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By Joseph Viscomi

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Cover: Photo illustration from The Song of Los copy B, plate 8. Lessing J. Rosenwald Collection, Library of Congress.

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Blake's "Annus Mirabilis": The Productions of 1795

BY JOSEPH VISCOMI

Author's note: An online version of this article, with six more illustrations, all illustrations in color, and a slightly longer first section, is available on the journal's website at <http://www.blakequarterly.org>. Illustrations that appear only online are indicated in the print version by the online illustration number preceded by an "e" (e.g., illus. e4).

In 1795, Blake produces The Song of Los, The Book of Ahania, and The Book of Los, executes 12 large color-printed drawings, color prints a few etchings, reprints 8 copies of Songs of Innocence and of Experience, reprints most of his illuminated canon to date in a deluxe, large-paper set, and begins the 537 watercolor drawings of Night Thoughts. The first period of illuminated book production, 1789-95, culminates, new experiments in combining printmaking and painting are begun and perfected, and work as designer and painter begins to dominate Blake's energies and time for the next 10 years. In this essay, the second of a two-part study, I focus on the last of Blake's illuminated books from this period, The Song of Los, The Book of Los, and The Book of Ahania, trying to sequence them from a purely materialist perspective—by recreating the large copper sheets from which the individual plates were cut—to see how Blake's creative process, including changes of mind and false starts, unfolded through production and how these particular works and their techniques might relate to one another, to the color-printed drawings, and to the experiments in color printing that lie behind them both.

The Song of Los is generally thought to precede the two other books, which is to say, Blake is thought to have returned to America a Prophecy (1793) and Europe a Prophecy (1794) with "Africa" and "Asia," the two parts of The Song of Los, rather than continuing The First Book of Urizen (1794), because he began the "continental" books before the "Urizen" books.

I would like to thank Robert Essick for reading an early draft of this essay and Todd Stabile, multimedia consultant, formerly of the Center for Instructional Technology, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, for his assistance in digitally recreating Blake's copper sheets and virtual designs.

1. Part 1, "Blake's Virtual Designs and Reconstruction of The Song of Los," uses digital imaging to recreate Blake's original designs for the text plates of The Song of Los and to realize the virtual designs in this and a few other illuminated books. Blake's virtual designs are designs we create mentally by recombining an illuminated book's related images.

2. Europe and Urizen are both dated 1794 by Blake, but the order in which he produced them is not immediately clear. Kernies sequences the books America, Urizen, Europe, The Song of Los, The Book of Ahania, and The Book of Los (222-48). By placing Urizen between America and Europe, he implies that the continental cycle was Blake's most recent project when working on The Song of Los and that he postponed work on the subsequent books of Urizen. Erdman and other editors are less clear about the sequence of the 1794 and 1795 books; they group the related books together, even though that means placing Urizen after The Song of Los so it can be read with The Book of Ahania and The Book of Los and The Song of Los can be read with America and Europe. In the Blake Archive, we place Europe before Urizen, assuming a chronological contiguity with America because the works are physically, visually, and thematically alike, but also because the Urizen plates were executed in terms of color printing, the printing technique Blake had begun using in 1794, and the Europe plates were not (see Viscomi, Blake and the Idea of the Book, chapter 5, and "Evolution" 306-07).


3. (below) *The Song of Los*, virtual design of plates 1 and 8, based on copy E. These items are reproduced by permission of the Huntington Library, San Marino, California.
cause they are executed on the front and back of the same copper plate. This may not be apparent comparing just the height and width of the plates, but four measurements reveal their shared shape. The copy B impression of plate 1 is 23.6 cm. left side, 23.6 cm. right, 17.8 cm. top, and 17.5 cm. bottom. Plate 8 has the same measurements, indicating that it is the verso of plate 1 (illus. e4).

Blake typically etched both sides of relief-etched plates: Experience plates are on the versos of Innocence, Europe on America, Urizen on Marriage. Thus, discovering that plates 1 and 8 were etched recto/verso was not surprising. Finding plates 2 (illus. 5) and 5 (illus. 6), the other two full-page illustrations, apparently not recto/verso, however, was surprising. They have the same shape and width, but plate 5 is 9 mm. shorter. The discrepancy is an illusion, however, caused by the top of plate 5's having been masked 9 mm. upon printing. The plates are recto/verso, with the top of plate 5 being the bottom of plate 2. Together, this recto/verso pair form a virtual design in which Urizen is imprisoned behind the leaves of the lilies holding Titania and Oberon (illus. 8), calling to mind the imprisonment of another eternal in Urizen plate 4 (illus. 9) and the body be-

4. The masking is very difficult to detect, but the plate's embossment is visible in the verso of the copy C impression, which reveals the plate's true size as well as a 4-5 mm. dent in the plate's edge (illus. c7), which would have been unsightly and distracting had it been printed as part of the heavily color-printed plate 5. The bottom of plate 2, however, was not color printed and thus could be printed without showing the dent. This is not the first time Blake masked top or bottom of a design. He had masked the bottom of America plate 4 in its first printings of 1793 so that the last five lines did not print (Bentley, Blake Books 87).


8. (facing page, bottom right) *The Song of Los*, virtual design of plates 2 and 5, based on copy A. © Copyright the Trustees of the British Museum.


10. (this page, bottom) Small *Pity*. © Copyright the Trustees of the British Museum.


15. (below) The Song of Los, digitally recreated design for plates 3-4, based on copy E. These items are reproduced by permission of the Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

Erdman sees a virtual design formed of plates 6 (illus. 11) and 7 (illus. 12). He notes that plate 7 "seems to continue the forest of plate 6; the boughs that crowd the left margin—an unusual effect—can be the ends of those bent down in the right margin of 6" (Illustrated Blake 180). Envisioning plate 7 to the right side of plate 6 actually corresponds to Blake's design as originally executed. These two plates, which form the poem or section entitled "Asia," are actually the left and right sides of one horizontal design, as are plates 3 (illus. 13) and 4 (illus. 14), which form the poem or section entitled “Africa.” The “Africa” design is 21.5 cm. left, 21.5 cm. right, 27.3 cm. top, 27.2 cm. bottom; the “Asia” design is 22.2 cm. left, 22.2 cm. right, 27.2 cm. top, 27.4 cm. bottom. Instead of being recto/verso, as one would expect, the text plates are actually only half their original designs; as conceived and etched, “Africa” and “Asia” are autonomous designs clearly related to one another visually but not materially. I discovered these interesting material facts in 1991 and published them two years later.
16. (above) The Song of Los, digitally recreated design for plates 6-7, based on copy E. These items are reproduced by permission of the Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

17. (facing page) The Song of Los, digitally recreated design for plates 3-4 and 6-7 as pages stitched together to form a diptych, based on copy E. These items are reproduced by permission of the Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

(Blake and the Idea of the Book 287), and Detlef Dörnberger, in his 1995 edition of the poem, was the first to arrange black and white photographs of the conjunct pages to give an idea of what the original relief-etched plates looked like (320n29, 345-46). The digital recreations here (illus. 15, 16), however, are the first reproductions to join the plates seamlessly and present them color printed in their entirety.

Blake initially divided his text into two columns, but very unlike the columns in Urizen, these being very loosely placed across a horizontal—or “landscape”—format, a format used for paintings and prints but not the text of books. By masking one side of the design, probably with a sheet of paper, he was able to print each text column separately. Hence, he transformed a coherent design 27.2 cm. wide into two seemingly independent designs/pages approximately 13.6 cm. wide, which is nearly 4 cm. narrower than the four illustration pages. He produced The Song of Los using just four plates, but two are portrait format and executed recto/verso and two are landscape format and apparently executed using one side only. Why create pages in oblong folio format, with double columns, so visually different from the pages of America and Europe? Why print the columns of text separately after composing and etching them as part of the same design?

5. Why not etch both sides of plates 3-4 and 6-7, or cut the plates in half instead of masking? Putting the two text plates on separate plates freed the verso for Pity-size color prints. Masking instead of cutting the plates kept the verso intact should Blake ever want to use them for designs.
Given the two distinct sets of plates, The Song of Los appears to have emerged from two distinct stages of production, with the text plates coming first. This sequence seems the most likely, because if Blake had the two portrait plates on hand, intending to use them for the designs of his new book, then he would have acquired plates for texts to match. If, along with the portrait plates, he also had the 27.2 cm. plates on hand, then he probably would have cut them approximately 17.5 cm. wide and etched both sides to create four text plates to match the width of his illustrations, thereby producing a book of eight pages much nearer in size and shape to America and Europe. It seems reasonable to assume, then, that the two portrait plates were not yet on hand, that the two 27.2 cm. wide plates were acquired first, and that the text plates preceded the illustrations. (As we shall see, the shared width of these plates is not a coincidence; at least four other plates from 1795 share the exact measurement of 27.2 cm., including the sheets that yielded the plates for The Book of Los and The Book of Ahania.)

Moreover, from this perspective, Blake appears to have set out to fuse poetry, painting, and printmaking in ways even more radical than the illuminated books. “Africa” and “Asia,” as originally executed, function autonomously as painted poems or written paintings, with text superimposed on a landscape design. Each design could have been framed, viewed, and read like a separate color print or painting. They do not, however, function as book pages.

Blake created relief etching as a way to work as a printmaker with the tools of the poet and painter, that is to say, with pens, brushes, liquid ink, and colors, rather than the burins and needles conventionally required of metal. Blake worked on rather than in the metal surface, as though it were paper, with tools that enabled him to work outside the conventions and codes of printmaking and indulge his love of drawing and writing. His new medium encouraged the autographic gesture, the calligraphic hand of the poet with the line and brushwork of the painter. As he says in his prospectus (1793), his is a “method of Printing which combines the Painter and the Poet,” but he notes also that it is a “method of Printing both Letter-press and Engraving” (Erdman, Complete Poetry 692), by which he means printing text and illustration in the service of book production. Between 1789 and 1794, Blake printed illuminated plates as book pages; in his later style, beginning with the color-printed designs of 1794, he printed the plates more like miniature paintings. But whether he printed them as poems or elaborately colored them as miniatures, Blake designed illuminated plates with reference to the codex form and in portrait format.

Blake did not, however, design “Africa” and “Asia” as book pages; he transformed them into book pages through a trick of printing. Horizontal formats were commonly used for print series, particularly aquatints of picturesque views, but also for works like George Cumberland’s Thoughts on Outline, eight of whose illustrations Blake engraved in late 1795 and 1796. But, as mentioned, horizontal formats were not used for texts of books, nor does any book in oblong folio before 1795 with pages in double columns come readily to mind. Even stitched together to form a long open diptych (illus. 17), the two designs seem less like facing pages in a book than a long panel, pair of broadsides, or a horizontal scroll. Perhaps Blake used a non-Western book format to evoke Africa and Asia. For example, the Chinese horizontal scroll, usually on silk or paper, fuses calligraphy and painted image. It reads right to left, starting with the title panel, which names the work, and has a colophon panel, at the end of the scroll or juxtaposed over the image, which contains the poem or notes pertaining to the work. Blake titles his poems “Africa” and “Asia” and thus does not need a title page, which is a book convention. If he meant the poems to be read as parts of one work entitled “The Song of Los,” then that too is effected without a title page. “Africa” begins with “I will sing you a song of Los, the Eternal...
Prophet," and "Asia" ends with "The Song of Los is Ended. / Urizen Wept." Moreover, if treating the poems as autonomous designs or parts of the same panel or scroll, Blake could have signed and dated the work in pen and ink on its surface as he did paintings and color-printed drawings (usually with "WB inv." in monogram, with a date; illus. e18). Thus, these works did not need a title page for date and author.

Perhaps the two designs were meant to be joined and printed on one sheet to form a panorama, a format the landscape painters Paul Sandby and Francis Towne were experimenting with in the 1780s and 1790s, or, as noted, to suggest an ancient scroll, the predecessor of the printed codex, and thus a fitting medium for the Eternal Prophet. Indeed, "in the context of Romantic textual ideology," according to Mitchell, "the scroll is the emblem of ancient revealed wisdom, imagination, and the cultural economy of hand-crafted, individually expressive artifacts" (65). For Blake, "the scroll represents writing as prophecy: it is associated with youthful figures of energy, imagination, and rebellion" (65). Printed together on one sheet of paper the designs form a long, narrow, perpetually open composition approximately 22.5 x 54.5 cm., which is half the size of most of the color-printed drawings; if given a centimeter between and around the images (illus. 19), the resulting two-part panel would be approximately half the size of Newton (46 x 60 cm.) or Good and Evil Angels (44.5 x 59.4 cm.), among the largest of the color-printed drawings. As originally designed, however, the two poems continuing Blake's continental myth do not resemble the previous installments in size, shape, number, or structure. America with 18 plates and Europe with 17 plates are matched in size, shape, and structure: both begin with frontispiece, title page, two-page preludium (Europe's plate 3 is a late addition, though one that gave Europe 18 pages), a heading of "A Prophecy," and "finis" as the last word. The titles of The Song of Los sections clearly connect the poems/panels to the earlier works, but the horizontal format marks a break with them as well. The full visual extent of that break was not realized; instead, Blake executed four illustration pages exactly the size of America and Europe and printed each of the four text columns separately. The resulting eight pages of The Song of Los are frontispiece, title page, "Africa," full-page design, "Asia," end-piece; headings of "A Prophecy" or endings of "finis" are not present. As reconstructed, The Song of Los is unevenly shaped and oddly structured, being two poems in one book to form a quartet of continental works within a trilogy of artifacts.

Proofs of the text plates in their original condition, or "first state," are not extant, which may suggest that Blake abandoned his experiment in rethinking text and image soon after completing the text plates. This, however, cannot be proven, since other plates are also without proofs. But it does seem reasonable to suggest that Blake reconstructed the text plates to salvage an experiment about which he had changed his mind. We can sequence and speculate upon the stages in the production of The Song of Los, but can we sequence those stages within the year's worth of productions and discover the relation of the books to one another and to the color-printed drawings? These are the main questions I try to answer in the following five sections.

