is that it offers to include all others, and I do believe that there is evidence for it. But the inclusion is an active process, in which Blake (as I read him) was able to maintain both the particularity of response to a historical situation and the wider awareness of an eternal vision. The vehicle for this inclusiveness is the ambivalence of the image. Thus it is important that we build toward a case for the third of the above options, since everything invoked along the way is part of that achieved statement. Blake's aesthetic vocabulary locates the responsibility for choices firmly with the observer; criticism thus has something of an obligation to try to identify the range of choices he might have foreseen.

First, we may consider the possibility that the tree of the late copies is not an oak but some other species. There is not much evidence for this, as I see it, but there is one interesting possibility. Blake's tree looks nothing like the standard form of the cedar of Lebanon, *cedrus libani*, which has its branches spreading out very close to the ground, each of which is topped by dense, flat canopies, the whole looking something like a candelabrum. But there were two very famous cedars in the Chelsea gardens, which Blake would probably have seen. They were the first trees of this species planted in Britain, and Loudon notes that both of them "have lost all their lower branches and have a miserable and stunted appearance." He further describes the tops as being "blunt or flattened" (p. 194). Given this feature of the London landscape, it is not impossible that Blake may be meaning to depict one of the Chelsea cedars. What might he have meant to signify thereby?

The cedar of Lebanon is a tree which scarcely occurs in Blake's work, though it is mentioned as a feature of the idyllic landscape recalled in Enion's lament in *The Four Zoas* (E 369, K 354). It is of course the tree of the Bible, the image of perpetuity and the tree from which temples were built and idols carved—probably not a positive implication for Blake. But as the tree of the Holy Land introduced into a foreign country, as it was into England in 1683 (Loudon, p. 2405), it would suggest obvious analogues with the message of Christ supervening, or failing to supervene, upon the pagan practices of oak-worshipping Druid forefathers, and perhaps contemporaries. The distorted shape of the Chelsea cedars would thus ask to be considered as an emblem of the fate of the divine message in an inhospitable context.

Leaving the case for or against the cedar of Lebanon—and my own sense is that it is a slim one—I shall pass on to the second possibility, that Blake means us to recognize a different kind of "oak" from the standard guardian of the green, as indeed of Augustan civilization in general. Once again, he could have had in mind a particular oak tree. Strutt describes the "Chandos Oak" at Michendon House, Southgate, Middlesex, in some detail, and includes an illustration (illus. 3):

When it is in the full luxuriance of its foliage, it strikes the spectator with sensations similar to those inspired by the magnificent Banyan trees of the East. Its boughs bending to the earth, with almost artificial regularity of form and equidistance from each other, give it the appearance of a gigantic tent, its verdant draperies drawn up to admit the refreshing breezes that curl the myriads of leaves, which form altogether, what may be called a living mass of vegetable beauty and grandeur, scarcely to be equalled by any other production of the same nature in the kingdom. *(Sylva Britannica*, p. 11)

This was a famous tree (described also by Loudon, p. 1763), and one not too far from Blake's haunts; notice particularly the reference to its "artificial regularity of form." If Blake is indeed mirroring the Chandos Oak there cannot but be an ironic purpose;
the stately icon of free-standing aristocracy has been reduced to a shrunken backrest for the denizens of village greens.

Much more likely, to my mind, is the notion that Blake means to suggest, not a specific tree but a "different" kind of oak, the pollard oak. The process of pollarding involved cutting down the growth of the main trunk, and was carried out either to provide shade (by encouraging an early growth outward instead of upward)—and in this context such trees were and still are common on English village greens—or to yield a regular crop of poles for the rural economy. Bruegel’s The Gloomy Day (February) shows in the right foreground of its landscape a peasant harvesting poles from a pollard willow (illus. 4). Oak poles

3 The Chandos Oak.

4 Bruegel’s "The Gloomy Day (February)," 1565 (detail). Reproduced by permission of the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.

5 John Crome’s "Pollard Tree Study" (post 1810). Reproduced by permission of the Ipswich Museums.
would have been useful for fencing, but in the southern counties they seem to have been used principally for hop poles. Marshall's *County Reports* notes that the oak and willow furnish poles for hops, and materials for laths; whilst what are termed black poles, which are those of larger size, and confined to oak, are applied in rafters and other purposes in building.

If the pollard oak is indeed Blake's intended image, this still does not tell us how to "read" it. On the one hand, the business of pollarding is a suggestive emblem of man's aggressive interference in nature, and a possible image of castration. The fact that the thick vegetation embellishing the early versions of the first plate of "The Ecchoing Green" seems to have been considerably thinned out in the later versions may be Blake's corollary to a general outcry against the gradual deforestation of the English landscape (see, e. g., *County Reports*, V, 78-79). On the other hand, the pollarding of the tree renders its wood useful for the rural and peacetime economy only, and not at all fit to provide the timber required for the building of England's navy. It was precisely the long, curved, fully grown branches which were essential for shipbuilding.

As Evelyn has put the case in *Sylva*, a treatise reprinted at least four times in the eighteenth century:

> if you would propagate Trees for Timber, cut not off their heads at all, nor be too busy with lopping; but if you desire Shade, and Fuel, or bearing of Mast alone, lop off their Tops...11

Evelyn, for whom oak trees are "the truest Oracles of the perpetuity of our happiness" (p. 111), indeed argues against the habit of pollarding because "it makes so many scraggs and sparfs of many Trees which would else be good Timber" (p. 77).

Thus, on the positive side, the pollard oak might suggest itself as a happy icon of the integration of nature and nurture. The tree remains alive, and yet produces some contribution toward "civilization," whereas its use in shipbuilding would destroy it entirely. I have not been able to discover much evidence in eighteenth century landscape poetry for this use of the image of the pollard, though of course Blake was not an artist constrained by precedent or tradition.12 Moreover, as I have said, the pollard tree was a very common feature of the English landscape, and this is all the stimulus Blake might have
needed. We can see them dotted around the landscapes of the Norwich School, for example in the work of John Crome, whose Pollard—Tree Study is not unlike a younger specimen of Blake's tree (illus. 5). Some of Constable's paintings also feature pollards, for example Parham Mill, Gillingham (1826) and The Valley Farm (exhibited 1835). In none of these cases does there seem to be any suggestion of a conscious iconography, and Craig's Lectures on Drawing seems to consider the pollard aesthetically ambivalent:

Lopping and pollarding also produce wonderful changes on the aspect of trees, sometimes rendering them highly picturesque, and sometimes disgusting; but always disproportional from their natural character.13

Nor does the rest of Blake's work offer any sure clues. There may be a reference to a pollarded oak in the reply of Albion's angel to Orc and the American Revolution in America. The angel describes the inhibition of the governors of the States before the courageous stand of Washington and the "rebels," and tells us what his "punishing Demons" cannot do:

They cannot smite with sorrows, nor subdue
the plow and spade.
They cannot wall the city, nor moat round the
castle of princes.
They cannot bring the stubbed oak to overgrow
the hills.
(E 53, K 199)14

The term "stubbing" here may also mean something like "cut down to a stump," but it certainly reads as a gesture of aggressive interference and may relate to the use of foreign timbers for Albion's navies.

The tree of the late copies of "The Ecchoing Green" is itself echoed in an interesting way by Samuel Palmer, whose Early Morning of 1825 (now in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford) repeats almost exactly the shape and proportion of Blake's tree. There is tantalizingly implicit evidence that Palmer could have taken the image straight from Blake. We know that the two men met, probably in 1824, at a time when Blake was working on the Job designs. The first and last of these uses the image of the tree in the center of the composition, and the first, "Thus did Job continually," was lying on the table when Palmer arrived.15 Blake was also working on the Dante designs, being bedridden and unable to complete Job (Blake Records, p. 291), during one of Palmer's visits, and the Dante designs are full of images of trees, mostly with the implication of materiality. But none of these hints does more than suggest that


7 Dancing around the "liberty tree." Reproduced by permission of the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris.
An important element in the highly self-conscious iconography of the French Revolution had been the so-called "liberty trees." The flattened site of the Bastille had been planted with 86 trees, one for each province of the new federation, and this was the signal for a national campaign in tree planting (illus. 7). It seems likely that oak and laurel were the species most commonly used. There is a letter by Grimm containing an account of a comic opera called Le Chêne patriotique:

The idea of this piece is as simple as its title. In the first act, an oak tree is chosen from the forest; in the second, it is transplanted into the village square to serve as a monument to the liberty regained on the fourteenth of July.  

The oak thus signified the new growth of political freedom incumbent upon the fall of the Bastille and implicitly suggested the new harmony of man and nature which would characterize the new society. Wordsworth recalls this as part of the Solitary's recollections of the early days of the Revolution in The Excursion:

Meanwhile, prophetic harps
In every grove were ringing, 'War shall cease;
Did ye not hear that conquest is abjured?
Bring garlands, bring forth choicest flowers, to deck
The tree of Liberty.'--My heart rebounded;
My melancholy voice the chorus joined;
--'Be joyful all ye nations; in all lands,
Ye that are capable of joy be glad.
Henceforth, whate'er is wanting to yourselves
In others ye shall promptly find; and all,
Enriched by mutual and reflected wealth,
Shall with one heart honour their common kind.'

Liberty trees seem to have died out after the early, populist days of the Revolution, and it may be that Blake, in modifying the "growth" of his own tree, is imaging the similar falling off in radical political optimism which was taking place in England in the second and third decades of the nineteenth century, a period during which libertarian ideals were indeed being polled.

Before passing on to the third (and synoptic) option suggested above, that Blake's modified tree is a deliberately multivalent image designed to stimulate questions about its significations, I want to discuss at some length certain analogues to "The Ecchoing Green," first in the tradition of pastoral poetry which Blake inherits and certainly has in mind, and second in other areas of Blake's own work, chiefly the illustrations to Gray and to Milton. These additions will provide further echoes which will need to be gathered within our final perspective.

Blake's poem is offered quite overtly as a variation upon a theme of Goldsmith's, and perhaps also refers to similar variations by Crabbe; Blake's "innocence" has, it seems, a self-conscious ancestry in Augustan experience. Here is the famous passage from "The Deserted Village" which stands as an antetype to Blake's lyric:

How often have I blest the coming day,
When toil remitting lent its turn to play,
And all the village train from labour free
Led up their sports beneath the spreading tree,
While many a pastime circled in the shade,
The young contending as the old surveyed;
And many a gambol frolicked o'er the ground,
And slights of art and feats of strength went round.

And still as each repeated pleasure tired,
Succeeding sports the mirthful band inspired;
The dancing pair that simply sought renown
By holding out to tire each other down,
The swain mistrustless of his smutted face,
While secret laughter tittered round the place,
The bashful virgin's side-long looks of love,
The matron's glance that would those looks reprove.

