

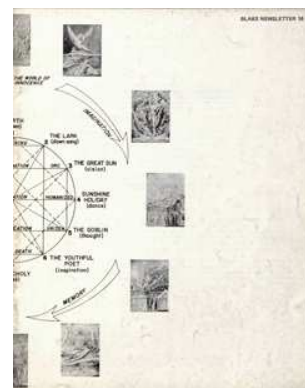
AN ILLUSTRATED QUARTERLY BLAKE

N O T E

Blake's Designs for L'Allegro and Il Penseroso, Part 1: A Survey of the Designs

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NOTES

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Blake's Designs for *L'ALLEGRO* and *IL PENNEROSO*, With Special Attention to *L'ALLEGRO* 1, "Mirth and Her Companions": Some Remarks Made and Designs Discussed at MLA Seminar 12: "Illuminated Books by William Blake," 29 December 1970

This version of my remarks has been somewhat tempered, amplified, and polished, though not quite as thoroughly as I should have liked. Because of the paucity of discussion devoted to this series of designs, however, it may be that quick publication of these observations will assist in maintaining dialogue about them. Several people found the diagram by Judith Rhodes, which I distributed at the Seminar and which accompanies my discussion here [see below], to be rather formidable, so she has added an explanation of what she wishes to bring out with this device.

All the watercolors are well-reproduced in color in Adrian Van Sinderen, *Blake, The Mystic Genius* (Syracuse, 1949)--Bentley and Nurmi no. 2086. They are also available in satisfactory color slides from the Pierpont Morgan Library. Black-and-white reproductions are included in John Milton, *Poems in English*, ed. Geoffrey Keynes (London, 1926)--Bentley and Nurmi no. 314. They are also reproduced, much diminished, in E. J. Rose, "Blake's Illustrations for *Paradise Lost*, *L'Allegro* and *Il Penneroso*: A Thematic Reading," *Hartford Studies in Literature*, 2 (Spring 1970), 40-67, an important article to which I refer. The second installment of my remarks will deal at some length with Blake's first illustration of *L'Allegro*, "Mirth and Her Companions." Both engraved versions of this design are reproduced and discussed in Geoffrey Keynes, ed., *The Engravings of William Blake: The Separate Plates* (Dublin, 1956)--Bentley and Nurmi no. 533.

While this article was in the final state of preparation, *Blake's Visionary Forms Dramatic*, eds. David V. Erdman and John E. Grant (Princeton, 1970) was published. It includes my brief interpretation of the sixth design for *L'Allegro*, entitled "From Fable to Human Vision: A Note on the First Illustration" on pp. xi-xiv, and this design is satisfactorily reproduced in color, while design 12 is reproduced in black-and-white. Below I have also referred the reader to reproductions of some of the *Night Thoughts* designs which are contained in this volume (hereafter abbreviated BVFD). As is customary, the first number after a reference to *Night Thoughts* is to its place in the entire sequence, whereas the material in parenthesis refers to the Night and page number; since not all pages are numbered, letters indicate the place of the picture in the sequence of the Night.

I am very grateful to David Erdman for providing the slide projector at the Seminar and for operating it in a flawless manner. Not least helpful was his sense of pacing, which tended to encourage only a practicable amount of discussion for some designs that might otherwise have detained us unduly.

PART I: A SURVEY OF THE DESIGNS

In his suggestive article on "Graphic-Poetic Structuring" that appears in *Blake*

Studies, 3 (Fall 1970), Karl Kroeber proposes that we might get farther if we could "kick the habit of labelling" the characters depicted in *Urizen*, or at least "mitigate" it (p. 12). If he means no more than that we ought to be able to enjoy the ballgame without a score card, there is no need to disagree. But after having striven vainly in two letters to persuade the reviewer in the *TLS* in 1967 that the lady depicted at the end of Blake's *Milton* ought to be recognizable as Ololon--or *somebody* mentioned prominently in the epic--I'm not prepared to concede that Blake's art is as peculiar or mysterious as Kroeber seems to imply.

It is true that Blake's repertoire of verbal and pictorial imagery tends to spill over from one work to another and that the student must read or look on further into Blake's later works to find out what to make of the first appearance of, say, Rintrah. But then he discovers that he can't just read backward from a later identification either. How many pictures are going to turn out not to be aligned with any words--even in the canon of illuminated books? It is all very perplexing, and all very simple--but involved.

I'll admit that nothing can be more dismal than the mechanical habit of labelling an old man *Urizen*, a mature man *Los*, and a youth *Orc*--unless it be the habit of attaching to these divine images still more outlandish names found in portentous and occult old books. Even when some kind of correspondence can be established, the careful scholar discovers that, well, yes, Blake meant something like that, but really it was quite a bit different--in fact, you might say it was just the opposite. Blake must not be relegated to his former state of splendid and irrelevant isolation from the main currents of thought, but he cannot be well represented in the guise of a philosopher, as is suggested by the inconsequential pages in Gillham's intelligent book, *Blake's Contrary States*.