II. The Large Color Prints

The large color prints are, "as a group, the first really mature individual works in the visual arts that Blake created. Moreover they are, as a group, probably the most accomplished,
forceful, and effective of Blake's works in the visual arts" (Butlin, "Physicality" 2). Technically, they are monotypes, which in effect printed paintings. Frederick Tatham described the process to Gilchrist accurately enough, stating that when Blake wanted to make his prints in oil... [he] took a common thick millboard, and drew in some strong ink or colour his design upon it strong and thick. He then painted upon that in such oil colours and in such a state of fusion that they would blur well. He painted roughly and quickly, so that no colour would have time to dry. He then took a print of that on paper, and this impression he coloured up in water-colours, re-painting his outline on the millboard when he wanted to take another print. This plan he had recourse to, because he could vary slightly each impression; and each having a sort of accidental look, he could branch out so as to make each one different. The accidental look they had was very enticing. (Gilchrist 1: 376)

To W. M. Rossetti, Tatham added that the printing was done in a loose press from an outline sketched on paste-board; the oil colour was blotted on, which gave the sort of impression you will get by taking the impression of anything wet. There was a look of accident about this mode which he afterwards availed of, and tinted so as to bring out and favour what was there rather blurred. (Rossetti 16-17)

Tatham is mistaken about the medium, which was gum and glue-based colors and not oil-based inks or colors, as are commonly used today for monotypes, and Blake would not have had to work too quickly or worry too much if his colors dried to the touch on the support, because he almost certainly printed on dampened paper, whose moisture would have reconstituted the colors. The colors, though, he applied "strong and thick" to create a unique spongy opaque paint film, but also to enable a second and sometimes a third impression to be pulled from the millboard without having to replenish the colors. Generally speaking, depending on the paper's dampness and thickness and the amount of printing pressure, the colors are strongest in first impressions and less intense in subsequent pulls. The presence of lighter outline and colors in second impressions is proof that outline and colors were both printed together for the first impressions as well, even for the one color-printed drawing with a relief-etched outline, as will be demonstrated in illustrations below. Tatham is correct, then, to assume that Blake "drew ... his design ... [and] then painted upon that ... [and] then took a print of that on paper," as opposed to printing outline ("design") and colors separately. He is also correct that Blake "tinted" the impressions "to bring out and favour what was there rather blurred." As with his color-printed illuminated book impressions, Blake finished the large color-printed drawings in watercolors and pen and ink, clarifying forms in the blots and blurs. Translucent and transparent washes over mottled colors could also transform printed colors, making more colors appear to have been printed than actually were. Given that the method is primarily painting on a flat support and pressing that painting into paper, differences among impressions were inevitable if not also intentional, hence the oxymoronic term of monoprint, a print that is unique rather than exactly repeatable.

To use millboard to print colors requires at least minimal sealing of its porous surface. Blake could have done this with a coating of glue size or gesso, which is chalk or whiting mixed with size and painted over panels or canvas to produce a very white ground. Smith, Tatham, and Linnell mention Blake's using this mixture to prepare his tempera paintings. According to Smith, "his ground was a mixture of whiting and carpenter's glue, which he passed over several times in thin coatings" (Bentley, Blake Records 622). In his manuscript on the life of Blake, Tatham says "3 or 4 layers of whitening & 7. To print outline and colors separately calls for printing the plate twice. For Blake, this would have required printing the outline onto a sheet of paper, somehow fastening the paper in place on the press bed, marking the position of the plate, removing the plate to apply its colors, returning the plate exactly to its position (a hair-width variance at top or sides will reveal itself), and dropping the paper over the plate exactly where it was. Because the shape of the dampened paper is slightly altered by its first pass through the press, perfect (i.e., undetectable) registration is near impossible under the best of conditions. Evidence of a plate's having been printed twice by hand is nearly always visible if you know where to look; the absence of such evidence signifies single-pull printing and is not evidence of Blake's genius for hiding his hand in color printing. If outline and colors of lighter second impressions were printed separately, then both first and second impressions underwent a procedure that doubled the likelihood of misregistration. The first impression, instead of being fastened to the press, is removed so a second impression can be printed, thus the sheet of paper as well as the plate with colors must be aligned exactly, top and sides, to their marked positions, greatly increasing the chances of misalignment. No one explicitly argues for this mechanical and labor-intensive procedure for second impressions, which is wise, since no second impression among the large color-printed drawings or the Large and Small Book of Designs (see section V of this essay) shows any misalignment of color and outline. Yet such a procedure is implied because it is the inevitable and logical result of printing outline and colors separately. Hence, the premise of two pulls collapses when tested this far in practice, which in turn supports the one-pull hypothesis for both second and first impressions. For the fullest presentation of the hypothesis that Blake color printed his outline (which includes text when it is part of the relief-line system) and colors (which could be printed from relief lines and/or shallows) separately, registering the second pull on top of the first exactly, consistently, and without traces of this production method, see Phillips' William Blake and "Correction" and Butlin's "War." For a refutation, see Essick and Viscomi's "Inquiry" and "Blake's Method."
20. Paint printed from a gessoed millboard, detail.

21. The Night of Enitharmom’s Joy, detail. This item is reproduced by permission of the Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

carpenters Glue” were used (Bentley, Blake Records 671). Lin nell told Gilchrist that it was a “plaster ground (literally glue and whiting); but he always called it either fresco, gesso, or plaster. And he certainly laid this ground on too much like plaster on a wall” (1: 368). One can sand gesso smooth or leave the striations created by brushing it on for a rougher feel for brushes. Colors printed from such a textured ground will replicate that texture if they are thin or pressed hard enough, or hide it if they are thick or opaque enough. The sample of three color strips (illus. 20) demonstrates this: at the top of the image, the first and second strips (red and yellow ochre) reveal the same striations, indicating that this texture is from the millboard and not the paint layers; the opacity of the third strip (green) hides most of that texture. At the bottom of the strips, the gesso was applied with a stump brush rather than brushed on, and its textures are also revealed in the printed colors.

The striations in the surfaces of The Night of Enitharmom’s Joy (illus. 21) and Christ Appearing to the Apostles (illus. 22) suggest that Blake painted his large color-printed drawings on gessoed grounds. Butlin notices “a striated” effect in Pity, as well as in impressions of Newton and Nebuchadnezzar (cat. 311, 307, 302), but believes it may have been “produced by only partial adherence” of paint to paper “as if the paper were slightly oily” (“Physicality” 17). The striations, though, appear not to have been created by the paint layer, but by the textured surface of the millboard, because the same striated patterns are visible across different printed colors, as is clear
in the Metropolitan Museum's copy of *Pity* (illus. 23). Gesso is used in fresco painting, and if Blake "always called" his "plaster ground" "fresco, gesso, or plaster," as Linnell states, then Blake's writing "Fresco" on five of his large color prints in an "Indian-type ink" (McManus and Townsend 82) is fitting.

But whether he used glue size or gesso, or thought of the millboard surface as canvas or panel or plaster wall, he needed an outline to know what to paint. Chalk or charcoal serves this purpose in oil painting, but lines made with either medium could be ruined in color printing and thus make returning to the design years later (as we know Blake did, around 1805) impossible (Butlin, "Newly Discovered Watermark" 101). He could have perhaps relied on the thin dried colors on the millboard, but it is more likely that he had an impervious outline to guide his hand. Some X-radiographs reveal traces of a lead-based paint, which may have been used for outlining, while others show no traces of lead, supporting the idea that the outline was executed in an ordinary water-based "Indian ink," which is lead-free and thus not detectable (McManus and Townsend 87). Indeed, the "Indian ink" used to sign color prints works for the purpose, because when dry it is not disturbed by the wet black paint and colors laid over it or by printing (Essick and Viscomi, "Blake's Method" 62). With a fixed outline, Blake could, as Tatham says, return to the design "when he wanted to take another print," presumably years later, by "re-painting his outline on the millboard," painting in the forms, and printing "that on paper."

What Tatham describes is planographic printing, that is, printing outline and colors not only together but also from the same flat surface, with outlines neither raised—as in woodcuts or relief etching—nor incised—as in etchings and engravings. Blake had tried his hand at planographic printing before 1795, possibly as early as 1789, in a print entitled *Charity*. Identified as a "planographic transfer print" (Essick, *Separate Plates* 10), the image was first painted on a sheet of paper or millboard and transferred to the paper while the ink was wet. Counterproofing (placing face down) newly printed impressions—regardless of matrix—works the same way, wet ink transferred from a flat surface to paper, reproducing all marks and forms, albeit in reverse. Blake did not, however,
systematically experiment with printing *painted images* until he color printed the etching *Albion rose*, which, as I argue below, was in 1795 and not 1794, as is supposed (Butlin, "Physic­ality" 3; Bindman 476), and which was executed with small *Pity* (illus. 10), the trial proof for the large color print. Until then, Blake had color printed only illuminated books with relief-etched plates. He inked outlines with dabbers and on and in small areas added colors, probably with stump brushes (brushes with the tips cut off) or *poupées* (tightly rolled felt), to small, well-defined forms. This is, as I have demonstrated elsewhere, a variation on *à la poupee* printing, in which an intaglio plate is inked in numerous colors (Blake and the Idea of the Book, chapter 13). It differs from conventional color printing, however, in that Blake put colors in spaces meant to be white and negative spaces defining forms, whereas in conventional color printing colors are applied to the lines of the design itself and not surfaces or white spaces. Adding colors to shallows and printing them with inked outline is radical, but, in terms of performance, it is still more printing than painting. The result is indeed a monotype, in that the prints are never exactly repeatable, but Blake is still thinking—given the medium, size, and tools—more like a printmaker coloring plates than a painter working broadly with brushes on a large, flat surface, blocking out forms by colors as well as line.

At least one of the 12 large color-printed drawings, however, was not printed planographically. *God Judging Adam* (illus. 24) has traces of an embossed outline, indicating that the support was metal, probably copper, and that the outline was etched in low relief; it also has a platemaker’s mark (illus. e25), indicating that it was printed from the sheet’s verso. For the only color-printed drawing known for sure to have been relief etched to be on a sheet’s verso suggests that Blake was probably unsure of himself, continuing the experiments started with the small trial proof for *Pity*, which was also etched in low relief (see below), and intending to preserve the recto, the side normally used for engravings and etchings, should the experiment not work out.

God Judging Adam is 43.2 x 53.5 cm. Because it is the only impression certainly to have come from a metal plate—and metal is much more expensive than millboard—Essick believes it was most likely the first of the large color-printed drawings executed ("Supplement" 139). This is probably so, as will be shown below, but its place in the sequence is suggested by its technical connections to earlier experiments in color printing and not by its support, for two other designs may also have been printed from metal. Though printed planographically, Satan Exulting over Eve, at 43.2 x 53.4 cm., and Elohim Creating Adam, at 43.1 x 53.6 cm., are the same size as God Judging Adam, raising the possibilities that one of these designs is on its recto and the other on a copper sheet acquired at the same time. If either Satan or Elohim was printed from a copper matrix, then Blake not only used metal before millboard, but he also printed planographically from metal before millboard.

The detail of the horses' heads in the first impression of God Judging Adam (illus. 26) reveals clearly that Blake applied a black paint to the low relief outline and shallows simultaneously and then added a brownish red to the shallows forming the neck and shoulder and a bright red to the manes. These steps in the painting process are even clearer in the second impression (illus. 27), which is, as noted, proof that both outline and colors were printed simultaneously here as well as in the first impression (see note 7). He probably applied the black with a small dabber, as in the illuminated plates, touching down in the shallows but not depositing color along the base of the relief lines, which produces a thin unpainted line on both sides of the outline. A yellow wash applied over the colors on the second impression is very bright in this line because it adheres to the untouched white of the paper. This halo-like line is evidence of a relief outline as well as of outline and colors' having been printed together, as is demonstrated by an impression printed in one pull from a design etched in low relief, inked with a dabber in black, and painted in brownish red (illus. 28a). Had outline and colors been printed separately, the fine white line could not parallel the outline exactly, even with perfect registration, because the paper's shape and dampness are slightly altered by its being pulled through the press, which is particularly noticeable in large sheets. Even when paint is deposited with a brush along the base of a relief line, paper is unlikely to pick the color up as it bends over the relief line onto the shallow, unless the paint is very thick. On plate 3 of The Song of Los copy C, for example, Blake most likely used a brush to apply color to the tendrils dividing the verses, depositing paint on both sides of the relief line (illus. 28b), which, when printed, produced the telltale white lines and two tendril-like lines that printed from the shallows. Had Blake deposited color on one side of the outline only, the ten-

11. Today, an 18 x 24 in. sheet of copper (16 gauge) for etching costs almost $100; millboard nearly twice that size is less than $5.
12. These measurements are from Butlin's catalogue raisonné; I did not have the opportunity to measure each side of the impressions, which I assume would vary slightly.
28a. Design etched in low relief, inked with dabber in black and gone over in brownish-red color, printed in one pull producing thin white line at base of relief lines, detail.


dril-like line would appear as the result of a misregistered second pull, an easy misreading of the material evidence.

As noted, Blake did not need or intend to print outlines separately, not in illuminated books or color-printed drawings. In the latter, he only needed fixed guidelines for painting and for ensuring that the design, however it was colored in and/or finished, was repeatable. But when and how did Blake realize that if he "drew...his design...[and] then painted upon that" he could take "a print of that on paper," that outline and colors could be on the same surface and he could paint over the outline with a brush rather than use a dabber? When did he realize that he was no longer painting a print but printing a painting? To answer these questions requires knowing where God Judging Adam fits into this evolution and how it connects to Albion rose and the small trial proof of Pity, which have a heretofore unknown connection to Blake's intaglio books of 1795.