These were thy charms, sweet village; sports like these,
With sweet succession, taught even toil to please;
These round thy bowers their cheerful influence shed,
These were thy charms--But all these charms are fled.18

An antetype, that is, in its images, which Blake will choose to echo in a different way. For Goldsmith's revellers are of both sexes, and their mutual sexual interest is quite apparent (even if reproved), whereas Blake suggests this only pictorially in his second plate. But Goldsmith's speaker is himself suffering from the loss of what he describes, and his version of the darkening green has explicit social and political causes:

Sweet smiling village, loveliest of the lawn,
Thy sports are fled, and all thy charms withdrawn;
Amidst thy bowers the tyrant's hand is seen,
And desolation saddens all thy green:

All that is positive about the vision is thus directed toward a negative verdict upon the present. The pastoral idyll belongs firmly in the past, and could be restored only by a return to the organic rural community which Goldsmith celebrates, embodied in self-sufficient husbandry. The images of nascent sexuality, suggestive of progress and fruition, are thus brought in to make the eclipse of this community seem all the more deplorable. Implicitly, of course, this now vanished community also had a place for the speaker/poet, whereas poetry written in the "present" must remain unrewarded, given that its obligations are negative and censorious:

Thou source of all my bliss, and all my woe,
That found'st me poor at first, and keep'st me so;
(p. 303)

Blake, conversely, provides a speaker who appears to be on the edge of (sexual) experience, a child in late infancy or early adolescence; and the darkening, as Gleckner has pointed out, contains a potentially educative and ongoing ingredient. Blake has removed not only the explicit "sociology" of the earlier poem, but also its cunning and Urizenic egocentricity. For he might well have seen Goldsmith to be manipulating a familiar pastoral trope as a way of explaining the unrewarded status of the poet. Goldsmith has left the land along with the exiles he describes, and he is Urizenic in that he projects himself as the passive recorder and receiver of an objective experience brought about by the rise of trade and luxury and outside his control. Blake, on the other hand, offers something akin to a choice of self by having his poem remain on the verge of "meaning." Because its iconographic elements have to be resolved through the active and responsible participation of a reader/beholder, it can avoid contributing authoritatively to an overt mythology of loss.

Crabbe's poem "The Village" (1783), as is well known, explicitly quotes and answers Goldsmith, and in this respect it also anticipates Blake. Crabbe refuses the sociological rationale of his predecessor, but in order to replace it with the entirely negative vision of fallen humanity, unorganized and--perhaps consequently, for him--uncharitable:

Where are the swains, who, daily labour done,
With rural games play'd down the setting sun;
Who struck with matchless force the bounding ball,
Or made the pond'rous quoit obliquely fall;  
While some huge Ajax, terrible and strong,  
Engaged some artful strildling of the throng,  
And fell beneath him, foil'd, while far around  
Hoarse triumph rose, and rocks return'd the sound?  
Where now are these?—Beneath yon cliff they stand,  
To show the frighted pinnace where to land:  
To load the ready steed with guilty haste,  
To fly in terror o'er the pathless waste,...  

They have all, in other words, turned to smuggling,  
and they are none too choosy about how they protect  
themselves in their trade. The direction of Crabbe's  
irony, of course, implies that there never have been  
such swains, no such idyllic societies of harmonious  
simplicity of Goldsmith. Urizen's lament over his  
fallen world in *The Four Zoas* explicitly invokes the  
images of "The Ecchoing Green":

Art thou O ruin the once glorious heaven are  
these thy rocks  
Where joy sang in the trees & pleasure sported on  
the rivers  
And laughter sat beneath the Oaks & innocence  
sported round  
Upon the green plains & sweet friendship met in  
palaces  
And books & instruments of song & pictures of  
delight  
Where are theywhelmed beneath these ruins in  
horrible destruction

(E 343, K 317)

Implicitly it recalls also Goldsmith who, like Urizen,  
fails to realize that his world is of his own making,  
and that to subject oneself to an outside authority  
for one's formative myths, or their failure, is  
merely a delusion of the object-bound vegetative eye.  
Urizen/Goldsmith thus represents an embittered "Old  
John" figure who resents and laments his own unful­  
filled potential, and is now wasting his adult years  
in hopeless retrospection. This is not to say, of  
course, that this is all there is to Goldsmith's  
position, nor that Blake intended "The Ecchoing  
Green" to stand as a complete dismissal of it. But  
it seems not unlikely that Blake's sense of the inter­  
dependence of the described object and the mind of  
the describer would have led him to question the  
position of Goldsmith's poet in his vision of the  
disappearance of the rural community.

Blake might have found a precursor for this  
stringent examination of the habit of "pastoraliza­  
tion" in a yet earlier poet. I know of no evidence  
to suggest that Blake read John Dyer, but *The Fleece*  
was very popular in the eighteenth century, and it  
includes a version of the tropes we are discussing  
which would be worth attention if only for its own  
sake:

At shearing-time, along the lively vales,  
Rural festivities are often heard:  
Beneath each blooming arbour all is joy  
And lusty merriment: while on the grass  
The mingled youth in gaudy circles sport,  
We think the golden age again returned,  
And all the fabled Dryades in dance.  
Leering they bound along, with laughing air,  
To the shrill pipe, and deep remurmuring cords  
Of the ancient harp, or tabor's hollow sound.  
While the old apart, upon a bank reclined,  
Attend the tuneful carol, softly mixed  
With every murmur of the sliding wave,  
And every warble of the feathered choir;  
Music of paradise! which still is heard,  
When the heart listens; still the views appear  
Of the first happy garden, when content  
To Nature's flowery scenes directs the sight.  
Yet we abandon those Elysian walks,  
Then idly for the last delightful repine:
As greedy mariners, whose desperate sails
Skim o'er the billows of the foaming flood,
Fancy they see the lessening shores retire,
And sigh a farewell to the sinking hills.

(Bk. I, 601-24)\textsuperscript{20}

The self-defeating paradox of activity presented as passivity, which I am suggesting Blake might have found in Goldsmith (and which he certainly dramatized in Urizen), is expressed perfectly here. The loss of the paradisal image is self-incurred; we abandon it and then lament its absence as an externally imposed necessity. The simile of the greedy sailors hotfooting it for the colonies suggests that in this case the motives for the abandonment are corrupt and commercial ones. This occasions a comic version of the pathetic fallacy as the sailors see the shores "retire" and the hills "sinking." They fail, in other words, to understand their own responsibility for what they "see," and in the same way the image of an ideal rural past serves as a sentimental avoidance of the responsibility for a crudely self-seeking status quo. The "objectivity" of that past is insinuated to cover over our motives for perpetuating the present, so that we can tell ourselves that this "present" is not really what we want. Here, Dyer exposes the role of the pastoral image in the propaganda of Augustan mercantilism (and colonialism), which mystifies the authority of the present by presenting it as necessarily consequent upon a prior fall of man. As long as we remain convinced that we cannot regain the ideal past, we need not face the challenge of trying to construct it again, or in a new way.

This view of the images of pastoralism seems to me very close to Blake's own. The "pastness" of the idyll is emphasized as an active construction of the present, and our good faith is questioned if we blandly endorse that pastness.

The idea that "The Ecchoing Green" is Blake's commentary on a well-developed tradition in eighteenth century poetry, and indeed may in its various versions provide the vehicle for a continuing commentary thereon, is substantiated by the inclusion of its major icons among the designs for Gray's Poems which Blake was commissioned to produce in 1797. This connection is of course well known; the first plate of "The Ecchoing Green" is recalled in one of the pages at the end of Gray's "Elegy," and the second appears in illustration of the "Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College." To take the second first (illus. 8): a boy in a tree is handing down what we take to be a nest of linnets to a girl waiting below. Beside her, but ignoring this incident, another boy is reading a book, whilst a third boy is running energetically away from this group, playing with a hoop (like the marginal figure in the first plate of "The Ecchoing Green," but here much more vigorous). In the distance two figures can be discerned under a tree.\textsuperscript{21} The poem pursues the familiar theme of lost youth, and the melancholy continuity of the generations as they pass through the same roles from youth to maturity, and culminates in the famous lines

Yet, ah! why should they know their fate!
Since sorrow never comes too late,
And happiness too swiftly flies.
Thought would destroy their paradise.
No more—where ignorance is bliss,
'Tis folly to be wise.

Once again, in other words, the eighteenth century poet deals in despair and inevitability, an authoritative prediction of decline and disappointment. The most complete reading of these plates is that of Irene Tayler, in her Blake's Illustrations to the Poems of Gray (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1971), and her thesis for this poem is that Blake's first five designs are deliberately limp and listless in order to suggest the connection between a vapid pastoral mode and the "horrors" shown in the last four pages. Of the fifth design, the one we are considering, she comments that

The cumulative effect of these young people, for whom reading is one of a group of rather infantile—certainly childishly "innocent"—occupations, is to suggest that life is bland, and best encountered with placid indifference.

(p. 37)

I do not wish to defy this thesis on any large scale, but there is more to be said about this particular design. The motif of the plundering of the tree, which Blake uses as it were parodically in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell,\textsuperscript{22} may here also be a negative image, signalling a senseless interference with the life of nature. But the nest is at the same time a sign of exchange between the sexes, for which there is no authority in Gray's poem. There were no girls at Eton. And even if this is a negative or unfruitful exchange, according rather than contrasting with the boy reading the book, I am unable to see the boy with the hoop as a mere depiction of the "idle progeny" indicated in the text. There is more than idleness and listlessness in this plate, even if it resides at the level of misdirected or as yet unfulfilled potential.

The image of the bird's nest appears in a popular engraving published in 1798 (illus. 9) and may speak for a popular iconography relating to the principle of sexual exchange. The young adult mediates between the two young children, the girl plucking flowers (perhaps roses) and the boy proffering the nest of young birds. These two figures, who are in the "spring" of life (though they could also be brother and sister), are to be compared with those on the right hand side of the design, described as "summer." The latter are of an age when adult love becomes possible, and the tree here acts as a motif dividing the two halves of the allegory, which can also be distinguished in terms of social status and occupation. On the left is bourgeois leisure, on the right peasant labour, where even the women work. It is tempting also to suggest a contrast between the

8 Design number 17 from Blake's watercolor illustrations to Gray's Poems (Eton College Ode). From the collection of Paul Mellon.
OF ETON COLLEGE.

The captive linen, which enthrall?
What idle prologue succeed
To chase the rolling circle's speed,
Or urge the flying ball?

While some on earnest business bent
Their murm'ring labours ply
Gains't graver hours, that bring constraint
To sweeten liberty:
Some bold adventurers disdain
The limits of their little reign,
And unknown regions dare defy:
Still as they run they look behind,
They hear a voice in every wind,
And snatch a fearful joy.

Gay hope is theirs by fancy fed,
Left pleasing when past
The tear forget as soon as shed,
The sunshine of the breast:

Theirs
plundering of nature on the left (the robbed nest, plucked flowers, and the caged or tamed bird) and the husbanding of nature on the right. In this use of the tree as a principle of compositional and thematic division, we might compare Morland's drawing *Midday Rest at the Bell Inn*, in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge (illus. 10), where the sportsmen on the right have obviously taken over the tavern and its ladies and are regarded with suggestive coolness by the seated rustics on the left. The first plate of "The Ecchoing Green" does use the tree to divide activity from leisure, or play from rest, but the point may be that the "division" is not important, since the figures seem to be all of the same sex (though an age distinction may be implied).

To return to the allegorical engraving in the context of Blake's design for Gray's "Ode," it is certainly the "bourgeois" side of things that Blake means to suggest. The images of labor which are so dominant in the series are absent from this composition, yet the absence of adults and the evident exchange between the sexes indicates to my mind a less straightforward view of the scene than Taylor's thesis would suggest.