III. The Book of Los, The Book of Ahania

Three color-printed drawings, God, Satan, and Elohim, possibly all from metal and the first executed, are approximately 43.2 x 53.5 cm. This is a large but apparently not uncommon sheet size. Blake's engraving of Beggar's Opera Act III (1788) is 40.1 x 54.2 cm.; Job and Ezekiel engravings of 1793 and 1794 are 46 x 54 cm. and 46.4 x 54 cm. respectively; the plates for Stedman's Narrative, 16 executed by Blake between 1792-94, average 27 x 20 cm., which suggests that they were quarters of a 40 x 54 cm. sheet of copper. The larger widths, up to 13. Eleven of the 16 plates are between 27.2 and 27.5 cm. in height, 3 are between 26.5 and 26.9 cm., and 2 are between 25.7 and 26.4 cm. Widths range only between 19.6 and 20.5 cm. I am indebted to Robert Essick for measuring his uncut copy of Blake's engravings for Stedman. In most copies, the prints were trimmed to the design and thus shorn of their platemarks. If the Stedman plates, which were commissioned by the publisher Joseph Johnson, were quarters, then the platemaker from whom Blake bought the plates was most likely responsible for quartering the sheets, presumably according to either Johnson's or Blake's instructions, and may also have been responsible for preparing them for intaglio etching by beveling the sides and rounding the corners. According to Mei-Ying Sung, most of the Book of Job plates were cut by the platemaker, but crossing marks on the versos make it possible to reassemble them into their original sheets ("Technical and Material Studies of William Blake's Engraved Illustrations of the Book of Job [1826]," Nottingham Trent
29. *The Song of Los* plates 3-4 and 6-7 as half sheet, based on copy E. These items are reproduced by permission of the Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

60 cm. for *Newton, Lamech, House of Death, and Nebuchadnezzar*, are presumably from millboards and likely come later in the series. Recall that the two *The Song of Los* text plates share the same width, 27.2 cm., though they vary in height by about 8 mm. If joined at their shared measurement of 27.2 cm., then they formed a sheet of copper approximately 43.5 x 27.2 cm. (illus. 29), which is half the size of these large metal sheets. The full sheet would have been 43.5 x 54.4 cm. That two plates are 27.2 cm. wide is unlikely to be a coincidence. The shared measurement strongly suggests that the plates are quarters of a sheet the size of those used for the first color-printed drawings. But if so, what were the other two quarters? I initially suspected the quarters were the sheets that yielded the plates for *The Book of Los* and *The Book of Ahania*, not because they are also 1795 productions, but because both sheets

University PhD, 2005, appendix 1). In some cases, in other words, Blake’s plates can be reconstructed into their original sheets whether Blake cut the sheets or had them cut for him.
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30. (facing page, top) The Book of Los plates 2, 3, 4, and 5 as quarters of a copper sheet, based on copy A. © Copyright the Trustees of the British Museum.


are 27.2 cm. wide. The former sheet was 19.85 cm. left, 19.60 cm. right, 27.2 cm. top, 27.25 cm. bottom; it yielded plates 3-2/4-5 (illus. 30), with plate 1 etched on the verso of plate 4. The latter sheet was 19.65 cm. left, 19.75 cm. right, 27.2 cm. top, 27.25 cm. bottom; it yielded plates 4-3/6-5 (illus. 31), with plates 1 and 2 on the versos of plates 6 and 3 respectively.

These plate arrangements are not from Blake and the Idea of the Book, where I used just two measurements per plate and thought the sheet was larger and cut into sixths rather than quarters (414n26); they are from research done soon afterwards for David Worrall's The Urizen Books. I used four measurements per plate and tracings of their shapes to reconstruct the sheets, the technique I had used to reconstruct the sheets that yielded the 27 plates of The Marriage of Heaven and Hell. Worrall agreed with The Book of Ahania arrangement (191) but not with The Book of Los arrangement (223n13), which is understandable since measurements, even with tracings, can support different results. With digital imaging, however, and the expert assistance of Todd Stabey, media consultant for my university, I was able to verify my earlier findings and to raise the bar for proof. Though it was no easy task, we were able to put the pieces back together. We verified the recto/verso plates by superimposing them, as with The Book of Ahania plates 3 and 2 (illus. e3), to reveal their matched shapes. We demonstrated, by revolving the plates, how their edges fit together, as evinced by the inside edges of The Book of Los plates 3 and 4 (illus. 33) paralleling one another exactly, one curving with the other.

With four plates 27.2 cm. in width (two for The Song of Los, one each for The Book of Los and The Book of Ahania), it seemed reasonable to assume that they were quarters of a sheet the size of—and perhaps acquired at the same time as—those used for the first color-printed drawings. The problem here, though, was an approximately 8 mm. difference in the heights of The Song of Los plates. If the measurements were correct, then one or both did not fit into the larger sheet. Moreover, the small, unfinished color print of Pity (illus. 10), recorded as 19.7 x 27.5 cm. (Butlin, cat. 313), was the same height as The Book of Ahania sheet, though 2 or 3 mm. wider, which I suspected was mistaken. The similarity of its size to the size of The Book of Ahania made small Pity seem likely to have been one of the quarters or, possibly, a quarter that was cut up to provide the plates for The Book of Ahania. Superimposing small Pity over The Book of Ahania plates revealed no convincing traces of small Pity. The digital reconstruction was beginning to reveal what combination of quarters was likely and unlikely to have come from the same sheet, as well as to reveal exactly what works I needed to reexamine. In the Morgan Library, I reexamined the height of the text plates in The Song of Los copy C, along with the size and shape of proofs of The Book of Los plates 4 and 5, and The Book of Ahania plate 5; in the Library of Congress, I reexamined The Song of Los copy B and again made tracings of the plates of the only complete extant copy of The Book of Ahania; most importantly, in the British Museum, I examined The Song of Los copies A and D, traced the plates of the only extant copy of The Book of Los, and determined exactly the size of the small Pity and Albion rose plates.

This new data enabled me to disprove my initial hypothesis that The Song of Los plates 3-4 and 6-7 and the plates for The Book of Ahania and The Book of Los were quarters of the same large sheet. It enabled me also to ascertain that small Pity was not the exact size of The Book of Ahania sheet but that it was one of the quarters. Two measurements for small Pity proved insufficient to see this connection, but with four it became clear: 19.75 cm. left, 19.5 cm. right, 27.2 cm. top, 27.4 cm. bottom. These are approximately the same measurements as the color-printed impression of Albion rose, which are 27.2 cm. left, 27.3 cm. right, 19.75 cm. top, 19.95 cm. bottom. Turn small Pity upside down and Albion rose on its left side, place them on top

14. This information about sheet reconstruction was first presented as a plenary address for William Blake 1794/1994, a conference at St. Mary's College, Strawberry Hill, London, 14 July 1994, and later published as "Evolution."

15. Essick records the plate size as 27.2 x 19.9 cm. (Separate Plates 24); Butlin records the Huntington impression as 27.2 x 19.9 cm. and the British Museum impression as 27.5 x 20.2 cm. (cat. 284, 262.1).
of *The Book of Los* and *The Book of Ahania* sheets (illus. 34), and you have the four quarters of a sheet that is 39.35 cm. left, 39.7 cm. right, 54.7 cm. top, 54.5 cm. bottom. Along the middle, vertically and horizontally, the sheet is 39.4 x 54.4 cm. This sheet was cut exactly in half and each half was cut in half, hence each of the four quarters has a side 27.2 cm. wide or high.

Why did Blake purchase a 39.4 x 54.4 cm. sheet of copper? At first, it may seem that he needed copper plates for his two new poems, *The Book of Ahania* and *The Book of Los*. The former has 239 lines and the latter has 176 lines, for a total of 415. *Urizen* is on 28 plates, 11 of which, including the title, are full-page illustrations, leaving 17 text plates for 517 lines. If Blake intended to etch his new poems in relief to match the style and structure of *Urizen*, then he would have needed at least 22 plates for the two books. Quartering each quarter of the large sheet produces 16 plates (or 32 if versos are used), slightly smaller than *Urizen*, whose size was determined by its being on the verso of *Marriage* plates, the size of which was determined by *Approach of Doom* quartered (see Viscomi, "Evolution" 307).

Deducing motive from end results, however, clearly does not work here. The sheet does not produce plates exactly the size of *Urizen*, forcing one to ask why not if that was Blake's intent. More troubling is that Blake appears to have changed his mind after he quartered the sheet. Three of the quarters he intended to use for etchings or engravings, as indicated by their rounded corners and beveled sides, features designed to remove sharp edges that could tear the paper when intaglio plates are printed under the required pressure. One quarter he intended to use as a relief etching, as indicated by the absence of these features, which are unnecessary for relief etchings, because they are printed with less pressure. Given the manner in which the quarters were prepared—whether by Blake or a platemaker following Blake's instructions (see note 13)—Blake appears not to have acquired this copper sheet as a poet needing many small relief-etched plates for an illuminated book; he appears to have acquired it as a printmaker, with at least two designs, *Albion rose* and small *Pity*, in mind, as a creative graphic artist who, to date, had executed many separate etchings and engravings, including *Head of a Damned Soul* (c. 1790), *The Accusers* (1793), *Edward and Elenor* (1793), *Job* (1793), and *Ezekiel* (1794).

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What Blake originally intended for the other two quarters prepared for intaglio designs is not known. It is interesting to speculate, though, that the designs may have been *The Night of Enitharmon’s Joy* (24.2 x 27.8 cm.) and *Newton* (20.4 x 26.3 cm.), which are the only other drawings extant that fit the quarters—or could be trimmed to fit—that were also executed, like small *Pity*, approximately four times their size as large color-printed drawings. But whatever the original plans were for these quarters, Blake changed his mind. He quartered the two quarters and used the resulting plates for *The Book of Los* and *The Book of Ahania*. This sequence of events is indicated by the fact that each small plate has just one rounded corner (illus. e35), that of its original sheet, which, in addition to the plates’ uneven and rough inside edges (illus. 33), is why the plates can be reconstructed like pieces of a puzzle back into their original quarter sheets (illus. 30, 31). The edges are rough because Blake did not file them at an angle (the bevel), and though he appears to have pounded down the sharp edges of the new corners, he did not round them. In other words, Blake did not prepare the small plates for etching.

Was he in such a hurry to print his new poems and designs that he ignored these crucial steps in preparing plates for intaglio printing? Or did he know that he would print with less pressure than normal since he planned to use the surface area for color printing, which he did with *The Book of Ahania* plates 1, 2, and 6 (illus. 36), and *The Book of Los* plates 1, 2, and 5? In *The Book of Ahania* and *The Book of Los* title plates, Blake etched the letters and inked them locally, wiping the surface around them clean of ink and painting the image between the inscription and title, presumably following a lightly scratched outline. Blake used the same combination of printing from the surface and incised lines in the endplates to both books. He knew printing from the surface of an etching would work, since—as I argue below—he had already done

16. If the platemaker had quartered the sheet and beveled the three quarters for Blake, then Blake’s not beveling the small plates may seem less inconsistent, but it is still highly unorthodox behavior for an intaglio etcher. I have not encountered intaglio plates with such rough, unbeveled sides before. Equally unconventionally, Blake etched three of his new plates recto/verso; as we have seen, in relief etching this was his common practice and something Blake could get away with aesthetically because scratches across relief lines fill in with ink, whereas scratches across the surface of an intaglio plate fill in with ink and print as black lines on a white background. Blake was smart, though, in using the versos for the frontispieces, which he very heavily color printed, and for *The Book of Ahania* title plate, whose background he filled with a dense pattern of swirling lines.
so with Albion rose (illus. 37), and knew also that he could
print surface areas with incised lines because he had done so
in Europe and Urizen.

Using the small plates for intaglio etching instead of relief
etching enabled Blake to condense his texts, averaging 59.5
lines per plate for The Book of Ahania and 58.6 for The Book
of Los, versus 30.4 for Urizen, and thus use far fewer copper
plates. Using two of the quarters initially prepared for single
intaglio designs (as is indicated by the four original rounded
corners per quarter) from this sheet for illuminated plates ap­
ppears to have been an afterthought, perhaps reflecting a deci­
sion to enlarge the designs originally intended for the quarters
in another medium. Blake’s decision to etch the small plates in
intaglio rather than in relief appears to reflect the influence of
another quarter from the sheet, Albion rose. But before we can
examine how those three quarters as used connect with one
another, we need to understand the role played by small Pity,
the quarter that appears to have been the first executed.

IV. Small Pity

For small Pity to have been printed from a quarter of a large
copper sheet means, of course, that its matrix is copper and
not millboard, but neither is it a “completely bare plate” (But­
lin, “Physicality” 4). The evidence that small Pity is from a
metal plate lies also in the faintly embossed lines in the horses’
hind legs, tail, and front leg, and at the head of the supine
figure (visible in the verso), the very slight embossment of the
relief plateau. Knowing that small Pity is from a copper plate
in slight relief and not completely bare helps to explain an ap­
parent anomaly in the sequencing of the large color prints and
to verify Butlin’s initial intuition regarding their evolution.

Butlin initially believed that Pity was Blake’s first large color-
printed drawing, because it “developed from the small trial
print, the only such try-out that is known, and this in turn was
preceded by two composition sketches ... the first of which is
an upright composition, showing that at this stage Blake had
not yet evolved the format for the series of large prints." In these works (sketches, trial proof, finished impression), "one does seem to see Blake developing a completely new composition in a relatively short time from upright drawing to large horizontal color print in a way that suggests a direct evolution rather than the reuse of earlier material as found in others of the prints, and hence the real point of origin for the series." And yet, if so, why is small *Pity*, "the ... trial print," followed by *God Judging Adam*, the first color-printed drawing, and not *Pity*? This Butlin cannot answer: "Whether this origin, in a totally new design, has any significance for the meaning of the series as a whole I leave for others to speculate" ("Physicality" 5).

Treating small *Pity* as a sketch that immediately preceded the larger *Pity* is logical, especially if you think that it too is from a "bare plate." On the other hand, placing the trial proof after the first color-printed drawing makes no sense, especially if it is the "real point of origin for the series," for it then becomes a "try-out" for *Pity* alone and not the "experiment" in color printing "on a larger scale" that Butlin also assumes (cat. 313). The material evidence, however, indicates that both the experimental small *Pity* and the first color-printed drawing are from copper plates, each etched in very slight to low relief, the former leading technically and materially to the latter. Indeed, small *Pity* is the "experiment" and "origin" that Butlin assumes. The mystery, however, lies not in Blake's following small *Pity* with a "totally new design" (many sketches are not fully realized until much later), or moving from "bare plate" to relief outline to bare plates or millboards (that progression is an illusion), but rather in his following small *Pity's* failure at defining form through blocks of color with a return to relief-etched outline, as used in illuminated books, before figuring out true planographic printing. As an experiment, small *Pity* is specifically about working out how best to define forms in large color prints, which is to say, less about format and composition than technique and style.

True, small *Pity* differs in format and design from everything color printed to that point; it is horizontal and a tryout for prints four times its size. It borrows from earlier works, though, even while attempting new things. Small *Pity* is divided into top and bottom halves that were inked in different colors (illus. 10). This in itself was not unusual, since two inks, as in sky and ground, were commonly used in color printing aquatint landscapes. Moreover, in 1794 Blake had color printed *Urizen* in this style, with page designs divided into texts and vignettes and inked in different colors. For example, he inked the bottom half (text) of plate 19 from *Urizen* copy C (illus. 38) in an olive green and the top half (figures) in yellow ochre; one can see that his dabber inked the figures' outlines and touched down in their shallows, creating a wide white line along the base of the outline, indicating that he inked shallows and outlines together and that the relief was slightly higher here than in *God Judging Adam*. He went over the background in an olive green ink or color, defining the yellow ochre figures as negative spaces, or cavities within the ground. Plate 23 demonstrates more clearly this style of defining form (illus. 39).
Again, Blake inked the plate’s top and bottom halves in different colors and went over the bottom with a darker color to differentiate background and figure, carefully leaving the white of the paper to form Urizen’s robe (it is finished in white and gray colors in other impressions). Note, from the waist down, Urizen is a blank triangular shallow defined by its background, by solid blocks or areas painted in stop-out varnish and etched in relief (illus. 40). Blake had used this style of defining form in *Europe*, also of 1794, plates 5, 8, and 14, and very rudimentarily in *America* plate 2.

Small *Pity* uses this style to define form on a larger scale. Instead of bold outlines to delineate figures, it uses blocks of colors, leaving the forms as white or negative space to be finished in pen and ink and watercolors (illus. 41). In other words, production is divided into two stages, each stage producing a different visual effect: in the print stage, forms are blocked out in thick, mottled colors printed from the relief surface; in the finishing stage, forms left unprinted are washed in and defined in pen and ink. Small *Pity* fails as a technical experiment because too much is left unprinted—nearly 50% of the composition—leaving too much for finishing, resulting in white areas whose flat, thin watercolors contrast poorly with thick, mottled, *alla prima* paint surfaces. The combination of watercolors over or adjacent to thick colors in the smaller illuminated plates works well, but here, on the larger surface plane, the allocation of the different media to different areas makes the surface visually incoherent. In short, small *Pity* printed but left uncolored is incomplete in ways that are not true of illuminated plates, etchings, or color-printed drawings.

Large color-printed drawings require finishing in pen and ink and watercolors (particularly in second impressions), often to keep the images from looking like blots and blurs, but it is just that, finishing: printing and coloring are not separate stages, but are instead integrated in the initial execution of the design in paint on the plate. Form is defined through line and

17. Perhaps Blake’s painting the horse’s rump sky blue was sign enough that the forms were poorly defined. He could have fixed the mistake by going over the blue in darker colors, but he chose to leave the impression unfinished, probably because even dark washes over a relatively large space would have appeared flat next to the thick, mottled paint printed from the plate.
colors together on the plate and then clarified, strengthened, and/or adorned further on the paper. The design on the matrix, in other words, already closely resembles the painting it will become rather than the basis for one. Matrix as organically unfolding painting would have described God Judging Adam (though of course not if its outline were printed separately from its colors), and most evidently the millboard designs that followed. As a design, small Pity could not be realized or completed without an inordinate amount of additional work that went far beyond the usual finishing, which is presumably why Blake left it unfinished, realizing that constructing designs out of printing and painting produced aesthetically inchoate textures and was not analogous to producing illuminated prints, where watercolor washes supplemented autonomous designs instead of completing them. His experiment was moving him in the opposite direction from the large painterly compositions he was envisioning.18

V. Albion rose and the Book[s] of Designs

Butlin believes that Albion rose also influenced the large color-printed drawings, and again he is right, not entirely as he supposes. Albion rose is one of two etchings and 30 illumi­nated plates with masked-out texts color printed on papers of two different sizes for Ozius Humphry. Blake refers to the impressions only as "a selection from the different Books of such as could be Printed without the Writing" (Erdman, Complete Poetry 771); we refer to them as the Small Book of Designs and the Large Book of Designs.19 Albion rose, from the latter, was color printed from the surface, with its incised lines not printed but used as guidelines for painting. In the catalogue, Butlin dates copies A of Small Book and Large Book 1794 because the date on Urizen plate 1 in the former was left as printed, "1794." He dates copies B of both Book[s] 1796 because the printed date was altered in pen to "1796" (cat. 260). Bindman does the same and believes the two copies of Small Book represent different projects and motives years apart, with copy A serving as a "sampler of his best designs" to "demonstrate his colour-printing process," and copy B possibly "some kind of emblem book [compiled] out of a selection of his designs" (476). Most of the B impressions, however, are second pulls, impressions pulled from the plate while ink and colors were still wet, which means they cannot be years apart. Butlin recognizes this fact in a later article ("Physicality" 3), but uses the unaltered 1794 date on the Urizen title plate in copy A for both sets of impressions. Thus, he considers 1794 as the date when "the illustrations literally broke free" of the accompanying texts. He also notes that Large Book included three subjects "based on independent engravings; the distinction between books and independent works was beginning to break down" (3). But a printed date does not date a printing session, as nearly any reprinted illuminated book demonstrates. The altered date of 1796 is more trustworthy than the printed "1794" because it bears Blake's autograph (a similarly penned-in date of "1790" on plate 3 of Marriage copy F proved reliable); even if treated like the "1795" written on color prints produced c. 1804, it would signify the conception of the series and not the individual parts. Moreover, a project such as this one, where a selection of plates was reprinted without text, would have been an anomaly in 1794, because Blake was just beginning to reprint books and had not yet color printed from the surface of intaglio plates.

Neither color-printed impression of Albion rose could have been printed in 1794, since the plate appears not to have been cut from its sheet until 1795, along with the plates for small Pity, The Book of Los, and The Book of Ahania. Both color-printed impressions are in the first state and "were very probably produced in 1795-1796 when Blake seems to have done most of his work in that medium" (Essick, Separate Plates 28). No monochrome impression of the first state is extant. On the basis of the similarity in style to The Accusers (1793) and The Gates of Paradise (1793), Essick dates the first state of Albion rose c. 1793 (Separate Plates 28). This date can now be changed to 1795 and may explain why no monochrome impressions in the first state are extant: Blake color printed the plate before printing it in intaglio (though he probably proofed the plate during its progress and the proofs, like most proofs, are not extant). On the basis of textual and graphic evidence, Essick dates the second state of the plate (illus. 42a) no earlier than c. 1804 and possibly later than c. 1818. Albion, mentioned in the inscription, does not appear as a person in "Blake's poetry until some of the later revisions of The Four Zoas manuscript, probably made after 1800, and in Milton, begun about 1803" (Separate Plates 28). Moreover, the inscription has a left-pointing serif on the letter g, which, according to Erdman's hypothesis, Blake used consistently between c. 1791 and 1803.20 How-

18. In the Tate's version of Lantech and His Two Wives, "virtually the whole image has been printed, with no reserves of paper left for finishing in watercolour." This "seems to be a considerably more developed form of the technique" than used in Naomi Entreatting Rath and Orphal, "which argues that this print [Lantech] was made late in the series" (McManus and Townsend 96). In Naomi, God Judging Adam, and other prints, Blake left the figures or parts of them unpainted/unguessed to use the white of the paper, often in conjunction with white pigments, for highlights and contrast, but these are small areas relative to the composition and do not produce visually discordant surface textures.

19. The Small Book consisted of 23 impressions pulled from Urizen, Marriage, The, and Visions, on Whatman 1794 paper 26 x 19 cm.; the Large Book consisted of plates from Urizen, Visions, separate relief plates of America plate d and Joseph of Arimathea Preaching, and two etchings, Albion rose and The Accusers, on Whatman 1794 paper cut to 34.5 x 24.5 cm. Humphry, a renowned miniaturist, appears to have already owned color-printed Songs copy H and Europe copy D as well as monochrome America copy H, which may explain why plates from these books were not in the Book[s] of Designs, despite the obvious suitability of America and Europe designs for such a project. For more information about the Book[s] of Designs and their connection to the large color-printed drawings, see Viscomi, Blake and the Idea of the Book 302-04.

ever, visual effects such as the burnished halo behind Albion's head Essick associates with the influence of Linnell, leading him to suggest a possible post-1818 date as well (private correspondence).

Yet something is not quite right here. Because the etched lines are visible in the second, lighter color-printed impression when examined in strong light, Essick could ascertain that the first state "lacked the bat-winged moth, worm, and shafts of light radiating from the figure .... The horizontal hatching lines of the background seem to have extended much closer to the head and shoulders of the figure ..." (Separate Plates 24). He also notes that Blake added a hill under the figure's right foot without deleting the horizontal background lines, as he did when he added the moth. While the inscription may be c. 1804 or later, these design changes—halo, shafts of light, and hill—are likely to have been c. 1795, because they follow the color print's coloring so closely, as is demonstrated by placing a transparency of the color print over the second state (illus. 42b). Blake appears to have used the color print as a model for the changes he made in the plate, but he is unlikely to have waited nine or more years to make these changes. The copy A impression was in Humphry's possession by 1796 and the copy B impression appears to have been "one of the prints by Blake acquired in August 1797 by Dr. James Curry, a friend of Humphry's" (Essick, Separate Plates 25; see also Bentley, "Dr. James Curry as a Patron of Blake," Notes and Queries 27 [1980]: 71-73). Also, Blake seems to have used scrapers and burnishers conventionally, to erase lines and smooth surfaces so he could etch new forms, like the moth, and not radically, as he did in the second states of Mirth, Job, and Ezekiel, where he created dramatic and painterly visual effects that do indeed appear to reflect the influence of Linnell.21

labour'd at the Mill with Slaves / Giving himself for the Nations he danc'd / the dance of Eternal Death." Essick notes that the imagery in the inscription echoes that used in a letter to William Hayley, 23 October 1804, in which he likens himself to "a slave bound in a mill among beasts and devils" who has been "again enlightened with the light [he] enjoyed in [his] youth" (Separate Plates 28). The inscription reveals Blake returning to an earlier image and reinterpreting it (or remembering it as an idealized self-portrait), as he did with Joseph of Arimathea among the Rocks of Albion (1773, c. 1810-20), The Accusers (1793, c. 1805-10), and Mirth (c. 1816-20, 1820-27).

21. For Blake's radical use of burnishers to create stark contrasts of blacks and whites and its association with Linnell, see Essick, Printmaker, chapters 13 and 16, and Essick, "John Linnell." The technique's use in Albion rose, however, seems more practical than painterly, and the resulting play of light less dramatic than in those others revised late in life.
Moreover, the worm, whose significance may be explained by a passage in *Jerusalem* 55:36-37 (Essick, *Separate Plates* 29), is visually similar to the worms in *Gates of Paradise* (1793) plates 1 and 18 and in *The Song of Los* plate 3. More interestingly, the bat-winged moth in the second state (illus. 42a) may have been influenced by the bat-winged moth in *The Song of Los* plates 3-4 (illus. 43). This image has heretofore been unre­corded because it appears in the middle of the horizontal plate 3. This image is pasted down on a thick sheet of paper. Essick dates the plate c. 1794 because it seems to share themes and motifs with *Europe* (1794), but he also recognizes that it differs stylistically from the other political prints, *Albion rose* and *The Accusers*, in that, while executed in their energetic etched style, it makes “more use of enlarged versions of such conventional patterns as worm lines and cross hatching, much as in the Night Thoughts plates of 1796-1797” (*Separate Plates* 43). I agree and think *Lucifer* is c. 1796 and probably color printed that year, along with the other works for the *Large Book* and *Small Book,* though it was not part of either series, no doubt excluded for having a horizontal rather than vertical format.

In 1796, Blake appears to have built a series of color prints around *Albion rose,* taking stock of his etchings and relief etchings and transforming 30 of them into miniature paintings to make up the two series for Humphry. Twenty-two years later, in a 9 June 1818 letter to Dawson Turner, he remembered the project this way:

> Those I Printed for M’ Humphry are a selection from the different Books of such as could be Printed without the Writing tho to the Loss of some of the best things[,] For they when Printed perfect accompany Poetical Personifications & Acts without which Poems they never could have been Executed[,] He then describes the color-printed drawings as:

> 12 Large Prints Size of Each about 2 feet by 1 & 1/2 Historical & Poetical Printed in Colours[,] ... These last 12 Prints are unaccompanied by any writing[,] (Erdman, *Complete Poetry* 771)

For Blake, the illuminated plates “Printed without the Writing” and the large color prints “unaccompanied by any writing” are clearly related projects. They are also, as Blake tells Turner, “sufficient to have gained me great reputation as an Artist which was the chief thing Intended.” Butlin recognizes that the projects are connected and has done more to champion their importance to Blake’s reputation as an artist than any other Blake scholar. He has argued, though, that the small works evolved into the larger works and thus, as noted, considers 1794 as the start of Blake’s illustrations breaking free of text (“Physicality” 3). But, as shown here, the smaller monotypes are from 1796, not 1794, and found their precedent and inspiration in the larger monotypes of 1795. And like their prototypes, the later, smaller impressions were colored “with a degree of splendour and force, as almost to resemble sketches in oil-colours ... all of which are peculiarly remarkable for their strength and splendour of colouring.”

22. The recently rediscovered proof is in the Essick Collection; it was unknown at the time Essick wrote his *Separate Plates* catalogue, which lists only one state for the plate (41-42).

large and small, are to oil sketches what relief etchings are to drawings. They are prints in which Blake incorporated the tools and techniques of painting, just as in illuminated prints he used the tools and processes of drawing and writing. The prints in the Small Book and Large Book are not only "free of text," but they differ even from the color-printed illuminated plates of 1794 by having been produced in a more overtly painterly manner, no doubt influenced by the larger prints of 1795. This painterliness in the small and large monotypes is no mere illusion, as it would be if the impressions were assembled from separately printed outline and colors.