The first plate of "The Ecchoing Green" is present in modified form at the end of Gray's "Elegy" in the tenth design for that poem. A group of mothers and young children are sitting under a tree in the right foreground, and one of the mothers points to a funeral procession passing behind (illus. 11). Taylor says of this that

The pastoral bounty of the scene in the foreground—mothers and children, and particularly the nursing infant, in a setting of lush greenery—provides a contrast with the drab order of the distant funeral march at the same time that it reminds us that the end of life is not the grave but eternal rebirth, that "new and greater sunrise." (p. 142)

Taylor moves to this position from an acceptance of Hirsch's reading of "The Ecchoing Green"; from the perspective of Gleckner's interpretation, we could presumably come to other conclusions. The greenery,

9 "Spring and Summer": a popular print of 1798, photographed from a copy belonging to John Barrell.
to my mind, is not particularly lush, and even if it were, as we shall see, we would not have to read this as a positive image. It may be worth pointing out that three of Blake's four children are not looking at the funeral at all, and there may be a sign here of an infantile non-recognition of death and its melancholy and moralized trappings. We recall Crabbe's conjunction of the children with the funeral, and suspect that Blake may once again be forcing a distinction between the generations of the kind wherein powerful and energetic images of peasant labor contrast forcefully with the effete icons of the "poet" and his literary baggage. In the fourth design, for example, the head and trunk of the massive gravedigger are "obscured" by the text, rather suggestively, and we "see" only the energyless figures of the priest and the mourners. Most of the figures of the tenth design seem to me to belong to this latter class.

Before moving on to attempt some kind of summary of Blake's concept of pastoral, there is one more important connection to be discussed. The images of Milton's "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso" anticipate those of "The Ecchoing Green," and Blake produced illustrations for these poems in the years 1816-20.

In the first of Milton's poems there is a passage which relates specifically to the scenario of Blake's lyric. It describes a holiday shared between the sexes and between the generations, a time

When the merry bells ring round,
And the jocund rebecks sound;
To many a youth, and many a maid,
Dancing in the chequered shade;
And young and old come forth to play
On a sunshine holiday,
Till the livelong daylight fail,
Then to the spicy nut-brown ale,
With stories told of many a feat,24

and so on. Milton, unlike Blake in his text alone, continues his account beyond nightfall. The revellers pass on to drinking ale and telling stories of the rural supernatural, stories which, like the events of A Midsummer Night's Dream on which Milton draws for this poem, project implicitly sexual undertones. This may well be one of the clues Blake responded to for his image of the older children picking the grapes; it does at any rate suggest an ongoing nocturnal aspect to the sunshine holiday. His illustration for this particular episode (illus. 12) shows a landscape densely populated by trees, with a face in at least one of them, this time a clear face drawn within the foliage of the tree in the right foreground.25 The revelling is done by the young adults or adolescents of both sexes, with the old people and young children looking on. Once again, it seems that Blake is insisting on a separation between the generations, as if to imply that progress must be made with one's peers and not with one's parents. Blake left some notes for these designs, but they are teasingly literal. He says of this one, for example, that "Mountains Clouds Rivers Trees among Humanized on the Sunshine Holiday" (E 664, K 618), but he leaves us to estimate the import of this humanization. Grant finds this to be "one of the happiest visions in Blake" (p. 122), though even he admits that the humanized mountains appear to be in distress. Butlin, conversely, finds that the allegory of nature "forms an oppressive accompaniment, perhaps signifying the negative materialism of the state of Innocence."26 So, we have a choice again. Blake wrote to Butts in October 1800 of the visionary identity of man and nature:

Each rock & each hill
Each fountain & rill
Each herb & each tree
Mountain hill Earth & Sea
Cloud Meteor & Star
Are Men Seen Afar

(E 683, K 805)

and we recall again the possibility of an anthropomorphic figuration of the tree in the later versions of "The Ecchoing Green." But this does not tell us how to interpret the more definite humanization of the landscape of "A Sunshine Holiday," for it could be read as mere allegory, depicting the fallen separation of self and other which Blake saw enacted in the birth of priesthood, abstracting "The mental deities from their objects" (E 37, K 153). The tilt of the face in the tree, read by Kiralis (p. 63) with some credibility as the face of Christ, mimics or images that of the old man beneath, and there is a beckoning finger pointing upwards which may be calling him to an afterlife. If so, then the figures in the sky above may indicate another incarnation for the old man, locating him as part of a cycle intimated also in the presence of the children he holds by the hand. Kiralis identifies the figures in the sky as images of "the sexual-spiritual life abundant" (p. 63), but it is to be noted that both the old man and the allegorical female recumbent on the mountain have one hand—opposite hands—on their heart or breast. Is the old man dying, as the female, who may be a personification of moisture or cloud (note that she seems to be the source of the water or river), is disintegrating by evaporation or precipitation? If so, then the animate forms spiralling away from her body could suggest yet another transition to another "form" of existence, and an extension of the cycle in which the old man has his place. The whole design certainly responds to being read as a depiction of mutability, and the allegorical female might thus endorse the mortal acceptance of change and decay. No one did so more willingly than Christ, who may be the figure in the tree, and we are reminded also of Blake's Milton as he accepts the passage back into experience. The net effect might be to establish the necessary unity of all the stages in our vegetative and spiritual life, and in this it anticipates the "synoptic" reading of "The Ecchoing Green" with which I shall conclude this essay. For this unity
is one of the lessons of The Book of Thel, imparted by the cloud:

O virgin know'st thou not. our steeds drink of the golden springs
Where Luvah doth renew his horses: look'st thou on my youth,
And fearest thou because I vanish and am seen no more.
Nothing remains; O maid I tell thee, when I pass away,
It is to tenfold life, to love, to peace, and raptures holy:

(E4, K128)27

The juxtaposition of sunshine and trees recurs in "Il Penseroso," and in the design which Rose sees as complementary/antithetical to that for "A Sunshine Holiday." Milton's poet is pleading for an unmolested landscape:

And when the sun begins to fling
His flaring beams, me goddess bring
To arched walks of twilight groves,
And shadows brown that Sylvan loves
Of pine, or monumental oak,

Where the rude axe with heaved stroke,
Was never heard the nymphs to daunt,
Or fright them from their hallowed haunt.

(Poems, p. 145)

He seeks a grove where there is neither pollarding nor felling; hence, no rural husbandry and no shipbuilding. Blake's design (illus. 13) shows the young poet, carrying a book, being led into the grove by the goddess. The sun is personified as a naked, frontal figure of energy, "throwing his darts &

10 Morland's "Midday Rest at the Bell Inn" (undated). Reproduced by permission of the Syndics of the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.
11 Design number 114, Gray's Poems (Elegy . . .in a Country Church-yard). From the collection of Paul Mellon.
12 Blake's "A Sunshine Holiday" (L'Allegro). Reproduced by permission of The Pierpont Morgan Library.
13 Blake's "The Sun in his Wrath" (Il Penseroso). Reproduced by permission of The Pierpont Morgan Library.
ELEGY WRITTEN IN A

E N.G.

Hand by von volm, now smilling as in sorp,
Mouring his wayward fancy he would rave,
Now drooping, woeful man, like one forlorn,
Or craz’d with care, or craz’d in hopeless love.

One morn I saw’d him on the custom’d hill,
Along the beach and near his favourite tree,
Another came; nor yet beside the till,
Nor up the lawn, nor at the wood was he.

The next with dures due in sad array
Slow thro’ the church-way path we saw him borne,
Approach and read (for thou canst read) the lay
Grav’d on the stone beneath you aged thorn.

T H M
flames of fire" [E 666, K 619]. But only the "Spirits of the Trees" appear to respond to the sun and gaze upwards with an expression of apparent longing. Blake describes them as being "under the domination of Insects raised by the Suns heat." This may mean that the tree spirits wish to escape from their sylvan prisons but cannot do so. If "A Sunshine Holiday" can be read, in its images of movement and conversion, as a study of the theme of transformation, then the absence or inhibition of that transformation here (though the rising figures in the treetops could be taken to indicate a potential future for the spirits within) may be ironically echoed in the poet's opting for shade and darkness, the very prison which the spirits wish to escape. Such a reading is, roughly, argued by Kiralis (p. 71), although for Grant the passage into the shade is read positively. He sees the poet as escaping from the "pestilential" arrows of Apollo and beginning his regeneration (p. 131). Milton, for him, is avoiding "the maddening effects of the noonday sun."

It would be quite out of place to suggest that Grant's reading of the design is "wrong," and it has its place in his interpretation of the larger sequence of these illustrations. But there is a good deal of evidence for thinking that the sight of Milton being led, book in hand, into the shady groves he appears to be asking for in "Il Penseroso" would not have been a positive one for Blake. We remember the ambiguity of shade in Gleckner's account of "The Little Black Boy" and the suggestion that the little white boy must learn to stand the heat of the day. Blake's short lyric "Memory Hither Come" prefigured many of the motifs in the Milton illustrations, and it is particularly interesting in its treatment of melancholy. The poem is worth quoting entire:

Memory, hither come,
And tune your merry notes;
And, while upon the wind,
Your music floats,
I'll pore upon the stream,
Where sighing lovers dream,
And fish for fancies as they pass
Within the watery glass.

I'll drink of the clear stream,
And hear the linnet's song;
And there I'll lie and dream
The day along;
And, when night comes, I'll go
To places fit for woe;
Walking along the dark'en' valley,
With silent Melancholy.

(E 406, K 8)

This is one of those songs which, as so often in Blake, depend for their elucidation upon an assumption about the status and integrity of the speaker. Read in good faith, the acceptance of woe at nightfall would seem to stand as a positive integration of the darker elements in the life of experience. But to my mind the poem works best if we distrust its speaker, and his invocation of memory, a faculty not endorsed by Blake in general, is a good clue to lead us to do so. The speaker seems to be trapped within a static and retrospective psychology, oscillating between memory and melancholy. The sense of inertia and even of narcissism--"the watery glass"--suggests that Milton may not be making the best use of his time in opting for shade rather than sunshine.

This reading of the "Il Penseroso" illustration would have been endorsed by the orthodox neoplatonic tradition, for which the tree, etymologized via Latin (sylva) and Greek (σύλες), stands for "matter," the merely earthly quality as against the spiritual. This was a commonplace, and this input into Blake's thought has been well documented by George Mills Harper in his The Neoplatonism of William Blake (Chapel Hill & London: Univ. of North Carolina Press & Oxford Univ. Press, 1961), pp. 169-76. There are strong hints throughout Blake's work of a leading awareness of the metaphorical connection between trees and the material world. They are evident in the Dante illustrations, and also in the illustrations for Paradise Lost, for example in "The Judgment of Adam and Eve" (Houghton Library, Harvard University), dated 1808, where a dense background of trees echoes the leaves around the loins of the fallen couple. Indeed, in Milton's poem, Adam's lament at his complicity and guilt is phrased in terms of a desire for the shelter of trees, which would certainly have been read by a neoplatonist as a desire for immersion in matter:

O might I here
In solitude live savage, in some glade
Obscured, where highest woods impenetrable
To star or sunlight, spread their umbrage broad
And brown as evening: cover me ye pines,
Ye cedars, with innumerable boughs
Hide me, where I may never see them more.

IX, 1084-90; Poems, p. 919

Immediately after this passage, moreover, we find the recourse to the fig leaves. Further, Blake's patron and "friend" Hayley offered a poetic coincidence in his very name, which was converted into the form "Hyle" and appears thus in the prophetic books. Corporeal friends could be spiritual enemies, as Blake wrote to Butts in April 1803 (E 697, K 822), and Hayley was one of them. The oak of the village green may be another manifestation of limited material vision in its status as an emblem of guardianship and protection. There are many analogues, not only the images of Albion's oaken navies discussed by Erdman (Prophet Against Empire, p. 482)--who, by the way, argues for the negative implications of the oak tree in Blake's earliest works (e.g. p. 82)--but also the criticisms of the Druids as they fell from an intuition of spiritual truth to an exclusive concern for the ossified dead letter of religion. Urizen spends much time beneath the oak (just like Old John), as do Har and Heva in Tiriel, whiling away their time in a pastoral world which may be read as one of idyllic innocence but is more often taken to suggest vapid fantasy:

But they were as the shadow of Har. & as the years forgotten
Jerusalem, p. 355), 76 (Erdman, The Illuminated Blake, p. 355), and the Bible itself provides numerous instances of sinister goings-on under and around oak trees. Absalom is murdered under an oak (2 Sam. 18), and beneath others the Israelites render homage to their idols (Ezek. 6, Hosea 4, Isaiah 57).

There is there considerable evidence for concluding that Blake was conscious of the neoplatonic reading of the tree as an emblem of limited material vision; but can this be related to the modification of the shape of the tree in the later versions of "The Ecchoing Green"? Not in any monovalent way, I think. We might read the thinning out of the vegetation in these later versions as a hint of progress away from the material toward the spiritual, in contrast with the dense forests which Milton's Adam and Blake's Dante (see "Dante and Virgil Penetrating the Forest") have to confront. But this conflicts somewhat with the "sociopolitical" reading for which I have already given evidence, that the later version of the design might represent a censorious comment upon the state of Albion (deforestation and pollarding) after the Napoleonic Wars. Indeed, I have presented speculations with varying degrees of evidence in several directions, although it is my own impression that allusion to pollarding and/or to the neoplatonic tradition is the most likely intention here. Any decision made between these two (or other) options would locate Blake within a specific historical, political, or intellectual context; it would read him as the exponent of a specific corporeal—not to say arboreal—vision.

My aim has thus been to try to suggest a way of seeing the icon of the tree in some inclusive, synoptic way. Of course, in seeing in the design a facsimile or reflection of the human face I may be doing no more than consulting my own "watery glass," but such a possibility does fit very well with the self-referring function of the image as a pointer to spiritual vision. Blake wrote to Trusler in August 1799, in that famous letter which declares that "The wisest of the Ancients considered what is not too Explicit as the fittest for Instruction because it rouses the faculties to act" (E 676, K 793), that I see Every thing I paint In This World, but Every body does not see alike. To the Eyes of a Miser a Guinea is more beautiful than the Sun & a bag worn with the use of Money has more beautiful proportions than a Vine filled with Grapes. The tree which moves some to tears of Joy is in the Eyes of others only a Green thing that stands in the way. Some See Nature all Ridicule & Deformity & by these I shall not regulate my proportions, & Some Scarce see Nature at all But to the Eyes of the Man of Imagination Nature is Imagination itself. As a man is So he Sees. (E 677, K 793)

As a critic is, so he reads, always hoping, of course, that we will read with him. Not an ignoble predication, by any means. But is it important to register Blake's sense of the plurality of "readings." In this context it is worth at least considering the availability of a mode of seeing his work which makes account of the dynamic interaction of the image as a pointer to interpretative possibilities—stirring up the standing water, so to speak. For example, I doubt that Blake would have intended to limit himself to the standard neoplatonic reading of the tree. Like Hegel, he was generally concerned to recognize the spiritual in the material (pace the polemical annotations to Wordsworth), and thus to avoid an idealism which would make the world of objects merely redundant and inhibiting. The tree which Blake is interested in may well ultimately be the one which grows in the human brain, and which, as a "potential" image, thus stimulates varieties of perceptions in different minds, and indeed in the same minds at different moments in time. The disjunction I have suggested between text and design in "The Ecchoing Green" can be seen as a way of encouraging the interaction of "meanings" which will then tend to involve the self-conscious reader in a process of critical self-referral.

Of course, it would be foolish to ignore the presence of a caveat; that this pirouetting between various options and modes of evidence is merely a way of dodging the issue, of avoiding the conclusive statement which conventional critical discourse certainly demands. However, I hope it will be clear that such insistence on a conclusion itself contains an assumption about the nature of Blake's creative imagination, as well as a more esoteric but perhaps more important assumption about what we as readers require of him. I have chosen to operate on a different assumption, that there is an aesthetic and historical rationale for organizing the evidence for determinate conclusions within an inclusive perspective. Thus I think that it is quite possible that Blake's tree might have been modified at the prompting of a heightened pessimism about the state of post-war England, but that an "eternal" perspective might also have its place, one in which all moments in historical consciousness are held together. Blake, I believe, always held that the eternal was to be approached through the historical; to understand this is to be reconciled to the life of experience and to accept the fall. This understanding itself becomes the vehicle of movement through experience. All being is becoming, and to assume otherwise is to repeat Urizen's mistake.

We can now see the force of Blake's renovation of the traditional images of pastoral poetry, which operates (I have argued) by replacing product by process, passivity by activity. Unlike Crabbe and Goldsmith, he provides an eternal present which is always "about to" turn into meaning, and which relies for that meaning upon the decisive contribution of a reader. Like Dyer, Blake reminds us that we are responsible for what we see. The only mythology of loss in Blake's pastoral is thus the one which his readers may choose to create for themselves.

Hence, in the early "Song" from Poetical Sketches which Keynes has noted as a precursor of "The
Ecchoing Green," Blake is quite explicit about the mythologized images of the village green:

I love the oaken seat,  
Beneath the oaken tree,  
Where all the old villagers meet,  
And laugh our sports to see.  

I love our neighbours all,  
But, Kitty, I better love thee;  
And love them I ever shall;  
But thou art all to me.

(E 406, K 8)

I think that there is more here than just the conventional hyperbole of the love poem. The speaker displaces the inherited catalogue of rural pleasures, all drawn from the tradition, in favor of personal (and implicitly sexual) experience, of the kind which may be intimated in the design of the second plate of "The Ecchoing Green." The "all" may be inclusive or exclusive; it may be that Kitty displaces all the other attractions and stands alone, or that she includes and contains them, in that they are only apprehended as significant through her. Whichever reading we prefer, it is clear that the personal relation is the crucial one, and that the images of rural pastoral are void of meaning except when seen in its context.

Much of the uncertainty about Blake's use of personification, for example in "A Sunshine Holiday," is related to the difficulty of deciding whether he means to suggest matter being brought to life, or life turning into matter. I have argued that this design, at least, can be taken to require the recognition of both processes occurring and recurring through time. It may be that "The Ecchoing Green" operates in a similar way with the plurality of references which a perusal of the design has called up. There is a similar inclusiveness, I think, with another of Blake's echoing oaks, that portrayed in the frontispiece to The Gates of Paradise of 1793 (reissued 1818). This design (The Illuminated Blake, p. 268) shows a humanoid chrysalis dormant on the sunny side of an oak leaf, and a caterpillar eating downwards into the dark side of another leaf (illus. 14). We are asked the question "What is Man," and the later version adds the couplet:

The Suns Light when he unfolds it
Depends on the Organ that beholds it.

The question seems to demand a choice between the two images, but the couplet goes on to intimate the importance of the perspective and character of the beholder. We see only the dark side of the caterpillar's leaf, but the creature itself is in the sun, and the sun, moreover, will be in different positions at different times of the day. By eating leaves the caterpillar will pupate, on the way to becoming a butterfly, which the sleeping humanoid may yet have to become. There is, then, a causal sequence in this design as well as a contrast, and it suggests that the frontispiece taken as a whole may be meant to indicate the entire career of man as he exists in time. Of course we can take our pick. "As the Eye--Such the Object" (E 634, K 461); as the beholder, so the allegory. The butterfly (psyche) may be the spiritual form of both chrysalis and caterpillar, thus implying the necessity of each to the other. Perhaps we are to see through the eye and not with it, through to the spiritual identity behind phenomenal appearances. This is one of the mandates of Milton:

And every Natural Effect has a Spiritual Cause,  
and Not  
A Natural: for a Natural Cause only seems, it  
is a Delusion  
Of Ulro: & a ratio of the perishing Vegetable Memory.

(E 123, K 513)

The spiritual form of the oak (or other) tree of "The Ecchoing Green" thus includes all the options I have touched on, as well as the early and fully canopied version of the tree, in a dynamic aesthetic characterized by modification and growth. Like the
older children of the poem, we have a choice before us, but we will also grow into the possibility of other insights and choices. Perhaps it is not accidental that the grand climax to Jerusalem, which identifies (verb active) so many of the incremental dualisms in Blake's own myth and in the tradition at large, operates through all the generations (kept apart in "The Ecchoing Green"), through "Childhood, Manhood & Old Age" (E 255, K 746). More particularly, it identifies many of the trees latent in Blake's books and used by him in different ways at different times. Along with the "Covenant of Priam" has disappeared "the Tree of Good & Evil," "The Oak Groves of Albion that covered the whole Earth," and "The Fruit of Albions Poverty Tree" (E 256, K 746). They have "disappeared" by becoming one in the tree of life which is the human form divine: "All Human Forms identified even Tree Metal Earth & Stone" (E 256, K 747). As we see in the text of The Book of Thel and have seen in (my reading of) the design for "A Sunshine Holiday," the dualism of animate and inanimate is resolved as all created forms expand energetically into oneness in the cycle of becoming "living going forth & returning wearied." The generations and the trees of "The Ecchoing Green" also have their places within this coadunation. And yet they remain stages on life's way. The end of Jerusalem involves a recognition of the necessity of repetition. In terms of a critical aesthetic, this appears as a demand for a continual re-reading. The very moment of determinate interpretation frees us to look for further echoes.


5 Virgil, in Georgica, II, 288 f., sees the oak as the emblem of longevity (though of course he refers to aspen, the Italian oak). We may contrast Erasmus Darwin, quoted by Jacob George Strutt, Sylvia Britannica: or, Portraits of Forest Trees, distinguished for their Antiquity, Magnitude, or Beauty (London, 1822), p. 2: "Yes, stately Oak, thy leaf wrapp'd head sublime, / Ere long must perish in the wrecks of time." The oak as a symbol of mutability is invoked also by Spenser, The Shepherds Calendar, February; by Cowper in "Yardley Oak"; and by Mrs. Barbauld in the tenth of her Hyperion. For the contrast between Virgil and the others here depends precisely upon one's choice of time-scale, which was a phenomenal quality for Blake.

6 David Erdman, The Illuminated Blake (Garden City: Doubleday, 1974), p. 47, reproduces the 'I' copy, and Keynes' facsimile of the Z copy shows the later version. The V copy is watermarked 1818 on thirteen leaves; W and Z are watermarked 1825.

7 This is less true of the V copy, where the bottom edge of the canopy has a slight (though symmetrical) uplift away from the trunk, the whole image being thus less rectilinear. The Z copy of "The Lamb" suggests a clear tree-face (not in W or AA) with one eye shut in somewhat sinister recognition. This was pointed out to me by John Wright, who suggested that this could be read as Blake's acknowledgement of his own scrutiny of the plate as he observed the bitting process. The idea that this may be an image of Blake's own face reflected from the surface of the acid bath operates as another signal of complicity and self-referral. It may also be that the Z copy of "The Lamb" indicates a pollard tree (see below).

8 J. C. Loudon, Arboretum et Fruticetum Britannicum, 8 vols. continuously paginated (London, 1838), p. 2426. This essay is much indebted to the various sorts of special information offered by Max Walters, Oliver Rackham, John Barrell, and Norm Bryson.

9 Loudon, p. 2410, gives an account of Pococke's travels of 1744-45, quoting details of a visit to Mt. Lebanon: "The great cedars, at some distance, look like very large spreading oaks... The Christians of several denominations... have built altars against several of the large trees, where they administer the sacrament."

10 The Review and Abstract of the County Reports to the Board of Agriculture, by Mr. Marshall, 5 vols. (York, 1818), 11, 321. See also V, 378-79, 430-31.