Butlin’s premise that the large monotypes of 1795 grew out of smaller works is correct, but his choice of smaller works is partly mistaken. The candidates are the illuminated books color printed in 1794, or small Pity and Albion rose of 1795. Blake first prints in colors in 1794, printing the Experience sections of Songs copies F, G, H, T, and B, C, D, and E (the two sets in that order); Europe copies B, C, D, E, F, and G; The Book of Urizen copies A, C, D, E, F, and J; and possibly Visions of the Daughters of Albion copies F and R and The Marriage of Heaven and Hell copies E and F. He color printed The Book of Los, The Book of Ahania, and The Song of Los in 1795. The last of these, as we shall see, is likely to have been executed concurrently with or after the large color-printed drawings and under the influence of their format and technique, whereas the first two books are etchings that appear to have been executed before the color-printed drawings but after Albion rose, as indicated by Blake’s change of mind regarding the original quarter sheets used to provide their plates. Many significant differences exist between color printing relief etchings and intaglio etchings. With the former, Blake is inking plates as prints and adding colors to inked and uninked areas. He behaved even more radically with the latter works. Blake is not inking the plate; he is painting it, using etched lines as guidelines, but he is also free to improvise at will, as he did with hill and halo in Albion rose. Nothing like these had ever been produced before and no analogous printing process exists.

Recognizing Albion rose as a product of 1795 rather than 1794, as the first color-printed intaglio plate, and as cut from the same sheet as small Pity helps us to see it and small Pity more clearly as experiments in color printing that reveal the technical problem Blake is attempting to solve. He, as intaglio etcher and relief etcher, quarters a large sheet of copper and prepares three plates for intaglio and one for relief. He uses the relief etching to experiment with creating a matrix capable of being color printed as a relatively large composition. He needs to scale up in size his earlier experiments; to date, he has color printed from both the surface and from the surface and shallows simultaneously of relief etchings. He needs to figure out how to define forms on larger surfaces in the new marriage of print and painting that he was then envisioning. Were forms to be blocked out in low flat relief, as in small Pity, in relief outline, as in illuminated plates, or in incised outline, as in Albion rose? Albion rose can be printed without colors or finishing, but small Pity cannot; the latter work was designed with color printing in mind while the former probably was not. As Blake was beginning to experiment with scaling up his color prints, however, he put Albion rose to double use, testing its suitability for large printed paintings by painting the design and printing it. The idea to color print Albion rose from its surface instead of printing it as an etching may have occurred to Blake during its execution or after recognizing the failure of small Pity.

The basic principle, one could argue, for inventing large monotypes is present in color printing relief etchings, but, in practice, Blake is closer to working up flat areas and defining forms through colors when color printing intaglio etchings. Does this mean Albion rose was more influential in what followed than small Pity? Yes and no. The intaglio etching appears directly to have influenced the choice of medium and color printing technique of The Book of Ahania and The Book of Los—works one quarter the size of Albion rose—but not the color-printed drawings, which are four times its size. Interesting, in this regard, is Blake’s never having color printed the intaglio engravings that are the size of the color prints, like Job and Ezekiel, perhaps finding the dense line systems unsuited for the open and painterly compositions he was then creating—or because such surfaces proved more difficult to use than gesso’s striated surfaces. In any event, he apparently decided not to use etched outlines for his large printed paintings, following small Pity with God Judging Adam. What, then, leads to true planographic printing, which lies, technically speaking, somewhere between small Pity and Albion rose?

Blake possibly went from small Pity to God Judging Adam and returned to Albion rose to think more on the problem of defining form. The idea of a non-printable outline—neither in relief nor intaglio—but paintable along with blocks of colors could have grown out of painting and printing Albion rose. Alternatively, it could have grown out of painting over a low relief outline of God Judging Adam and realizing that the outline’s function could be served planographically, that it was the painting over the outline rather than printing the outline that mattered most. Once Blake made that discovery, returning to color print an intaglio etching or moving to the planographic printing of Elohim or Satan and then to millboards must have come quickly.

VI. The Song of Los Reconsidered

Determining the exact sequence of development in Blake’s monotyping may be impossible, because planographic printing can evolve out of painting the surface of an etching, using the incised lines as guidelines, or vice versa. However, the use of one sheet of copper to produce both small Pity and Albion rose, two plates representing different technical solutions to defining forms needed for printing large monotypes, does help us sequence the illuminated books of 1795. The size of the sheet may have influenced the size of the subsequent sheets acquired for the color prints. Recall that Blake described the "Size of Each" of his "12 Large Prints" at "about 2 feet by 1 & 1/2" (Erdman, Complete Poetry 771). Since these
works are horizontal, we should record this as 18 x 24 in. This is a rough approximation, but each work is within one and a quarter inch in height and three inches in width of this approximation. The smallest, *Pity*, is 16.75 x 21.25 in. (42.5 x 53.9 cm.), approximately the same size as *God Judging Adam*, presumably the first, which is 17 x 21 in. (43.2 x 53.5 cm.); the largest, *House of Death*, is 19 x 24 in. (48.5 x 61 cm.); the widest, *Nebuchadnezzar*, is 17.5 x 24.4 in. (44.6 x 62 cm.).

At 39.4 x 54.4 cm. (15.5 x 21.4 in.), the copper sheet yielding small *Pity, Albion rose, The Book of Ahania, and The Book of Los* fits squarely within the average of the first color-printed drawings, but is shorter, on average, by 3.5 cm. Assuming the copper sheet used for *The Song of Los* plates 3-4 and 6-7 was a half sheet, then the full sheet, at 43.5 x 54.4 cm., fits within both height and width of color-printed drawings. Relative to the copper sheets and millboards used in 1795, it fits the series while the shorter sheet, which yielded works whose printing directly influenced the technique and printing of the large color-printed drawings, does not. Similarly sized sheets for a projected series suggest a similar date of purchase; the shorter sheet appears not only to have been worked on before those of the series, but also to have been acquired apart from them, which further supports the thesis that *The Book of Los* and *The Book of Ahania* were composed and executed before the larger relief-etched text plates of *The Song of Los*, which in turn preceded their illustrations, plates 1, 2, 5, and 8.

Assuming Blake treated the sheet yielding *The Song of Los* plates 3-4 and 6-7 like the one for *The Book of Ahania* and *The Book of Los*, i.e., cutting it in half, then the unused half would also be approximately 43.5-8 x 27.2-5 cm. Cutting this half to provide the coppers for *The Song of Los* plates 2/5 and 1/8 appears logical, but to have done so would have meant wasting precious metal, because 24.2 x 17.4 cm. (2/5) and 23.6 x 17.5 cm. (1/8) do not fit without lots of awkward trimming. Moreover, plates 2/5 and 1/8 do not fit together; they were not conjoined in a sheet. Thus, while technically possible, economically it made no sense—and as his recto-verso etching demonstrates, Blake was very practical in his use of copper. He may have bought just half the sheet, intending to halve it for *The Song of Los* text plates, or bought the whole sheet and used the other half or pieces from it later. However he used it, plates 2/5 and 1/8 appear certainly not to have been cut out of it, which supports the evidence below that they were not copper but millboards.

Plates 1 and 8 were planographically printed; no relief lines or marks are present in the versos of any impressions from either plate. No traces of incised lines are seen through the impression in strong light, as can be seen in the copy B impression of *Albion rose*. Blake either lightly etched or scratched these lines on the relief-etched coppers, or engraved them onto the millboards himself. As he engraved the verso of the large text plates for *The Song of Los*, which in turn preceded their illustrations, plates 1, 2, 5, and 8, for their appearance on the verso plate of the projected series, the verso of *Albion rose* was not included in this cutting. The copper sheet yielding the first color-printed drawings was also used for the back plates of *The Song of Los* which in turn preceded their illustrations, plates 1, 2, 5, and 8.

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24. The widths vary 8.5 cm., ranging from approximately 53.5 cm. (four), 57.5 cm. (one), 58.1 cm. (two), 59.4 cm. (one) to 60-62 cm. (four); height varies only 6 cm., ranging from 42.5 to 44.6 cm. (ten), and 46 to 48.5 cm. (two).

25. Blake’s *Child of Nature* (1818), known from a unique impression, is 43.3 x 27.5 cm., the size of the half sheet. Other possible configurations include the *Moore & Co. Advertisement*, c. 1797-98 (Essick, Separate Plates 47), along with some practice plates for Thomas Butts (see Essick, Separate Plates 211-12). Blake reused parts of the *Moore* plate years later for *Jerusalem* plate 64, which is the recto of *Jerusalem* plate 96 (Essick, Separate Plates 48).
I the outline in metal, as suggested by Essick (Printmaker 128), or he used millboard, which seems more likely, given the very wavy cut of the plate along the top edge (illus. 2), something more likely in board than metal. More significant are the striations in clouds and arms visible in plate 8 of copy B (illus. 44). These patterns, typical of gessoed millboard, are also in copies E and A and thus are not repetitions in the paint layer of a first pull within a second.

Plates 2 and 5 are also planographically printed. In plate 5 (illus. 45), figures, lily petals, and stems are consistent in each impression and carefully finished in watercolor washes and pen and ink. The broad green and brown leaves under the lilies, however, differ in number, form, and placement in each impression, signs of improvisation, of having been painted broadly and energetically directly on the plate rather than painted within an outline. Here, Blake paints each design anew, creating prints with both the miniature’s exactness of form and the freedom and boldness of the oil sketch.

Essick was first to recognize that plate 2 is the only illuminated plate with planographic lettering, though he acknowledges that the letters may have had “lightly incised” outlines (Printmaker 128). Dörrebecker agrees and adds that the let-
ters of the inscription may have been relief etched (319n28). Comparing all six impressions in great detail, however, reveals that the letter forms are too inconsistent to have been outlined or relief etched. Note, for example, the letter “N” (illus. 46) in copies A and B (top row) and D and C (bottom row): B and C differ slightly from one another but are exactly like A and D respectively, only lighter, because they are second impressions.26 Incised lines and relief etching are also ruled out because the matrix is almost certain to have been millboard, as indicated by the striated texture under the colors forming the letter “L” in the non-sequential B and C impressions (illus. 47). The copy C impression is telling in other ways as well; a second pull, it reveals thin white lines (illus. 48) that at first appear to be part of an incised outline, thus suggesting a metal plate. Closer inspection, however, reveals the white lines are the spaces between adjoining blocks of colors; we see the same effect in the second impression of Pity (illus. 49) and many of the other color-printed drawings.

The accepted sequence of The Song of Los, The Book of Ahania, and The Book of Los has Blake returning to the continental myth before finishing the Urizen cycle. It pictures him creatively experimenting in The Song of Los with page format and text design and using small color-printed drawings as book illustrations, only to return in the intaglio books to the earlier text format of Urizen. We now can see that The Song of Los is last in this sequence and that Blake completed the Urizen poems first and without interruption, with two much shorter books whose planographically printed images were directly influenced by the color printing of Albion rose. The Song of Los plates 3-4 and 6-7 are horizontal compositions influenced apparently by the format of Blake’s new invention, the large

26. The six extant impressions of the title plate can be sequenced: F, A, B, D, C, E[?]. The E impression is very poorly and lightly printed and has so much handwork that sequencing is difficult and the possibility of a missing impression, of which this is a second or even third pull, is raised.

color monotypes. Their double columns were influenced by *Urizen*, *The Book of Ahania*, and *The Book of Los*, but differ significantly, being widely spaced and almost free flowing in a format that combined poetry, printmaking, and painting in a new and radical way. *The Song of Los* was Blake's last illuminated text until *Milton*, and Blake probably began it while working on the color-printed drawings, conceiving of his new texts as paintings with—or of—poems, presented as horizontal scrolls, panels, or broadsides.

With *The Song of Los* as originally conceived, Blake returned to his continental cycle using the same relief-etched print medium but in a painting format. For whatever reason, he changed his mind and decided that his "Africa" and "Asia" needed to be reformatted. He masked one side of the horizontal plate when printing to transform texts into book pages. He executed full-page illustrations on millboard after the text plates and designed them to match in shape and size the plates of *America* and *Europe*. In doing so, he appears to have salvaged an experiment he abandoned by extending what he learned about planographic printing from millboard into book production. The fact that *The Book of Los* and *The Book of Ahania* are not to *Urizen* as *Experience* is to *Innocence*, but are clearly related parts differently formatted, may have freed Blake from thinking that "Asia" and "Africa" had to match *America* and *Europe* exactly. The non-symmetrical relation within the Urizen cycle may have enabled him to reconstruct *The Song of Los* into a book with two "continents" and fewer than half the number of pages in *America* or *Europe*.

Butlin is surely correct that "1795 can be seen as a vital year in Blake's evolution, that in which his pictorial art finally achieved maturity with works of the highest quality while, conversely, his production of illuminated books suffered a hiatus for over ten years . . ." I hope, however, in light of new information about how small *Pity* was designed and executed, when and how *Albion rose* was printed, the size of the copper sheet and manner in which it was cut to yield their plates and the plates for *The Book of Ahania* and *The Book of Los*, how the small intaglio illuminated plates were printed, how the large color prints evolved and were executed and influenced the *Large and Small Book of Designs*, and, mostly, how *The Song of Los* began as texts designed in landscape format and was recreated as a book by the masking of these plates during printing and the inclusion of small color-printed drawings, that the last illuminated books of this period can be thought of as more than "the three relatively unambitious books of 1795" ("Physicality" 6).

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Reviewed by Karen Mulhallen

This set of reproductions by the Folio Society is the third publication in book form of William Blake's watercolor drawings in illustration of Edward Young's *Night Thoughts* and the first to present all the drawings in full color and at approximately original size. A comparison with the earlier attempts at reproduction highlights the Folio Society's accomplishment. The first set was published for the Fogg Museum (Harvard UP, 1927) in an edition of 500 copies, but it contains only 30 images, of which five are in color. Like this new edition, however, the Fogg edition was made from the original drawings, which were then owned by William Augustus White, who personally approved the final versions of the reproductions as "finishes" and declared them the "most successful attempt he had seen to bring out the full quality of the original designs" (Fogg, "Prefatory Note"). Unfortunately, there is no information as to what "finishes" means, although one might suppose the term refers to accuracy of texture and color. The Fogg reproductions (13 1/8 inches high by 10 3/8 inches wide) are smaller than the Blake originals by approximately three inches in height and two in width.

A microfilm of the watercolors was published in the early 1970s by Micro Methods (now Microform Imaging Limited), but the second attempt at a paper edition of the drawings was not until 1980: *William Blake's Designs for Edward Young's Night Thoughts: A Complete Edition* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1980), ed. John E. Grant, Edward J. Rose and Michael J. Tolley, with David V. Erdman as the coordinating editor. Like the Folio Society edition, the Clarendon publication presents the designs in two volumes, but the complete set of plates is in black and white, with the addition of 78 in color. The images, at 11 1/4 by 8 1/2 inches, with some slight variations, are not the full size of the originals.

The 1927 Fogg edition is a luxury limited edition—my own copy is number 55 of 500—and it is presented as loose sheets, in the French manner of many artists' books, in a light blue buckram portfolio, tied with a grosgrain ribbon. Its images are printed on deckle-edged paper, textured for color images, and smooth for black and white images. It includes a separately printed commentary by Geoffrey Keynes in a sewn pamphlet. The Clarendon edition is a scholarly publication with a sewn binding but with none of the extra details one gets in luxury limited editions. In format, this new edition by the Folio Society returns the work to the luxury trade with its small print run—my copy is number 187 of 1000—its large scale, and its sumptuous bindings in buckram and leather, with a specially designed cover ornament reflective of Blake's work, and an ample hinged box, crafted to hold all three volumes: the reproductions in two large tomes and the plate-by-plate critical commentary in a large octavo by Robin Hamlyn, keeper of drawings at the Tate. Weighing in at approximately 27 pounds, the Folio Society publication gives its buyer a hefty package for the money.

An announcement of the Folio Society edition appeared in *Blake* 40.1 (summer 2006): 4-5, 13, and I must concur with G. E. Bentley, Jr.'s, statement there that "one can appreciate as never before" the way in which Blake created connections between the designs, not only diptychs, as Bentley argues, but whole runs of images and coloristic connections creating a narrative line. Bentley hails the publication as a major event, and it is. We have never had the whole series in paper in color before. Until now anyone wishing to place these designs next to each other has had to travel to the study room of the British Museum Department of Prints and Drawings in London, and wait while the 43 heavy boxes of drawings, each drawing individually encased in acetate or Plexiglas (called Perspex in the UK), are hinged, box by box, by the stewards to the table. Even in the museum, it has been difficult to flip back and forth, to compare one design to the next, all of which book publication...
facsimile," as Hamlyn claims in the commentary volume (vii), as the colophons at the end of the folio volumes state, and as Bentley also asserts (5). In its conception for the luxury market, the Folio Society edition resembles one of the two interrelated projects proposed to Blake around 1795 by the publisher Richard Edwards: the commissioning of Blake's original watercolor designs and the proposal to use them as the basis of a luxurious engraved edition of Young's Night Thoughts. Both the Folio Society edition and the Edwards engraved edition, in conception and marketing, are publications for the wealthy, so the Folio Society edition completes in some sense the initiative begun more than 200 years ago, which is to say that Blake's designs at last find their luxury audience. The asking price of the 1797 edition, for all four parts of the Edwards Night Thoughts, was five guineas, a considerable sum, representing approximately three weeks of a manual worker's income. Given the cost of hiring a plumber today, we can see that the Folio Society actually represents a considerable bargain in comparison to the 1797 edition, but both are unquestionably publications conceived for the luxury commodity marketplace. Although the Folio Society edition was only listed for publication in 2005, and is shipped only as orders are received for its 1000 copies available to the public (there are 20 more hors de commerce), in checking the listings for the book on www.abebooks.com, I note that number 425 is already listed for resale by MisterE Books and Records for $2500 (US). This is the nature of luxury limited editions: their price increases and their potential audience decreases. Speaking of scarcity, a curiosity of this particular publication relates to its method of production, since by binding only as orders are received, with the exception of a copy or two as stock, the Folio Society in effect creates a book which is always almost out of print. Blake was paid only a pittance for all his Night Thoughts work, but a similar phenomenon of scarcity and increasing prices has developed with the original 1797 engraved edition of Night Thoughts, which is now listed for sale by one US dealer, Phillip J. Pirages (McMinnville, OR), at $19,500 (US).

It is of interest, I think, to consider how the current Folio Society edition is akin to Blake's original project. This question is complex, because Blake's drawings were themselves never intended to be published. They were unique and also preliminary to a projected four-volume set of engravings. The book of watercolor drawings has its own logic and can be considered as an artist's book, running parallel to, but different from, the engraved edition. In the engraved edition, for example, there is a mixture of illustrated and unillustrated pages. The watercolors appear on every page, including the preliminaries. Although discussion of the engravings needs to be left aside from this review of the Folio Society reproductions, it is an issue to keep in mind in any critical work on Blake's Night Thoughts project, since the two sets of designs, watercolors and engravings, constitute quite different works.

The question, then, is can a facsimile ever be a possibility? Every reproductive process carries its own identifying features and differences from the original. Perhaps a good way of beginning to talk about these distinctions in regard to Blake's Night Thoughts is to think of the watercolor drawings as what Fredson Bowers has called the "ideal" copy. Bowers is of course talking about facsimile as it relates to several versions of a printed text from which one model should be constructed. Since there is only one copy of these watercolors, they form in fact that "ideal" model. Any attempt to reproduce them must deal with this "ideal" copy. In The Republic Book VII, Plato describes the world of mortals as a world of shadows being played out on the wall of a cave, a descent from the world of ideal forms. So the original is unique, and thereafter reproductions are a falling away from originality.

This distance from the original to the copy will have a great deal to do with the material from which the original was made. Engravings, for example, printed books, even money, are easier to facsimilize than paintings, especially watercolor drawings, which depend on so many ephemera, such as water and light, speed of execution, pigment, dampness of paper, paper density, and texture, and present rather formidable obstacles for reproduction.

The story of William Blake's commission to illustrate Edward Young's international bestselling poem for an audience in the 1790s, 50 years after the original poem had been published, has often been rehearsed, and only a brief summary is needed here to place in context some of the remarks which follow. When Richard Edwards, the publisher, commissioned the series of watercolors from Blake as preliminary to a four-volume set of Night Thoughts, to be accompanied by some engravings (reported by Joseph Farington as 200) based on Blake's preliminary designs, several luxury book projects were already underway in London, illustrating major authors such as John Milton and William Shakespeare. John Boydell's edition of Shakespeare was in fact a multifaceted business venture that included gallery displays of the commissioned oil paintings by some of the best artists of the day. Blake was not invited to participate in any of these large scale ventures—although he did engrave for Boydell's Shakespeare—so we can imagine what it might have meant to him to have been invited to have his own large artistic project. The promise of a solo showing of his work, in whatever format, clearly gave Blake
the energy to complete more than 500 drawings in what appears to be about two years. That's a massive amount of work, and the drawings show various stages of completion, some complex and highly finished, others lightly drawn, almost sketches.

Richard Edwards's project was never completed; only 43 of the drawings were developed as engraved images, and only one volume was published by Edwards (1797) before he retired from the trade and went to Minorca in 1799. Edwards had each of Blake's original drawings mounted on a leaf with a complementary tinted border, and the whole collection was divided into two volumes, bound in red morocco. Edwards's signature and the words "High Elms," Edwards's residence in Hertfordshire to which he retired in 1803, appear in each volume on the back of the frontispiece in the upper right hand corner, above the pencil sketch (and onto the tinted mount) which Blake made for the actual watercolor drawing on the other side. (This inscription is still visible today on the originals, but it does not appear on either of these pages in the Folio Society reproduction, because the mounts for the drawings have been cropped out.) The original drawings seem to have become the property of Richard's brother Thomas, who had them offered for sale three times in auction catalogues, in 1821, 1826, and 1828. The drawings in effect disappeared from public view for many decades, while the engraved book continued to appear for sale on the book market. It is scarce, but not rare. The drawings were offered for sale again in the later nineteenth century; they were displayed in London in a hotel, purchased by the bookseller James Bain, who displayed them in his shop for 30 years, then sold to Marsden J. Perry and finally William Augustus White. In 1928 White's daughter gave them to the British Museum, where they were accessioned in 1929. The British Museum accession stamp—"1929-7-13-[sheet number]"—appears in the lower left-hand corner of the verso of each of the drawings. I mention these facts because they are relevant to my consideration of what constitutes a facsimile.

What Are We Looking at in This Folio Society Edition?

I. The Binding and Numbering of the Pages

The two frontispieces have been treated as separate drawings, and the British Museum accession numbering designates them as rectos, in effect denying their status as frontispieces and making them into something like fly-titles or even end-papers. The Folio Society edition, like the earlier Micro Methods microfilm and Clarendon edition, adheres to the museum's rearrangement. The inscription "Richard Edwards / High Elms / WA White / 20 March [illegible date (?), covered with tape in the British Museum] / of M.J. Perry" is cropped out in the Folio Society and Micro Methods versions. (It is visible, however, in the Clarendon edition of the first volume.) In other words, the details of page one are silently altered. Blake's original pencil sketch, a standing figure, presumably Christ, with arms raised pushing aside clouds, remains in the Folio Society edition on the back of the watercolor drawing of Christ resurrected, but it is now page two, as it is in the Clarendon edition. Like the inscription, the pencil sketch is not reproduced in the microfilm. In the Folio Society edition, the back of the second frontispiece, which opens the second volume of drawings, has no pencil sketch on it (although there is one in the second frontispiece original: a faint design, perhaps a show-through of the underlying pencil sketch for the front image), but it does show the British Museum accession number. The back of the Clarendon edition second-volume frontispiece is a blank page.

Do these changes matter? Perhaps they are of interest only to scholars concerned with interventions reflective of the relationship between possessors and artifact. But the purpose of a frontispiece is to set up a reaction to, or even present an epitome of, the whole, and these frontispieces were designed and made by Blake; they presumably represent his sense of the two gatherings of the drawings. To place them in effect as dust jackets or front covers for the drawings does change their integral relation to the sequence. In the case of the second frontispiece, the preliminary sketch is actually important in helping to ascertain just what it is that the watercolor depicts. In considering the semantic trajectory of the drawings, I will return to these frontispieces in my remarks on Hamlyn's commentary.

II. The Size and the Mountings

As I pointed out in my opening paragraphs, there is some deviation in the different reproductions from the size of the original watercolor drawings. The original drawings also vary. I have measured several of the original pages. Night I, page 15 (1929-7-13-11), for example, is 16 7/16 inches high by 12 ¼ inches wide. Including the tinted mounting border, the overall size grows to 20 9/16 inches by 15 7/16 inches. The text window, which contains Young's poem, is 8 5/16 inches high by 6 3/16 inches wide. All the original cutting and mounting was done by hand, and there are differences of as much as a half inch between drawings. Although the Folio Society pages are uniform at 16 ⅛ by 13 (slightly larger than the originals), their text windows vary to reflect the originals. The original text box containing Young's poem was mounted off-center toward the upper left in the recto, thereby creating irregular margins in which Blake drew his designs, and a pairing of pages, verso-recto, creates a balanced asymmetry. Once Blake completed his drawings, Edwards had them placed in individually tinted cardboard mounts. These framing and strengthening devices add another dimension to the designs within them, and, of course, both highlight each individual design and increase the overall page size. They are still extant on the originals in the British Museum, but are not reproduced in the Folio Society edition. They appear in irregular, almost shadowy fragments, with no apparent pattern, sometimes a bit of the bottom edge, sometimes of the
III. The Quality of the Reproductions

Young's printed text is clearly reproduced in the Folio Society edition, even to the point of the show-through of text from the verso. Show-through is also evident in the Fogg edition, in the microfilm, and in the Clarendon edition. The incidental pencil and pen additions, some by Young, some by Blake, and perhaps even some by Richard Edwards, show corrections to the text, underlining, marginal markings of potential lines and groups of lines for illustration, manuscript additions such as quotations from Joseph Addison's *Cato*, and a few pages which have the pencil notation "Engraved" or even "Engraved reversed." All of these incidental marks, except the ownership inscriptions, accurately match the originals. There is, however, an omission with the final Folio Society design, which shows the biblical figure of Samson pulling down the pillars of the temple of Dagon. The back of this design in the original, and also visible as show-through in the microfilm, and in the Clarendon edition, is the printed opening of a few stanzas by Young of another poem altogether. This verso page, including the British Museum accession number in the lower left-hand corner, has been omitted from the Folio Society version.

Accurate color reproduction is extremely difficult, and using modern photographic methods not only requires precise scans from the originals, but also demands a technician who has the skill to match the computer scans again to the originals. A feedback loop is created between the technician at the computer and the person operating the press. Each of the Night Thoughts editions has used a different printing technique, but every method is capable of superb results. In each case, photography has yielded a pattern of dots per square inch which is only one of the determining factors in the fineness of the translation. Although some might argue that a regular dot pattern cannot do justice to the actual irregularities in most works of art, there are many examples which belie such an assertion. However, anyone who has ever stood before a painting in a gallery with the catalogue in hand knows just how elusive reproduction in color is. In May 2006 I stood in a small side gallery in Sotheby's New York with their catalogue for the sale of the watercolors of Blake's designs for Blair's Grave and the actual drawings on the walls before me. In some cases, the catalogue reproductions seemed not even to be of the same works of art. I did inquire of Sotheby's about these radical variations, since they had done the photography themselves, working, they told me, from Blake's originals, but the staff were unable to proffer any explanation for the astonishing differences in coloration which we agreed were visible before us.