11 John Evelyn, Sylva: or a Discourse of Forest-Trees, and the Propagation of Timber in his Majesties Dominions (London, 1664), p. 14. In the classical myth of the four ages, it was only in the last and lowest, the age of iron, that shipbuilding and warfare began together with the felling of trees. See Ovid, Metamorphoses, I, 132.

12 John Scott does use the pollard as an image in his vision of the harmonious husbanding of nature. See The Poetical Works of John Scott (London, 1782), pp. 77-78, 94-95, 269, etc.


18 Collected Works of Oliver Goldsmith, ed. Arthur Friedman, 5 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), IV, 287-88. The derivation from Goldsmith is well known, as is that from Milton which I shall discuss later; but they have never been fully analyzed.


21 Sir Geoffrey Keynes, in the commentary for his reduced facsimile edition, William Blake's Water-Colour Drawings for the Poems of Thomas Gray (Chicago: Philip O'Hara, 1972), pp. 46, 70, has of course noted the analogues to both designs.


23 John Barrell, who brought these analogies to my attention, will discuss the Morland drawing in his forthcoming The Dark Side of the Landscapes: the Rural Poor in English Painting, 1720-1840 (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1979).
The Poems of John Milton, ed. John Carey & Alastair Fowler
Angel of Apocalypse: Blake's Idea of Milton (Madison: Univ. of
Wisconsin Press, 1975), p. 285 n. 25, makes some valuable points
about the tradition of pastoral motifs in illustrations of Milton.

All the designs are reproduced, with a commentary, by John E.
Grant, in "Blake's Designs for 'L'Allegro' and 'II Penseroso',
with Special Attention to 'L'Allegro' 1, 'Mirth and her
Companions'," Blake Newsletter, 16 (Spring, 1971), 117-34;
See also Edward J. Rose, "Blake's Illustrations for 'Paradise
Lost', 'L'Allegro', and 'II Penseroso': A Thematic Reading," Hartford Studies in Literature, 2 (1970), 40-67; and Karl Kiralis,
"Blake's Criticism of Milton's 'L'Allegro' and 'II Penseroso' and
of its Author," in Milton Rereconsidered: Essays in Honour of
Arthur E. Barker, ed. John Karl Franson, Salzburg Studies in
English Literature (Salzburg: Institut für Englische Sprache und
Literatur, 1976), pp. 46-77.

Martin Butlin, William Blake, catalogue for the 1978 Blake
exhibition (London: Tate Gallery, 1978), p. 120.

York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1970), p. 602: "I am the daughter of
Earth and Water, / And the nursing of the Sky; / I pass through
the pores of the ocean and shores; / I change, but I cannot die."

See, for example, James Harris,erman: or, a Philosophical
Enquiry Concerning Language and Universal Grammar (London, 1751),
pp. 308-09; Thomas Taylor the Platonist: Selected Writings, ed.
Kathleen Raine & George Mills Harper (London: Routledge & Kegan

The connection is suggested again in a passage from Cowper's
"Yardley Oak":

It seems idolatry with some excuse
When our fore-father Druids in their oaks
Imagin'd sanctity. The conscience yet
Unpurified by an authentic act
Of amnesty, the need of blood divine,
Lov'd not the light, but gloomy into gloom
Of thickest shades, like Adam after taste
Of fruit proscrib'd, as to a refuge, fled.

Norma Russell (London, New York, Toronto: Oxford Univ. Press,

See Peter F. Fisher, "Blake and the Druids," JESP, 58 (1959),
509-612.

Both oak and palm stand on the edge of Beulah, and are so
illustrated in Jerusalem 33 [37] (The Illuminated Blake, p. 312).
Wittreich, Angel of Apocalypse, pp. 12, 142, reads the contrast
as an absolute one, the oak negative and the palm positive. The
oak and the palm, respectively, appear in the two tempera paint­
ings of 1810, Adam Naming the Beasts and The Virgin and Child in
Egypt, perhaps suggesting a contrast between the falling man and
the redeeming child.

This position is very much in the spirit of W. J. T. Mitchell's
Blake's Composite Art: A Study of the Illuminated Poetry
(Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1978), which was published
soon after I had finished this essay. Although Mitchell does
not offer a specific discussion of "The Ecchoing Green," I find
that my methods here are very much in line with the general
principles he recommends and the conclusions he draws. He notes,
for example, the potentially disjunctive relation between text
and design and locates it within an aesthetic of deliberate
discordance, seeing text and design as drawing upon different
and varied sources and traditions (see, e.g., pp. xvii, 5, 11-12,
31). He further suggests that this disjunction both represents
the fall and stimulates inquiry and reconstruction in the awakened
mind (p. 33). I do sense two different priorities in our res­
pective procedures, but they are complementary ones. My scope
here is much narrower, concentrating as it does on one iconographic
element and establishing for it both an immediate context and a
possible position within a larger sequence in Blake's work. I
have treated the "historicality" of Blake's image as potentially
situated within specific political and social preoccupations,
with relatively little reference to the autonomous traditions of
painting and engraving discussed in detail by Mitchell.

Of course, these remain important and undoubtedly provide a
repository of materials echoed by Blake with varying degrees of
terly trees, and I
am well aware of the hermeneutic paradoxes which come into play
in trying to reconstruct that very "history" which one aspect of
his aesthetic seems designed to unsettle. But eternity is
produced out of time, and produced for the times.
Studies in Romanticism announces its Fall and Winter issues for 1979

**Structuralism and Romanticism**

James A. Boon, An Endogamy of Poets, and Vice Versa: Exotic Ideals in Romanticism/Structuralism

John A. Hodgson, The Structures of Childe Harold III

Gene M. Bernstein, Lévi-Strauss's *Totemism* and Wordsworth's *Lyrical Ballads*

A. C. Goodson, Kubla's Construct

Diane C. Macdonell, The Place of the Device of Expectation, or "Seeing through a Medium," in Book I of *The Prelude*

Mark A. Schneider, Goethe and the Structuralist Tradition

Reviews by James F. Beard, George M. Ridenour, Sander L. Gilman

**The Rhetoric of Romanticism**

Paul de Man, Introduction

Stephen J. Spector, Thomas de Quincey: Self-Effacing Autobiographer

William Ray, Suspended in the Mirror: Language and the Self in Kleist's "Über das Marionettentheater"

Cynthia Chase, The Accidents of Disfiguration: Limits to Literal and Rhetorical Reading in Book v of *The Prelude*

Barbara Johnson, Melville's Fist: The Execution of Billy Budd

Timothy Bahti, Figures of Interpretation, The Interpretation of Figures: A Reading of Wordsworth's "Dream of the Arab"

E. S. Burt, Rousseau the Scribe

Reviews by Eric J. Sundquist and Richard E. Matlak

Studies in Romanticism continues to solicit general submissions in the area of Romanticism as well as essays for the following proposed special issues: *The Dramatic Imagination under Romanticism, Romanticism and History, Romanticism and the Spirit of Place,* and *Romanticism in Modern (and Contemporary) Poetry.* We welcome suggestions and essays related to these topics.

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TEACHING BLAKE'S RELIEF ETCHING

MORRIS EAVES

Blake advertised "illuminated books" in "illuminated printing." Technically he usually meant "watercolored relief etching." The excuse most often given for separating them into a print-component to be interpreted by one class of specialists and a design-component to be interpreted by another is lack of expertise. Usually the interpreter politely says that he lacks expertise in dealing with one component or another, and then just as often he takes it all back and says that really it was Blake who lacked the expertise, and we must presume that it is only the interpreter's good fortune to lack expertise in the same area in which Blake lacked it. If Jacob Bronowski, Harold Bloom, and F. R. Leavis don't mind excusing themselves on those grounds, it shouldn't be any surprise to find ourselves shirking the demands Blake's illuminated printing makes on us. If we shirk, who can blame our students?

This is not supposed to be a paper on why the print-component and the design-component should be interpreted together. (I have provided a short bibliography for those interested enough to pursue the matter.) But lest someone think I am implying that the proper answer is the classic nonanswer to all what-for questions, formulated, I understand, by Sir Edmund Hillary in regard to an adventure that was certainly as crazy as anything Blake ever would force us to attempt, I want at least to recall the classic answer invented by Jean Hagstrum, who in his book on Blake several years ago said memorably, "What Blake has joined, let no man put asunder." Taken with everything that it implies, it's an answer that satisfies me. But it was an answer that Wimsatt, especially, always on the lookout for intentionalism in all its forms, found hard to take as the last word on the subject. This paper assumes that the question has been answered in the affirmative and that the problem has shifted from theory to practice and, in the college classroom, to convenience.

But even if we want to proceed in the face of fear, ignorance, and prejudice, all sane teachers know that you can't teach things like relief etching in the classroom. You can't even show slides without looking like Urizen tangled up in his systems. I have never discovered a solution to the slide-technology problem, but two tactics and a formula ease the way for watercolored relief etching. The tactics are (1) avoiding the danger, expense, and exoticism of relief etching by using a surrogate printmaking medium, namely, linoleum-block cutting; and (2) letting students figure out the details of most of the techniques by themselves at home, instead of spending hours of class time giving out technical recipes and explanations which are only confusing anyway, like lectures on auto repair.

I hand out two sheets of instructions that take care of almost everything important: a list of essential materials and techniques, and a list of requirements for the project, with deadlines.

I. WHAT THE PRINTMAKER NEEDS (& A FEW TIPS)

1. SOMETHING DRAWN

For any printmaker this is the "design." There is no true preliminary design for any plate from Blake's illuminated books--including full text and
pictures—and therefore Ruthven Todd once claimed that as evidence for Blake having used a process in transferring his design that eliminated the design at the same time. Of course the design can be drawn freehand directly onto the copper or the linoleum. But most professionals work out their designs on paper and transfer them to the plate or block. A design that includes words has to be reversed to make the writing read the right way around. (Engravers get used to imagining things in reverse, and Blake drew a number of important metaphors from this peculiar experience.) There are many simple ways to transfer and reverse. The simplest is probably to draw on paper that is transparent or semi-transparent (TRACING PAPER, etc.). Turn it over; that reverses the writing, which can, however, still be seen from the wrong side of the paper. Now transfer it in reverse to the plate using CARBON PAPER and a BALLPOINT PEN.

No one really knows quite how Blake got his text onto the plates for relief etching. When working as a commercial reproductive engraver, however, he used the methods common in his trade.

2. SOMETHING TO MARK ON

For Blake this would be a metal plate, usually copper. Linocuts are made on sheets of LINOLEUM mounted on plywood to make a block. These are available in several sizes from all art supply stores. The linoleum is usually dark red; it comes already painted white so that lines carved into it show up red. Engravers had a similar problem with red copper, and they coated it in various ways—smoking the surface with a sooty candle, for instance—to make their lines show up.

3. SOMETHING TO MARK WITH

If a plate is a flat surface—like linoleum or copper—then to make a design the printmaker has to use something to remove the material that isn’t going to print. In a relief process, everything left standing on the surface prints; everything taken away doesn’t, because it’s too low. Imagine the designs carved out of potatoes by children, or a rubber stamp, or the letter on a typewriter key: those are all ways of printing in relief. The medium of Blake’s illuminated books is called “relief etching” because he used acids to eat away the unwanted copper. Whatever he didn’t want the acid to eat, he covered with a substance that was impervious to acid, probably a mixture of waxes and tars called a “resist” or a “ground.” He probably applied the ground in several ways depending on the local need: with a brush, with a dauber, by transfer, perhaps with a quill of some sort. The plates of America show very clearly in several instances how he then used the engraver’s other most common tools, the burin (or “graver,” the old-fashioned term) and etching needle, to scratch marks into the ground and to make shapes out of unshapely areas of etching ground.

Blake printed on good paper. Almost any surface will accept a print—rice paper, etching paper, watercolor paper, cardboard, plywood, the nearest wall. Damp paper often prints better than dry, but all printmakers experiment. The variations in the amount of reticulation in the ink of Blake’s prints indicate a lot of experimentation.

4. SOMETHING TO PRINT WITH

This is ink. Because watercolor will be applied to the print later, the PRINTING INK must be oil-based.

5. SOMETHING TO APPLY INK TO THE BLOCK WITH

No one knows for certain what Blake used. Ruthven Todd suggested that Blake’s relief was so shallow that he had to apply the ink to his plate by covering another plate with a thin coating of ink and pressing it onto the plate he wanted inked. John Wright assumed that Blake used some kind of roller. Robert Essick says Blake probably used an ink ball (of the sort that printers and engravers used frequently) skillfully enough to ink his relief plates. A BRAYER—simply a roller with a handle—is the usual modern inker; cheap ones are available in all art-supply stores. The object in inking is to spread a thin and even layer of ink over the surface, usually by rolling a small glob of ink as if it were dough on a very smooth surface—like a piece of glass from a picture frame—until the ink thinly covers the brayer; then roll the brayer over the block. Ink does not have to be applied with a special tool. Fingers can smear ink thinly over glass, too, or over a blank linoleum block (imitating Todd’s method, above).

6. SOMETHING TO PRINT ON

No one really knows quite how Blake got his text onto the plates for relief etching. When working as a commercial reproductive engraver, however, he used the methods common in his trade.

Linocutters don’t use acid, of course, but to carve away the unwanted linoleum they do use tools that are remarkably similar to burins and etching needles. They come in a box, usually one handle and three cutting blades. But engravers used a variety of tools, some improvised, and likewise, anything that will mark on linoleum is a potential tool.

7. SOMETHING TO APPLY PRESSURE WITH

One of the advantages of relief printing is that a high-pressure press isn’t necessary as it is for intaglio printing. Anything that can mash the paper onto the block will suffice: standing on it, rubbing it with a large spoon, rolling it with a dowel, typewriter platen, or rolling pin. It isn’t at all certain that Blake always used a press to print his relief etchings.
8. SOMETHING TO COLOR THE PRINT WITH

This is watercolor. Dimestore quality will do, several colors in one tin box with a brush.

Those are the techniques, and they are even simpler when you do them with your hands than when you listen to a description of them. But since the instructional aim is not at all to teach linocutting, and not even quite to show someone the steps in watercolored relief etching, but to show what a knowledge of Blake's printmaking medium can add to the experience and understanding of his illuminated books, there has to be something beyond a list of technical facts. No doubt many educational schemes would work. I use some version of the one that follows.

When someone--one of John Linnell's children, you or I, one of our students--colors a print that Blake designed and printed but never colored himself, what is the relation of the colorist to the designer and/or printer? The fundamental version of the question is probably the one that involves Blake most directly: when Blake colored one of his own prints, what was his relation to it? For instance, is the printed design a kind of script or score that the colorist performs, as Bob Dylan sings a song he has written? Might Blake the colorist--as he decides how to watercolor a plate of America forty years after he printed the first copy--be justly considered a member of his own audience or an interpreter of his own work? A strong line of Enlightenment thought proposes that Blake might be better at imagining the work he wanted to do than actually doing it, or better at doing certain things than at others. We might want to hear Beethoven "perform" one of his own piano concertos; but he could only "conceive" his string quartets, never "execute" them, if execution = performance, as Enlightenment theories usually seem to assume. One of the most striking effects of such theories is the sanction they give to specialized divisions of labor. Blake returns again to the issue as it arises in questions such as the following: What does "better" mean in the assertion that "I know someone who colors Blake's uncolored prints better than Blake himself?"
II. THE EDUCATIONAL RECIPE

1. COLORING AMERICA

Early in the semester, while in class we are discussing the earliest illuminated books, the class buys a cheap, unbound facsimile edition of *America* a Prophecy, which later they'll use for studying that work, but which for now they are going to use as a kind of coloring book, because it has high-contrast reproductions of the plates of *America*. The initial assignment is to watercolor five plates with very different designs and textures. The instructions are to use Blake's coloring as seen in the Trianon/Blake Trust facsimile of *America*—which they consult in the library—as a model for their own coloring in three plates, and to invent their own contrasting kinds of coloring in the other two plates. The point of watercoloring is to force attention to the details of imagery, handling, and texture in Blake's designs, each of which presents a different problem in coloring.

2 When students first hear of this odd assignment, their anxiety-level begins to rise: I'm no artist; I've never been good at technical things; Isn't this a course in literature anyway; Do you expect us to learn printmaking in two weeks; I can't afford all that expensive equipment. I try to allay their fears by the following tricky means: to show students how to do their linoleum block, I flash a sequence of slides using my son Obadiah (then 6) as the craftsman in charge. I make it clear that he is making the family's Christmas cards with a few tools and supplies bought with his allowance of (then) 60¢-per-week. Here he shows how to hold the linocutting tool, which closely resembles an engraver's burin in size and shape.

3 Obadiah shows weak-wristed beginners how to dig linoleum with two hands when one isn't sufficient.

4 A roller (brayer) helps to turn a blob of printer's ink into a thin, even layer. Brayers are a convenience. Blake himself almost certainly inked his plates with a "dauber" or tightly wrapped pad (see Essick's book in the bibliography below). Anyone interested in historical reconstruction can make a dauber, and not much skill is required to ink the high relief surfaces of a linoleum block with one. But the surfaces of Blake's own relief-etched copper plates were not very deeply etched, and considerably more skill and experience were required to ink them satisfactorily. Blake's skill at inking with a dauber distinguishes him from several experimenters who have tried to reconstruct his method of etching and printing in relief. As Essick points out, none of the engraving handbooks of Blake's time mentions the roller as a tool for inking. But in using printmaking as a classroom exercise, I have not stressed historical accuracy, as is evident in the rather careless substitution of linocutting for real relief etching. Stressing instead the technical variety and flexibility of printing processes seems to encourage students to work in what I regard as the proper spirit of adventure.
2. MAKING A PRELIMINARY DESIGN

Meanwhile in class we've been talking about the principles of design in the early illuminated books, the Songs, Thel, and Visions of the Daughters of Albion, and discussing Blake's development in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell of his discovery that drawing and printmaking can become basic controlling metaphors, and that one of the natural themes of art is artmaking. Students try to express their understanding of these matters into a preliminary design for a plate of their own. Since the aim of the project is imitative instead of creative, they can choose between copying a design of Blake's; assembling elements from Blake designs and poems into a new composite; and making a design that is distinctly Blakean but not Blake's. In any case it must combine pictures with some words, which of course is the basic design problem in Blake's illuminated books.

At the same time they write a one- or two-page description and rationale of their design.

3. MEETING TO TALK ABOUT THE DESIGN

I prefer to have individual conferences with students to talk about their designs and their plans for a print. I intervene in two cases: when the designs don't look like Blake's, and when the designer has forgotten that outline drawings are different from relief prints. This is an essential lesson. Blake said that all true visual art finally depends upon "drawing" and "outline," but the way he used the brawny surfaces of his relief-etched copperplates shows that he didn't mean that he couldn't tell the difference between outlines in pencil and whatever corresponds to them artistically in the sculptured

5 Obadiah's flumey Christmas-tree whale is sound in imagination and sound in technique. His design uses graphic relief in ways that are characteristic of the medium (and therefore of Blake's work in it): concentration on rugged sculptural surfaces and bold contrasts instead of "photographic" tonal refinements.

6 Similar surfaces appear in this rugged linoleum block carved by a student whose amalgamated inspirations were coming from Blake and Spenser.

7 By imitating plate 11 of Europe a student discovered that "relief" is a repertory of technical choices, not a monolithic system. The wings of the figure at the top are done with white-line work, and the angelic pair at the bottom are similarly floated out of the surrounding inked surfaces. Blake used lots of white-line work in Europe, much less in America. In looking for their own techniques, students quickly become aware of the variety of graphic possibilities available in relief. They become far more perceptive in examining the plates of the illuminated books because they understand in practical terms how certain graphic effects are achieved.
surfaces of the plate. The student already knows this from experience in coloring the plates of America and has only to be reminded that the differences between a pencil drawing and a print in relief reflect essential differences in tools and materials.

4. MAKING THE PLATE & THE PRINTS

The final requirement is to transfer the design to the plate, the linoleum block, to carve it in relief, print it, and watercolor it. I ask for a kind of portfolio consisting of several prints made from the block in earlier "states" that also show experimentation with inking, paper, surface textures, etc.; one finished print—watercolored—of the final state of the plate; and a written description, in the form of an essay or a diary, of the designing, printing, and coloring of the print.

Of course I vary the format with the nature of the class. If it's a class on the English Romantic poets, I abbreviate the scheme and make most of the work independent, outside of class. If it's a class on Blake alone, I like the atmosphere of a workshop: I do a demonstration of relief etching, that is, the real thing, and I encourage students to bring in their work at various stages of completion, and we all talk about the problems of designing, printing, and coloring. Sometimes I assign readings after the project—never before—on Blake's graphic processes (see the bibliography).

Students frequently make their experience with relief printing a basis on which to write longer critical or scholarly papers, proceeding with a good deal more confidence in their knowledge than one usually expects.

At any rate the results are always striking. While students are fearfully challenged at having to do something so utterly strange, the strangeness seems to be liberating, perhaps because they know I'm not interested in their linocutting skills, only in their dedicated efforts. I find very few shirkers and almost no serious complainers at this work. "This took me four hundred hours of work," they'll say, "and I have callouses and dirty fingernails." But they seem to know somehow that the work was worth it, and that what they are able to notice and know about Blake's illuminated books now is being noticed and known at a different level of competence. They see things they couldn't see before, and they have a new context for what they see. Most important, though, is their newfound willingness to grant the request that Blake makes at the beginning of Jerusalem: "dear Reader," he asked, "forgive what you do not approve, & love me for this energetic exertion of my talent." This is the educated benefit of the doubt that Wimsatt and Leavis found it impossible to give, but that all great art, Blake's more than most, requires.

8 Another student discovered some of the metaphorical uses of printing, in this case using the contrast between white-line and black-line relief as the basis for one of Blake's own favorite graphic metaphors, reversal—as in the mirror-writing of Milton, the devil's reflection in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, and the contrary states of the Songs.
In the printed and watercolored version of the plate shown in illustration 6, the artist has used a second plate, as Blake occasionally did, to solve a technical problem in combining text and design. In another copy the movable text might have been printed in the sky at the top of the plate. It might have been printed with another illustration altogether. Or the same illustration might have been printed with yet another text. Blake's own tendency to mine one poem for another or several others, and to use one basic design in several different contexts, called for comparable flexibilities.