Before making a journey to the British Museum, I began by comparing my different reproductions of Night Thoughts. I examined the Folio Society edition next to the Fogg Museum edition, commissioned by White and made from the originals, next to the Micro Methods microfilm, also made from the originals, which were by then in the British Museum, and next to the Clarendon Press edition, which I understand was made not directly from the originals but from glossy photographs that were considerably smaller than the original pages and the published reproductions. I also compared two copies of the Folio Society edition. My own copy, number 187, and that of G. E. Bentley, Jr., number 214, were placed side by side. He and I found the color, page for page, to be consistent in our different copies. We also placed our copies next to the Fogg edition pages which are in color. Here the differences of coloration were radical. Next we placed side by side the colored Fogg pages, the relevant Folio Society pages and the Clarendon colored pages. Again, we both observed widely variant colorings and widely variant details. The Fogg edition coloring is denser and richer, while its details are in every case sharper.

To try to find out why, I consulted three experts in the printing industry in Toronto. First, I spoke to Marcus Schubert of Toronto Image Works, a renowned high-quality digital imaging house, and then, at Schubert's suggestion, I talked to Jay Mandarino, president of C. J. Graphics Inc., Printers and Lithographers. Finally, I spoke to Michael Torosian, proprietor of Lumiere Press, which specializes in photographic, limited edition, handbound books. Torosian, who works as both administrator and technician, was able to explain to me as a layperson what is entailed in various processes—photogravure, collotype, photographic offset, halftone screens, and stochastic offset lithography. What follows by way of explanation of the different methods of reproduction is always informed by the clarity of Torosian's explanations and my own attempts to grasp these highly technical processes.

After examining the Fogg, Clarendon, and Folio Society versions, Schubert compared the density and richness of the coloring of the Fogg edition, the quality of its tonal range, to examples he had seen of gravure reproductions and wondered whether this was the actual process used. Photogravure is a printmaking process developed in the 1830s with an ability to register extraordinary tonal variation. This process was more prevalent in the first half of the twentieth century than today. Torosian pointed out to me that photogravure is an intaglio process where the etching plate is inked, wiped, and heated. The paper must always be dampened before being pressed.
into the plate. The results can be very subtle. In some cases a reticulated pattern is placed over the entire plate before it is exposed to the negative. This is the equivalent of the halftone screen, except more random. Torosian felt that the overall effect of the Fogg edition was subtle and very like an original watercolor on densely textured handmade paper.

Jay Mandarino of C. J. Graphics is an internationally recognized, award-winning fine art printer, specializing in limited edition fine art books. I took my three Night Thoughts paper editions out to his plant where paper samples and pigments and a production crew were on site. Together we compared the reproductions.

Mandarino agreed with the judgment of the richness, that is, the vibrant color and the sharp details, of the Fogg edition. The Fogg edition, however, lacks a colophon, and it presents conflicting printing information. On the title page, the reader is told the book is an American printing, and yet each individual reproduction of illustrations from Night Thoughts is marked "Printed in Austria." (This variation may be a simple matter of site of production versus place of publication, or of a division of letterpress for the introductory pamphlet and another method for the printing of the illustrations.) There is no information in this book about actual printing processes, but an unusual and complex dot pattern is visible on its pages. Again, Mandarino's conclusion was that the printing method was photogravure, with each sheet hand fed, which produced very sharp detail and very high quality.

Although each of the three experts whom I consulted speculated that the printing process for the Fogg reproductions was probably photogravure, the other process which was widely used for fine art printing in the early twentieth century was colotype. Colotype was developed in the 1860s and has the advantage, like hand photogravure, of rendering continuous gradations of tone. The printing surface is a film of gelatin which is subjected to different degrees of drying and hardening. In colotype, a base color creates a framework for the image. Subsequent colors may be laid on through a hand-stenciling process known as pochoir, or through a series of separate colotype plates. The irregular dot pattern discernible in the Fogg reproductions indicates that the plates used were not pochoir, but were rather colotype, photographic plates. The process is labor intensive in either case, taking months and months to complete, because of all the handwork involved. Because of the subtle layering, the end result can have great depth of color, as in the Fogg reproductions. A side effect of the colotype process is the reticulation, or the breaking up into a fine-grained pattern of the gelatin coating on the plate as it is dried. Finally, although the consensus among the printing experts I had consulted was that photogravure was highly likely for the printing of the Fogg reproductions, in fact under 100 times magnification there are discernible separate colotype layers and a telltale ragged craquelure pattern in both the monochrome and color sheets. Colotype is the only process which would produce at this time the unusual dot pattern found in the Fogg reproductions.

Mandarino and his production head reported that the photographic dot patterns in the Clarendon and Folio Society editions are pretty much the same. They felt the color quality is not significantly different between the two, although the use of textured paper gives the Folio edition a much more luxurious feel. For the Clarendon edition they estimated 150 dots per square inch and for the Folio Society 175 dots. They found a kind of uniformity in each page of reproductions, and a lack of distinction in details and variations found in the originals. Mandarino argued that in order to produce a set of reproductions closest to the originals, offset lithography using a stochastic screening process, where a laser etches the dots onto the plates, would have allowed a variable dot pattern for each page and given more vibrant color on the paper. The Clarendon edition was made using photographic offset, a halftone screen with film. The Folio edition uses a digital photographic process, eliminating the film stage, in which an image is sent from the computer to the press.

The consensus is that accurate color reproductions are very difficult to achieve; what we hope for is a continuous tone translation which recalls the original. As viewers, rather than as printers, we must ask ourselves how important it is that the reproductions of the Night Thoughts drawings be precise as to color. The Folio Society volumes bring us close to the originals, but how close is close enough? In some of Blake's drawings for Night Thoughts, color is a critical component of meaning. I will return to color in my remarks on Hamlyn's commentary, but let me take just one example from the originals to illustrate how important color can be to our understanding. On page 32 of Night III (NT 107) are two figures, Age and Disease, emerging from under the text box against a background of red, which is decorated with branching lines. The Clarendon background reproduction is yellowish-red in hue. The Folio is a brighter red, not as red as the original, but red. What the two figures are cruising in is the human bloodstream, complete with branching veins. Accurate color cues the viewer to the content of the design. Blake knew very well the scientific and medical treatises of his own time, and William Harvey's theory of blood circulation was more than a century old. The notion that disease is carried by infections in the bloodstream was commonplace, and is mentioned by Young as well. Color, then, can be crucial as an identifying sign.

IV. The Original Drawings and the Folio Society Reproductions

The ultimate question for scholars is accuracy: how close are the Folio Society reproductions to the originals? Although I have extensive notes on all of the original drawings, and measurements of many of them, accuracy can finally be determined only by placing the reproduction next to the original. In September 2006, in the British Museum Department of Prints and Drawings, I examined each page of the Folio Society edition, copy H (one of the lettered hors de commerce copies), next to Blake's originals.
I found remarkable variations as to accuracy of color in the Folio edition throughout the series. Some designs seem precise, others in coloring almost unrecognizable. Problems of coloring arise most particularly in designs where there is great tonal variation, such as the title page to Night III (NT 78), and there is a general washing out of color and a turn to a greenish hue in the grays. Night V, page 29 (NT 184), is an example of this change in coloring, in its turning of gray to green. Night VI, page 3 (NT 224), is pure gray in Blake's design, with apricot flames, and an apricot-tinted border. In the Folio edition, the colors are blue, gray, and red. In fact, greenishness seems to be the major problem in the edition's coloring. Blake's gray tree trunk for Night VI, page 13 (NT 234), is now green. In the same Night, page 36 (NT 257), Blake's partial blue ground has become an all-over blue. The title page before Night VII in Blake's originals (NT 265) is gold, gray, and white; in the Folio edition it is green and gray. Blake's color might be a lemon yellow; the edition will change it to gold (Night VIII, page 2 [NT 348]), or Blake's gold in Night IX, page 62 (NT 480), is changed to brown. There are many examples of such shifts. While they may seem minor, they are surprising in an edition on which such care has been lavished. The Department of Prints and Drawings reported to me that the British Museum itself had done the photography, but the Folio Society came in and checked proofs against the originals. Perhaps it is impossible to expect a check of every single page—certainly that was not done. Because the Folio sheet size is taller and wider than Blake's, there is some figural distortion. There are also consequent distortions in the text box and the relationship between elements in some of the designs.

Another remarkable feature which deserves study is the numerous pentimenti on the Blake drawings. There is a world of marginal activity here. Scene after scene, page after page, has erased pencil marks, figures, scenes, and postures. These are clear in the originals, but not always in the Folio edition, nor are they remarked upon in Hamlyn's commentary. Indeed, the complexity of the pentimenti in Blake's Night Thoughts rivals that of the Vala manuscript, and will richly reward study, which none of the currently available reproductions will allow. Page 28 of Night I (NT 33), for example, has several pencil sketches illustrating the three ages of man. They are readily visible in the originals, and dimly in the Folio edition, but they are not commented on by Hamlyn. Anyone interested in this parallel universe will have to visit the originals.

There are also annotations both in the text-box area and below in the tinted border. Some of these inscriptions refer to the many numbering systems found in pencil on various areas of the mountings, some in the lower section, others toward the upper margins. Page 25 of Night I (NT 30), for example, has a note: "wrong plac'd, as are also several others [P Lane?] number'd the corners of / The pages as they ought to follow to the end of Night the Fourth." Because of cropping, all annotations beyond the text box and drawing area are not visible in the Folio edition.

When Blake's original drawings were bound by the firm of Benedict, No. 4 Mays Building, Saint Martin's Lane, they were bound out of sequence. In the marginal notations are several attempts, in several hands, to sort out the correct order of the designs. In fact, when Frederic James Shields did his description of the Night Thoughts designs for William Michael Rossetti's "Descriptive Catalogue" in the second edition of Alexander Gilchrist's Life of William Blake (1880), he also made a number of errors regarding the order of the drawings, so they must have remained out of order until they were disbound for exhibition at the Fogg Museum and in Birmingham in 1928-29, before they went to the British Museum. Hence one of the hands in the various pencil numberings on the originals might be that of Frederic Shields. These incomplete numberings on the designs are now part of the history of the drawings themselves.

V. The Commentary

There is no question that Blake shared the public reverence for Edward Young's Night Thoughts which was apparent throughout the eighteenth and well into the nineteenth century. Young was spoken of along with John Milton, and Night Thoughts was several times published in editions with Paradise Lost. In his own work, Blake began to quote Young in the 1780s. Young was a major influence on the age, and Blake's remarkable output in the Night Thoughts project was no doubt fueled by both Young's reputation and Blake's own admiration for him.

There has been little study of the Blake-Young relationship, and Robin Hamlyn's commentary makes very plain the intimacy between Blake's drawings and Young's poem, the visual artist and the poet. Both Blake and Young were learned, deeply schooled in the Bible and the classics. Young's politics, and his courting of promotion, might have offended Blake, but there is much which Blake would have admired. And Young's Newtonian inebriation—Newton does demand the muse—which seems to have made Young soar into the heavens, as often carries Blake up with him as it becomes an occasion for Blake to demur. Both men are visionaries, and their considerable common ground in "European literature and religious and classical iconography" (Hamlyn xx) is everywhere evident in Young's allusions and Blake's responses.

Although Martin Butlin in his two-volume The Paintings and Drawings of William Blake (1981) does deal briefly with each Night Thoughts drawing, Hamlyn's is the first monograph discussion of every single Night Thoughts design. Bentley calls Hamlyn's commentary "workmanlike" (Blake 40.1 [summer 2006]: 13) and in its page-by-page format the commentary is indeed "workmanlike," which is no small achievement, but it is much more, for it takes us back to huge reservoirs of images and references, historical, art historical, political, biblical, biographical and classical, and also points to autobiographical moments for Young in the poem, as well as important political references for Young's time. Paradoxically, Young's life
in the poem has been overtaken by Blake’s reputation in our
time, and the text has been treated as a Blake text rather than
a Young text. Hamlyn certainly redresses this imbalance. The
virtues of the commentary are the density of its identification
of classical references in both Young’s text and Blake’s pic-
tures, the use of Young’s biography to explicate moments of
the poem, the creation of a political context for Young’s writ-
ing of the poem, and the cross-referencing of Blake’s imagery
to other works by Blake, both verbal and visual.

The page-by-page format of the commentary is designed to
explain the pictures to the general reader who might be pre-
sumed to be just leafing through them, perhaps even dipping
into the volumes at random. A page-by-page commentary is
not ideal for a coherent reading, because the format neces-
sarily involves a lot of repetition, and some of the arguments,
assuming a general reader, might seem perhaps self-evident,
even too literal, to a scholar. This is the difficult task—to cre-
ate a commentary which satisfies two radically different audi-
ences.

Hamlyn discusses Blake’s working methods in these draw-
ings with admirable clarity and concision, showing how each
illustration was drawn in graphite, worked over with water-
color and then often “strengthened with firmer dark lines”
(xviii). He even points out marks left by two edges of a sheet
of paper which were placed on a design where the watercolor
was still wet. Such lines are clearly visible on the left and upper
left around the text box on page 55 of Night VII (NT 327).
He also argues that Blake’s use of color is conventional—green
for earth, gold for the sun, black for death, and the like, since
there are so many different scenes in the series, some set in the
world of the grotesque, some classically iconographic, others
Christian, and some even historical. Hamlyn presents the cos-
tuming of Blake’s figures as timeless rather than contemporar-
eous, just as we find in Blake’s own Songs of Innocence. While
this argument holds generally, Hamlyn does not examine the
possibility of actual historical representations. In fact, the se-
ries, just like Blake’s design of the pilgrims from Chaucer’s
Canterbury Tales, contains a real portrait gallery of Blake’s
time, including Pitt and Fox, the king and the prince regent,
and even Napoleon. The possibility of actual representation is
cued quite early in the series in a realistic portrait of the poet
Edward Young. Later there are two portraits of Blake himself.
None of these realistic portraits is mentioned by Hamlyn.

Edward Young was notably shy of having his portrait drawn
and several biographies recount how he finally capitulated and
“sat to the pencil.” The only authenticated portrait of Young is an oil painting, now in All Souls College, Oxford, by
the eminent painter Joseph Highmore. The image has been
reproduced in several editions of Young’s works, and Blake
must have known it, for he includes a portrait of Young on the
verso of the first preface page (NT 5), pen in hand, light from
above beaming down on him as he looks up to that light. This
is a realistic portrait of Young, and there is another in Night
VIII, page 67 (NT 413), where he is reunited with his dead
wife. Throughout the series, there are two pilgrims whom
Blake uses to make the journey through the landscapes of the
poem. One has golden curly hair, the other has straight hair.
The curly-haired figure is also depicted in a design which is
cognate to the earlier portrait of Young. In Night VII, page 51
(NT 323), the figure is described as a prophet from Sion, and
he reappears a few pages later, inspired by an angel, on page
72 (NT 344). These two portraits are of Blake himself, and
resemble strikingly a later visionary portrait of Blake drawn
by his wife Catherine.

One of the problems with the commentary stems in fact
from its strength, the richness of its referencing, for Hamlyn
has a tendency to read Young as if Young were John Milton,
and to comment on Blake and Young as if we were read-
ing Milton’s Paradise Lost, in particular, and not Young and
Blake’s Night Thoughts. For instance, in discussing Night IX,
page 39 (NT 457), a spectacular design, and a stunning pas-
sage of poetry, where the urns of heaven pour down inspira-
tion, Hamlyn reads back into the composite work classical,
biblical, scientific, Shakespearean and Miltonic sources to the
point where Young and Blake are buried altogether (291-93).

In conclusion, I’d like to return to the two frontispieces
which open the bound drawings. The first frontispiece (NT 1
[1929-7-13-1]) shows Christ emerging from the tomb, throw-
ing aside his grave clothes as two figures kneel before his radi-
ance. Hamlyn correctly identifies the scene as the resurrection,
but sees Christ as rising toward heaven (3). That is certainly an
error of emphasis, for Christ does not rise to heaven until his
ascension, which is 40 days later than the resurrection. Blake’s
design shows an energetic figure leaping up and pushing away
clouds, but not an ascension. (There is an ascension scene
later in the series of Night Thoughts drawings.) Hamlyn com-
pares this first frontispiece to the second frontispiece, NT 264
(1929-7-13-133): “A different treatment of the subject is seen
in the frontispiece to volume II” (3; see also 165). He quotes
various biblical passages to bolster this identification, but the
passages quoted do not explain the actual design by Blake,
which shows Christ as a beaming light centered in a world
of darkness where two figures are wrapped, even cocooned,
in imprisoning carapaces or clothes, as they agonizingly twist
and look toward his radiance. The scene, which is also appar-
ent in the preliminary sketch on the back of the watercolor
(not reproduced in the Folio Society edition), may indeed be
read as an early stage of the resurrection—chronologically ear-
lier than the scene depicted in the first frontispiece with Christ
just beginning to emerge from the tomb—but it also refers to
the harrowing of hell, the scene based on the New Testament
passage that tells how, before Christ ascended, he descended
“into the lower parts of the earth” (Ephesians 4:9-10).

While one might disagree with analyses such as these of in-
dividual pages of the composite work, Hamlyn’s commentary
is a major contribution to Blake scholarship. It is rich in its
knowledge of art, art history, Edward Young, William Blake,
western iconography, the Bible, and the classics, and it will
provide a foundation for all future work on Blake’s Night
Thoughts.
The Folio Society edition does not constitute a facsimile in the truest sense of the word. Any scholar wishing to complete work on the drawings will still have to consult the originals in the British Museum. Nonetheless, the Folio Society has given us a beautiful edition of Young's poem with reproductions of pictures by Blake and an important commentary. Together, the three volumes do constitute a major publishing event.

Editors' note: The Folio Society edition may be purchased by calling the society; the telephone number depends on your location, but is listed at <http://www.foliosoc.co.uk>.


Reviewed by Elizabeth B. Bentley

Forty years ago Michael Bedard was introduced to the work of William Blake by his high school English teacher, and he has continued to live with Blake ever since. He knew he had to write a biography which would assist adolescent readers, and nine years ago he started writing it. During these years he established himself as a poet and as an author of books for children.

My first experience of this book was hearing it read. My reader and I agreed that it is eminently suitable to be read both aloud and silently. It is also a book that is accessible for browsing. Furthermore, it is visually pleasing, with 89 well-chosen reproductions, including a plate from For Children: The Gates of Paradise as a heading for the prologue and each of the 16 chapters.

In the first two chapters, Bedard points out the effect on the small William Blake of his long solitary walks in the country where he could create his own songs about "Englands green & pleasant Land." Here he experienced some of his first visions. In the city he observed the poverty and suffering brought about by the "dark Satanic Mills" of the Industrial Revolution. Bedard skilfully tells us what fine parents William Blake had. They provided enough security and recognition of his gifts to support him in becoming a richly developed human being who

was not simply an engraver; he was a poet and a painter. He dreamt of uniting the arts of writing and painting, as the artists of the Middle Ages had in their illuminated manuscripts. He discovered a way to write and draw on the copper plates he used for engraving, and create a raised image he could print from on his wooden press and then color by hand.

He called his discovery Illuminated Printing, and in the books he created with it, he confronted all systems of power that confined the human spirit. He announced a gospel of freedom and fellowship founded on the exercise of the creative imagination. In a world impressed with the great and powerful, he celebrated the small. He delighted in the innocence of the child. He showed us "a world in a grain of sand, and a heaven in a wild flower." (2)

Bedard presents Catherine as the wife William needed. She worked by his side and did not complain when project after project did not bring the income they had expected. One despairs over the years when William was forgotten. We can be grateful that Thomas Butts remained a faithful commissioner of paintings by Blake, especially the Bible illustrations. The formation of a group of young admirers, who called themselves the "Ancients" and ranged in age from 15 to 25, was a godsend to the childless Blakes in their old age. The Ancients came for advice, they came to admire, they went off for excursions into the country to paint and draw, taking William with them.

William Blake had said on more than one occasion that death was not something to fear. It was like passing from one room to another. Bedard describes Blake's passage with a sure pen which leads us to admire his biography of Blake.

I recommend this book to adolescents and to anyone teaching them, first and foremost for its compelling portrait of Blake and his time. In an age like ours that is experienced as apocalyptic, it is well for youth to be introduced to a human being who does not turn his back on that condition but can become an inner counselor and guide.

I look forward to giving this book to my 12-year-old grandson and hope to be able to read it with my granddaughter when she turns 10. I hope that they will find both Michael Bedard's and William Blake's Gates of Paradise as rewarding as I do.
MINUTE PARTICULAR

The Sketch on the Verso of Blake’s Self-Portrait: An Identification

BY M. CROSBY

ROBERT Essick has persuasively argued that a portrait of William Blake in his collection is a self-portrait and that it may be dated to the period Blake executed a number of miniature portraits under the guidance of his Sussex patron, William Hayley.¹ On the verso of the self-portrait is a rough pencil sketch (illus. 1). The subject of the sketch is difficult to ascertain due to extensive soiling. In 1975, Martin Butlin suggested that the pencil lines on the verso constitute more than one sketch.² In order to facilitate his reading, Essick traced over the pencil lines in black ink (illus. 2), revealing, as he states,

a single composition, not multiple “sketches.” On the left are buildings, or a single structure with several bays including an arched entry. From this cluster stretches a colonnade, gradually diminished in size to show its extension into the distance on the right. . . . On the far right are two standing figures, rigidly composed of simple verticals and a few lines to indicate heads and arms.³

Essick suggests that the sketch is by Blake while Butlin intimates that it may have been drawn by either John Varley or John Linnell. Butlin was the first to attempt an identification of the pencil lines, suggesting that there are parallels in “the [Smaller] Blake-Varley sketchbook.”⁴ Butlin uses this rather imprecise identification to support his main contention that the portrait was executed c. 1819-25 by Linnell, but, as Essick points out, Butlin does not identify a particular drawing or drawings in the Blake-Varley sketchbook. Essick offers a tentative identification, suggesting a lightly drawn sketch on page 40 of the sketchbook, which depicts an arched doorway and castellated walls. Essick also suggests that the sketch shares similar motifs with the Job illustrations of 1805-06, but does not claim to find an exact parallel or offer a precise identification of the subject.⁵ There are two drawings by the miniature painter George Engleheart that appear to offer a more likely identification of the sketch than those hitherto mentioned.

3. Essick 132.

2. (above) *Portrait of William Blake*, verso pencil sketch with lines traced in ink. By kind permission of Robert N. Essick.

Engleheart was a close friend of Hayley and frequently visited Felpham. During these visits, Engleheart executed two drawings, a pencil sketch (illus. 3) and a watercolor, pen and ink drawing (illus. 4) of Hayley's marine villa, known locally as Turret House due to the large turret that formed the entrance. Both drawings date c. 1810 and depict the Turret House from the southerly aspect. The drawings were first reproduced in George C. Williamson's 1902 biography of Engleheart. The pencil sketch only was reproduced in Morchard Bishop's 1951 biography of Hayley and also in 1969, as the cover illustration to Elizabeth Johnston and William Wells's catalogue of Blake's portraits for Hayley's library. Both drawings depict a single-storey colonnade constructed of at least six bays that appears analogous to the colonnade depicted in the rough sketch on the verso of the self-portrait.

Hayley employed Samuel Bunce, architect to the Admiralty, to design and oversee the construction of his Turret House. In a letter of 1 May 1797, Bunce tells Hayley of his intention to proceed with the construction of "a colonnade protruding from the turret, or being formed of the turret." By June 1798, this idea had changed, with Bunce recommending that the

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7. The house was demolished in the 1960s, but the two Engleheart drawings, the surviving correspondence between Hayley and his architect, including numerous plans of the house, and the 1876 Ordnance Survey map of Felpham allow Turret House and its grounds to be reconstructed.

8. William Wells and Elizabeth Johnston, William Blake's "Heads of the Poets" for Turret House, Residence of William Hayley, Felpham (Manchester: Manchester City Art Gallery, n.d.). This booklet is undated, but was produced for the exhibition "For Friendship's Sake": William Blake and William Hayley at the Manchester City Art Gallery in 1969.


coach house be kept as low as possible so that it can be joined onto the proposed colonnade. Bunce asks Hayley: "What do you think of giving up the small room over the coach house & letting the arcade run thus?" There is no mention of the colonnade in their later correspondence, which suggests that the matter may have been resolved during one of Bunce's many visits to Felpham. According to the 1876 Ordnance Survey map of Felpham, which was the first topographical survey of the village to use the 25-inch to one-mile scale, the colonnade was approximately 47 meters long, running between the main house and a small building that, according to Bunce's letter of June 1798, served as the coach house.12

The similarity between the colonnade depicted in both Engleheart drawings and the rough sketch on the verso of the self-portrait suggests a possible identification. The sketch appears to depict the northwest aspect of Hayley's house. The structure on the left of the sketch may be an extremely hasty delineation of the rear of Turret House, with the horizontal and vertical lines above the arched doorway representing the turret at the front of the house.13 According to the plans of the house in the Hayley-Bunce correspondence, there was no rear doorway in the house. However, the plans do not include the colonnade and the extended west wing, which are depicted in both Engleheart drawings. The 1876 OS map indicates that the colonnade extended approximately five meters beyond the main structure of the house, although this is not evident in either of the Engleheart drawings. It is possible that the arched doorway on the sketch depicts the northern entrance to the colonnade. The colonnade stretches to the right, terminating in the coach house, which is either represented, or more likely obscured, by the vertical lines on the right of the sketch. Essick suggests that the vertical lines could represent two figures standing "well forward of even the nearest reaches of the building."14 If this is the case, the coach house may be obscured behind the figures, who could possibly represent Blake and Hayley.

Alternatively, like Engleheart's drawings, the sketch may depict the southern aspect of Hayley's Turret House, albeit rendered from a position further back than Engleheart's pencil drawing. In this case, the structure with the arched doorway may represent the coach house, with the colonnade running to the right and disappearing behind the vertical lines on the right of the sketch, which possibly depict the main structure of the house, although the vertical lines appear to show two structures, or two figures, rather than one turret as in Engleheart's drawings.

The key feature of the rough sketch on the verso of the self-portrait is the single-storey colonnade that begins at the building, or cluster of buildings, on the left and gradually diminishes until terminating in the vertical lines on the right of the sketch. The similarity between the colonnade and Engleheart's two depictions of Hayley's colonnade suggests that both artists were working from the same source. Blake is known to have executed a small number of landscapes while in Felpham. For example, there is an unfinished pencil and watercolor drawing that depicts the southern aspect of the village, including St. Mary's Church, Hayley's turret and Blake's cottage, partially hidden behind trees and bathed in a ray of sunlight.15 The rough sketch may be a prefatory drawing for a planned picture of Hayley's marine villa that was never begun or is now lost. An identification of the sketch with Hayley's Turret House reinforces Essick's dating of the self-portrait to the period Blake was resident in Felpham and learning the techniques of miniature portraiture.16

12. Hayley's friend, John Johnson, recalls this building being used as a porter's lodge after 1800; see Hayley, Memoirs 2: 198.
13. The doorway to Turret House was a brick arch that was constructed over what Hayley refers to as a "Trilithon" formed of "three great stones." In later correspondence Bunce refers to the "Trilithon" entrance, describing Hayley's newly built house as "the Druidical seat." It is possible that Blake's depiction of trilithons in Milton and Jerusalem was in part influenced by the entrance to Hayley's Turret House. See Fitzwilliam Museum, Hayley Letters, XXXII, f. 3 and f. 19.
14. Essick 133.

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NEWSLETTER

Companion of Angels, a musical drama based on the lives of the Blakes, will be performed in the autumn at the following venues in the UK:
23 November: St. James's Church, Piccadilly, London, 7.30 pm
25 November: Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, 1.15 pm
1 December: St. Mary's Church, Felpham, 7.30 pm

The music is by Rachel Stott, and the arrangement and commentary on the words of Blake and his contemporaries is by Tom Lowenstein, who has kindly provided us with the following description:

The work will consist of scenes based on the lives and work of William and Catherine Blake. The tension between Blake's visionary illumination and the relative obscurity in which he worked will be evoked in the context of his social and professional isolation, economic pressures, the political turmoil of the period and Blake's difficulty in attracting patronage. The libretto has been constructed from Blake's prose and poetry and the piece will be in the nature of an oratorio with interaction between characters.

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