APPENDIX 1. LIST OF ASSIGNMENTS

1. Watercolor 5 pls. from America
   a. 3 imitating Blake's handling & color scheme
   b. 2 using a contrasting scheme

2. Preliminary design
   Rationale for the design (1-2 pp.)

3. 1 linoleum block
   Several prints made from the block in earlier "states," and experimenting with paper, ink, etc.
   2 prints of final state, watercolored in contrasting ways

4. Description of the designing, printing, and coloring of the prints

APPENDIX 2. SHORT LIST OF TOOLS & MATERIALS

For initial watercolor assignment: reproduction of America published by Blake/An Illustrated Quarterly ($2.50, high contrast black & white reproduction on one side of each page, medium contrast on the other side)

1. Making preliminary design: pencil, ballpoint pen, paper

2. Linoleum block

3. Transferring design to block: ballpoint pen, tracing paper, carbon paper. If reducing or enlarging: pantograph or ruler for making proportion squares

4. Engraving design onto block: handle with tips (Speedball). Any number of tools can be improvised. Nails and knives are useful. An oven or hotplate for warming the block makes the linoleum softer and less brittle (oven: 300° F. with door propped slightly open)

5. Inking the block: printing ink, oil-base (Speedball); ink-ball (make it yourself) or brayer (roller: Speedball, or piece of dowel, or kitchen rolling pin); smooth surface (piece of glass from a picture frame, etc.)

6. Printing: paper (use what's at hand, or buy etching paper); source of pressure (brayer, rolling pin, back of large spoon, hand)

7. Watercoloring the print: set of child's watercolors and brush
APPENDIX 3. FURTHER READING

PRACTICE

The opening section reprints technical recipes contemporary with and relevant to Blake. Also reprints Todd (below), with slightly revised notes.

A full and sound account of Blake’s practices as a printmaker, complete with historical documentation and, when necessary, speculative reconstruction of techniques based on a rigorous combination of personal experiment, close examination of Blake’s prints, and historical context. The best single source of information. Illustrated.


A conventional account, not very well organized or presented. Illustrated.

A description of techniques Blake might have used to transfer his design and/or text onto copper for relief etching. Illustrated.

Uses electrotyes, made directly from some of Blake’s relief-etched plates before they were destroyed, as evidence for Blake’s practices. Illustrated.

Describes experiments carried out at the Slade School of Fine Art in transferring, etching, repainting, etc. Illustrated.

THEORY

On the relationship between artistic techniques and artistic principles. Illustrated.

On the uses of etching and engraving techniques as metaphors. Illustrated.

On the broader historical implications of Blake’s artistic theory and practice in the context of 18th and 19th century publishing.

A reading of the printing-house allegory in The Marriage.

The commentary demonstrates the uses to which metaphors from Blake’s graphic processes can be put.

Essick, Robert N. William Blake as a Printmaker. see above.
Essick places his discussions of Blake’s prints and printmaking in the context of Blake’s artistic theory, and the book includes a discussion of the imagery that Blake draws from his own technical practices. Illustrated.

Essick, Robert N. "Blake and the Traditions of Reproductive Engraving." Blake Studies, 5 (1972), 59-103.
On the metaphors suggested by systems of engraving. Illustrated.
A SUGGESTED REDATING OF A BLAKE LETTER TO THOMAS BUTTS

E. B. MURRAY

Blake's letter to Thomas Butts presently dated 10 January 1802 should probably be dated 10 January 1803. Arguments for the redating are almost entirely internal, though they may gain some external authority from the reminder that it is not at all uncommon for people less afflicted by Spiritual Enemies and more involved with workaday time than Blake was to omit changing their mental calendars the first week or so into the new year. The internal evidence is largely embodied in the correspondences italicized in the 10 January letter to Butts and the 30 January 1803 letter to James Blake from which I have excerpted the numbered passages placed in parallel columns listed below.

10 January
Your very kind & affectionate letter & the many kind things you have said in it; calld upon me for an immediate answer, but it found My Wife & Myself so III & My wife so very ill that till now I have not been able to do this duty. The Ague & Rheumatism have been almost her constant Enemies which she has combatted in vain ever since we have been here... (1556)

If we assume that the news of their health became a little confused in the retelling, we may suppose that the 10 January reference to Blake's illness and his wife's Ague and Rheumatism made its way from Butts to James and back to Blake again. And so his clarification, which has a demonstrable relevance if we can date the Butts letter 1803, not 1802. The verbal identity of the last clauses in both excerpts corresponds with their general content to further suggest contiguity in time and reference.

30 January
But I did not mention illness because I hoped to get better (for I was really very ill when I wrote to him the last time) & was not then persuaded as I am now that the air tho warm is unhealthy. (1568)

Since he had not mentioned the "unhealthiness" of Felpham to James in a letter which preceded a letter to Butts in which he had so noted it, we must assume that either a year and twenty days or merely twenty days had elapsed since his last to James before the 30 January letter. The fact that he writes Butts in the 22 November 1802 letter that James had told (likely "written") him that Butts was offended with him makes it very clear that he had had some corre-
sponse with James since January 1802 wherein he could have passed on his sense of the unhealthiness of the place. And from what he says about his correspondence with Butts "the last time " it is highly unlikely that the 22 November letter came between 10 January and 30 January as that last letter. The parenthetical emphasis on his illness, while it seems to qualify the relatively negligible "Cold" initially implied, therefore comes closer to the "so ill" emphasis of the 10 January letter.

10 January

I am now engaged in Engraving 6 small plates for a New Edition of Mr. Hayley's Triumphs of Temper. (1556)

Again content and verbal correspondences would seem to coalesce the references into the same time period. The "indefatigable" Blake could linger over a work in contemplation but, once under way, these six little plates could hardly have taken over a year in the execution, particularly since Hayley was obviously (so the 10 January letter) pressing him to "the meer drudgery of business" with "intimations that if I do not confine myself to this I shall not live" (1557). The volume referred to in both letters would then seem to be the twelfth edition of the Triumphs, published by the summer of 1803.

10 January

My unhappiness has arisen from a source which if explored too narrowly might hurt my pecuniary circumstances. As my dependence is on Engraving at present & particularly on the Engravings I have in hand for Mr H... You will understand by this the source of all my uneasiness. This from Johnson & Fuseli brought me down here & this from Mr. H will bring me back again... (1557)

We often wish that we could unite again in Society & hope that the time is not distant when we shall do so, being determined not to remain another winter here but to return to London.

I hear a voice you cannot hear that says I must not stay. But my letter to Mr. Butts appears to me not to be so explicit as that to you for I told you that I should come to London in the Spring... But since I wrote yours we had made the resolution of which we informed him viz to leave Felpham entirely. (1568)

I did not mention our Sickness to you & should not to Mr Butts but for a determination which we have lately made namely To leave This Place because I am now certain of what I have long doubted viz that H... will be no further my friend than he is compell'd by circumstances. ... he thinks to turn me into a Portrait Painter as he did Poor Romney... This is the uneasiness I spoke of to Mr Butts but I did not tell him so plain... I told Mr Butts that I did not wish to Explore too much the cause of our determination to leave Felpham because of pecuniary connexions between H & me.-- (1567)

From William Hayley's The Triumph of Temper, 1803. Reproduced by permission of The Huntington Library.
before "another winter" or "in the Spring," with specific reference to the 10 January letter unmistakable in the paraphrase to James of his unwillingness "to explore any more" for his reasons for leaving "because of pecuniary connexions between H & me." The use of "pecuniarly," "explore," "uneasiness," "determined" in 10 January, all echoed in 30 January, abet the general statement of both letters—Blake is coming back to London before another winter—to fairly well dispose of the 1802 date without other evidence. But even here we may note besides the relative lack of explicitness assigned to the Butts letter in the paraphrase to James seems justified by the cautious innuendo and suggested fears of 10 January, even to the Tickell distich with which the excerpt concludes. The reference to the more explicit letter to James suggests that it was written fairly recently, though before the less explicit letter that he parallels it with. The letter to James could well be the one referred to in the P.S. to the second letter of 22 November 1802. And, while of course possible, Blake's clear intention to leave Felpham the following winter would dangle like a broken purpose nowhere justified in subsequent correspondence if the present 1802 dating is retained.

Another parallel or two between these letters may be best considered along with the two letters to Butts of 22 November which now separate, in time and space, 10 January and 30 January. As already noted, the November letter begins with Blake's concern that Butts was offended with him. Or so James had "told" him. He then offers a survey of his two year study of chiaroscuro which eventually comes to relevant focus on the "Pictures" he has done for Butts (1560-61). He concludes the letter by writing that he is sending "Two Pictures" to Butts which he hopes will gain his employer's approval (1562). In the second letter, which seems to have been enclosed with the first, he again refers to these same "two little pictures" (1556). In the 10 January letter he provides a "P.S." in which he thanks Butts for his "Obliging proposal of Exhibiting my Two Pictures" (1559). He also promises to finish "the other," since he'd been provided—as he reminds Butts in the 22 November letter—with "three" canvasses. Or, rather, he is reminding Butts of the "other" canvas in the 10 January letter if, and only if, that letter can be dated 1803. But, unless we somehow suppose that the two pictures and a third canvas referred to in 22 November and the two pictures plus an "other" yet to be done mentioned in 10 January really refer to two different sets of two completed and one projected picture—unless we make that inference, we seem obliged to correct the date in lieu of straining coincidence to a breaking point.1

Furthermore, we should first note that in the second of the 22 November letters he directly asks Butts to tell him "in a Letter of forgiveness if you were offended & of accustomed friendship if you were not" (1563). And in light of that request, we should then consider whether the beginning of the 10 January letter, referring to Butts's "very kind & affectionate Letter," does not in fact refer to the response which the 22 November letter had solicited. Blake notes that he should have answered before 10 January, whatever kind letter Butts sent him either at some indefinite time before 10 January 1802 or between 22 November 1802 and 10 January 1803. If Butts had made a fairly prompt reply to Blake's clear request for one, we could suppose a time lapse of a month and a half a sufficient delay to call for the excuse of illness which in fact we do have in the 10 January letter. But, to move out of the polypus of what may seem a circular argument, we may again return to the substantive matter of the pictures. What pictures, if not the two enclosed in the 22 November letter, is Blake referring to in 10 January when he writes Butts that "Your approbation of my pictures is a Multitude to Me. . . ." (1556)?

The final significant bit of evidence from the 22 November letter which may be relevantly collated with both 10 January and 30 January appears in Blake's explanation to Butts of his long silence: "... I have been very unhappy & could not think of troubling you about it or any of my real friends. . . ." (1561-62). In the 10 January letter he is clearly responding to a concern for his happiness which could very well have been elicited from Butts by the 22 November confession: "But you have so generously and openly desired that I will divide my griefs with you that I cannot hide what it is now become my duty to explain—My unhappiness has arisen. . . . etc. (1557). In both the 10 January and 30 January letters he not only defines his unhappiness in comparable terms which suggest their proximity in time but reiterates more specifically his 22 November disinclination to burden his friends by "dividing" his griefs with them: "... I should not have troubled You with this account of my spiritual state unless it had been necessary in explaining the actual cause of my uneasiness into which you are so kind as to Enquire, for I never obtrude such things on others unless questioned. . . ." (10 January; 1558); "I never make myself nor my friends uneasy if I can help it" (30 January; 1567). Again one may note that the "question" which the 10 January letter required was in fact solicited by the 22 November letter.

While there may be other correspondences or incongruities to favor the case I am advancing, these seem sufficient to decide it.2 The digital strength of the "2" which Blake wrote cannot, I think, hold up the weight of the internal evidence arguing against its retention. I believe future editors should allow the change definitive standing, while future biographers may care to readjust their perspective on Blake's overt expressions of his dissatisfaction with Hayley and Felpham.

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1 The manuscript at Westminster Public Library establishes the fact that Blake dated his letter 1802. Unfortunately, the Chichester postmark was not stamped evenly or firmly enough for its date to be imprinted on the outside of the letter.

2 The page numbers following the excerpts refer to William Blake's 'Writings', ed. G. E. Bentley, Jr. (Oxford Univ. Press, 1978). I use the punctuation and capitalization of this text as well, omitting, however, the half brackets and italicized letters used to indicate editorial emendation. I retain the ms. semicolon before "call" in the first excerpt with certain misgivings about its authenticity. With the exception of the ambiguous and unrepresentative m.s. for the 18 Jan. 1803 letter to Octavia Humphry, the 250 pages (and thirty-seven years worth) of Blake letters record
only six other semicolons in extant mss. Two of these (22 Jun. 1804, 4 Aug. 1824) appear in quotations, another (14 Jul. 1826) in a formal receipt. The fact that the other three (27 Jul. 1804 [2], 31 Jan. 1826) appear in letters in which Blake complains of a "cold" is a curious coincidence, if not (alas) the kind of internal evidence one can adduce to bring the "illness" of 10 Jan. a year closer to the "cold" reference of 30 January than the received dating now allows. Conceivably the interruptive irrelevance of the 1826 and 10 Jan. semicolons could suggest that even the thought of a cold helped induce the misstrokes or splatters which other editors may care to read into these dotted commas. It is quite evident that semicolons simply did not occur to Blake in the ordinary course of his letter-writing career. And it may be worth noting that David Erdman (The Poetry and Prose of William Blake, New York, 1956, 687) chooses to read "it: calld" in his diplomatic rendering of 10 Jan. Geoffrey Keynes apparently supposes the dot above the comma utterly accidental, since he ignores it in providing what is perhaps the most acceptable of readings in a modern view: "it, calld" (The Complete Writings of William Blake, Oxford Univ. Press, 1972, p. 811).

He did, in fact, enclose a letter to James in 22 Nov. (1566). The 1 May imprint on the Triumphs plates comfortably allows the inference from a redated 10 Jan. letter that Blake was working on them through the winter and early spring of 1803. I am indebted to Robert Essick for conveying this information to me.

This third canvas might have been filled in, on Butts's reply to Blake's request for instructions, with the "Picture of the Riposo, which is nearly finished much to my satisfaction" by 25 Apr. 1803 (1571) and then sent to Butts with the letter of 6 Jul. In the 10 Jan. P.S. he is apparently working on "the other," having (if we can accept the 1803 date) been given the subject and implicit go-ahead he had asked for in 22 Nov. In his Aug. letter to Butts he apologizes for having omitted to thank Butts for "offering to Exhibit my 2 last Pictures in the Gallery in Berners Street" (1577). He then quotes the thank-you which he had written in a "rough sketch" of what might well have been the 6 Jul. letter. The quotation would have fit in well enough after the description of the "Riposo" at the start of that letter. It is clear from 22 Nov. (1563) that Blake distinguished between the three canvasses which he had brought with him to Felpham (for the two pictures completed and the one in prospect) and the "Drawings" which he is also doing for Butts. He so distinguishes the "Riposo" from the seven drawings he has "on the Stocks" for Butts as of 6 Jul. (1574) and which he sent to him 16 Aug. (1577). The likelihood is that the "Riposo" was the subject of the third canvas which Blake associated with the two pictures of his first thank-you to Butts in the 10 Jan. P.S. Whether Blake had forgotten his original thanks to Butts or reiterated it when the "Obliging proposal" had gained the concrete focus of a specific gallery is unclear but probably immaterial.

In his 16 Aug. 1803 letter Blake asks Butts about his eyes: "I never sit down to work but I think of you & feel anxious for the sight of that friend whose eyes have done me so much good . . . ." (1577). In 10 Jan. he expresses a comparable (and apparently initial) concern: "But what you tell me about your sight afflicted me not a little . . . ." (1556). While Butts's eye problem could have extended over twenty months, from Jan. 1802 until Aug. 1803, the chances are that it did not. By drawing these kindred expressions of concern a year closer, we would focus them on the less chronic and more remediable affliction which Blake seems to be referring to.
MINUTE
PARTICULARS

BLAKEWELL

G. E. Bentley, Jr.

In November 1977 Blackwell's Antiquarian Department (Ship Street, Oxford) had two works of minor Blake interest:

(1) A Copy of Hayley's Ballade (1805) bearing the familiar Blake plates but also containing a loosely inserted duplicate leaf of pages 109-10 in a variant setting. The variants are few and minor—"10" for "io," for example—but the existence of variants in the text has not hitherto been suspected. Perhaps there is an undetected re-issue of the work. Certainly the book survives in a large number of copies today.

(2) A loose etching (21.1 x 32.8 cm) representing, at the top, a massive blasted oak with three cows under it, signed "WB. del Nov 18. ch 1809." Beneath it is etched a poem:

The Oak in Penshurst Park

Under which Sir Philip Sydney is said to have composed his Arcadia.

Hail! reverend Oak, with giant arms outspread,
In hoary grandeur lift thy leafless head,
Still raise the glory of the neighbouring lands,
Nor dread the touch of sacrilegious hands:
For many a tow'ring elm, and stately oak
Shall bow submissive to the woodman's stroke,
Whilst thou shalt triumph midst surrounding fate
The last memorial of the good and great:
And still shall flourish through the lapse of years,
What Sydney's fame protects and Sydney's worth endear.

F. D. C.

The leaf is a mystery to me. For one thing, I do not know where it came from, beyond the fact that it was loosely inserted in a copy of Hayley's Romney (1809) (which does have a genuine and integral Blake plate dated 1809) and given me by Mr. Manners of Blackwell's. For another, though I have found a number of poems on the Penshurst Oak1 (and even a representation of it2), I know of none by F. D. C. or containing these lines. The lines ought to be by Francis Coventry (d. 1759), who did write a poem on Penshurst, but he did not have a middle initial beginning with D, and his Penshurst poem does not contain these lines. I suspect that it is by Frances Dorothy Cartwright (1780-1863), who signed the dedication to her Poema, Chiefly Devotional (1835) as "F. D. C."--but this, apparently her only volume of poetry, does not contain the relevant poem, though it has others of 1802-1835.

For another, though Blake lived in Sussex in 1800-1803, not so very far from Penshurst, Kent,3 and could have gone there, the design is not strikingly like his, and Professor Robert Essick thinks the signature and stipple work unlike Blake's. There are very few tree-scapes by William Blake, and no cow-scapes at all.4 A number of other artists and engravers with the same initials were working at this time,5 and one of these may have been responsible. Probably William Blake's proximity to Penshurst in 1800-1803, the identity of the initials on the engraving with his, the appropriate-ness of his profession, and the source of this copy of the print in a book with a Blake engraving of the same year are all just coincidences. It seems quite unlikely that the author of Songs of Innocence and of Experience had anything to do with the Penshurst Oak, stills (4 copies, if it would be agreeable to connect him thus with Sir Philip Sidney and with Percy Bysshe Shelley, to whose family the Penshurst property had passed by marriage.

1 Ben Jonson, "To Penshurst"; Edmund Waller, "At Penshurst" (addressed to Lady Dorothy Sidney, his Sachareusa); Francis Coventry, "Penshurst" (in A Collection of Poems in Six Volumes By Several Hands [ed. J. Dodson] (1782), IV, 55-56—it is also in editions of 1755 and 1763.

2 I have received generous advice concerning the poem, the engraving, Penshurst, and Sir Philip Sidney from Jean Bromley (University of Southampton), Dr. Felix Hull (Kent County Archivist), John Buxton (New College, Oxford), Viscount De L'Isle (Penshurst Place, Tonbridge, Kent), John Flower (The Wews, Penshurst), and Robert Essick (University of California, Riverside).

3 Sir Philip Sidney's Oak is reproduced in Jacob George Strutt's Silus Britannicus (1822-1825), Plate XXVIII, along with poems by Jonson, Waller, and Charlotte Arnett XLVI "Written at Penshurst in Autumn 1780" in her Elegiac Sonnets (1795). The tree was 25' 11" in girth on 27 September 1794 when Joseph Farington made a drawing of it (Farington, Diary, I [1798], 243) and still stands today.

4 There was a proposal in 1802 that Blake should engrave Mr. Spilsbury's "drawing of Mrs Poyntz's Price Bull" (Blake Records [1969], 100), but nothing came of it so far as is known today.

5 In the 1800s Blake was rescued from the prospect of "making a set of Marlond's pig and ploughboy subjects" by commissions from Linell (ibid., p. 274).
The Oak in Penshurst Park.
Under which Sir Philip Sydney is said to have composed his Arcadia.
Hail, reverend Oak, with giant arms outspread,
In hoary grandeur lift thy leafless head,
Still rise the glory of the neighbouring lands,
Nor dread the touch of sacrilegious hands.
For many a towering elm and stately oak
Shall bow submissive to the woodman's stroke,
Whilst thou shalt triumph, midst surrounding fate.
The last memorial of the good and great:
And still shall flourish through the lapse of years
What Sydney's fame protects and Sydney's worth endears.
F.D.C.
BLAKE IN NEW YORK

Skidmore and Union Colleges will co-host a conference, "With Corroding Fires: William Blake as Poet, Printmaker, and Painter," to be held 9 and 10 May 1980. The conference will emphasize Blake's great range of techniques, interests, and accomplishments as poet, printmaker, illustrator, book designer, and painter. The four major speakers will be Robert Gleckner, Jean Hagstrum, Karl Kroeber, and Robert Rosenblum. Their major talks will be followed by panel discussions conducted by students, faculty and visiting scholars. In addition there will be an ambitious slide presentation, a public program, "William Blake: Poet and Singer," which will include dance, speaking voice, soloist and choral interpretations of selections from the illuminated books, a panel discussion on the problems of "Teaching Art and Poetry and Blake," and a demonstration and workshops on printmaking given by Joseph Viscomi. An exhibition that will include a full representative selection of original prints, paintings and drawings will accompany the symposium.

BLAKE PURCHASE

The Tate Gallery has recently purchased Blake's late tempera painting on a panel of "Winter." This is one of the pair of pictures illustrating William Cowper's poem The Task that were painted for Cowper's cousin, the Rev. John Johnson, to be set each side of his fireplace. A third painting, a landscape of "Olney Bridge," ran across the top, but has been destroyed. These pictures were almost certainly painted in the early 1820s, following the rebuilding of Johnson's rectory at Yaxham, Norfolk, in 1820-21, and remained in the possession of Johnson's descendants until their recent sale, having been on loan to the Tate Gallery for the last few years. When sold at Sotheby's on 18 July 1979, "Winter" fetched £30,000 while the companion "Evening" fetched £21,000. Both were bought by Thos. Agnew & Sons, Ltd., the first for the Tate Gallery, the second for a private American collector.

MARTIN BUTLIN, KEEPER OF THE BRITISH COLLECTION, TATE GALLERY, LONDON.
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Blake's Ugolino and his sons in prison. Tempera.
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MLA ON BLAKE

Anyone wishing to participate in a tentative MLA Special Session (1980) on "Blake and the later Eighteenth Century" is invited to send a copy of the proposed contribution to Nelson Hilton, Dept. of English, Park Hall, University of Georgia, Athens, GA. 30602, no later than March 10. Topics of interest would include Blake's relation to the contemporary science, philosophy, and literature: that is, aspects of Blake as a poet of his time, a time which enacts (à la Foucault) the break with classical representation.
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The Echoing Green

Sun, &c., &c., &c.

And make laughing the

Woe, &c., &c., &c.

The old man:

Kings, &c., &c., &c.

Whose eye pants shall he once

He.

Old John, with white hair.

Dams, &c., &c., &c.

Among the old folks.