When we come to Blake and Milton, there really is something to talk about. The evidence of the watermarks indicates that the designs for *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* constitute Blake's last thoughts on Milton, save for some stray allusions overheard by Crabb Robinson and the glorious designs from the last fragmentary series for *Paradise Lost*. They are also much more complicated, more dense in particulars, than the other Milton designs and we have the great advantage of possessing a picture-by-picture guide written by the Interpreter himself. I had copies of Blake's commentary mimeographed from the Erdman text and distributed at the Seminar to serve as reminders. Blake doesn't tell us all we need to know about the pictures, but with Milton's help we can see that Blake had a lot to say.

It is not extravagant to declare that systematic published criticism of these designs began in 1970 with the article by E. J. Rose in the Spring issue of *Hartford Studies in Literature*. I have some important reservations about Rose's premises, interpretations, and conclusions, but I wish to make it clear that I believe there are admirable things in this article. *Blake's Visionary Forms Dramatic*, the anthology I co-edited with David Erdman, was not published by Princeton until February 1971; consequently the audience at the Seminar had no opportunity to read my short piece on design 6 for *L'Allegro*, which serves as part of the introduction to the volume. I brought mimeographed copies of the article for distribution at the Seminar for those who wished to read this closely-written piece after the meeting.

I have silently incorporated into my remarks a number of points which Judith Rhodes--a graduate student at the University of Iowa who is writing a thesis on Blake's designs for Milton--first observed, and I have discussed with her many of the ideas I shall put forth. Her diagram of the thematic relationships among Blake's designs for *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* follows my remarks here [see below]. What has proven to be most helpful to me is the imaginative skepticism with which she greeted a number of my

plausible but invalid hunches, thus making it clear to me that I had not yet reached an understanding of Blake's meaning. Doubtless errors remain in the interpretations I am advancing and I look forward to their being pointed out by others, but for now I take entire responsibility for them.

We all know that Blake is complicated, but we tend to shy away from geometrical descriptions of his complexities partly because, as Frye has pointed out, Blake himself generally avoided them. At first glance Mrs. Rhodes's diagram seems somewhat bewildering, but after a little study it enables us to recognize some of the pervasive interrelations among these designs. No doubt, after glancing at the diagram, someone will think: "How Urizenic: bring out the compasses in the year of dearth." I would hope to reassure those who are uneasy that all legitimate apprehensions have been anticipated and are shared by Mrs. Rhodes. Certainly not all the relationships indicated are of precisely equal weight. Nor are all the connections indicated equally verifiable: that between designs 2 and 9, for example, is probably a contrastive or contrary relationship, not a connection of similarities. And there is an important connection in symbolism between figures in designs 1 and 9 that the diagram does not call attention to. Doubtless all the designs are somehow connected, but to say this is merely to utter a pre- or post-critical hypothesis: the question is, how?

In the Seminar I showed slides of the whole *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* series fairly rapidly, not pausing for much comment on each. Then I made some more general remarks before turning to a detailed consideration of the first design, "Mirth and Her Companions." This method helps to place Blake's initial premise--his first design--more clearly since we must achieve an awareness of its consequences or its "context" within the rest of the series before we can appreciate the weight of the design itself. Since there are also two engraved versions of this first design, in contrast to the others, an expositor has a great deal of symbolism to work with. We also looked at some other Blake designs that seem relevant or illuminating in one way or another to particulars in the first design.

In a survey of the designs it seems best to point out details of possibly symbolic significance that might not be noticed or would have an uncertain status if one depended entirely on the Morgan Library slides, which tend to turn blue into black, and the reproductions in the Van Sinderen volume, which are done with a fairly crude screen process. One should observe that Blake numbered the designs consecutively in his commentary, the sheets of which have been laid down, thus obscuring some writing on the other sides of the pages. It is also noteworthy that many, if not all, of the original designs have been trimmed, sometimes irregularly, across the bottoms especially, often cropping part of the signatures. This can be observed in the Van Sinderen reproductions which happily reproduce the entirety of each picture, a practice that is too often not respected in the reproductions contained in the art books that are turned out today. These wonderful pictures are not the only ones of Blake's that have been unconscionably trimmed. The great series for "On the Morning for Christ's Nativity," now in the Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester, and Blake's greatest undertaking, his designs for Young's *Night Thoughts*, have been similarly trimmed. I gather from an art historian that the edges of pictures were, in former times, commonly trimmed when the paper had become worn or ragged. If this aspect of the drawings is unremarkable, though lamentable, another minutia may be more meaningful. I would be glad to have an explanation of what seems to be the form of the signature, "W. Blake inv," on one side or the other at the bottoms of all the pictures save the first, where the "inv" precedes the signature. Possibly this variation has some significance; can anyone say for certain what "inv" should be understood to imply with respect to subsequent engraving?

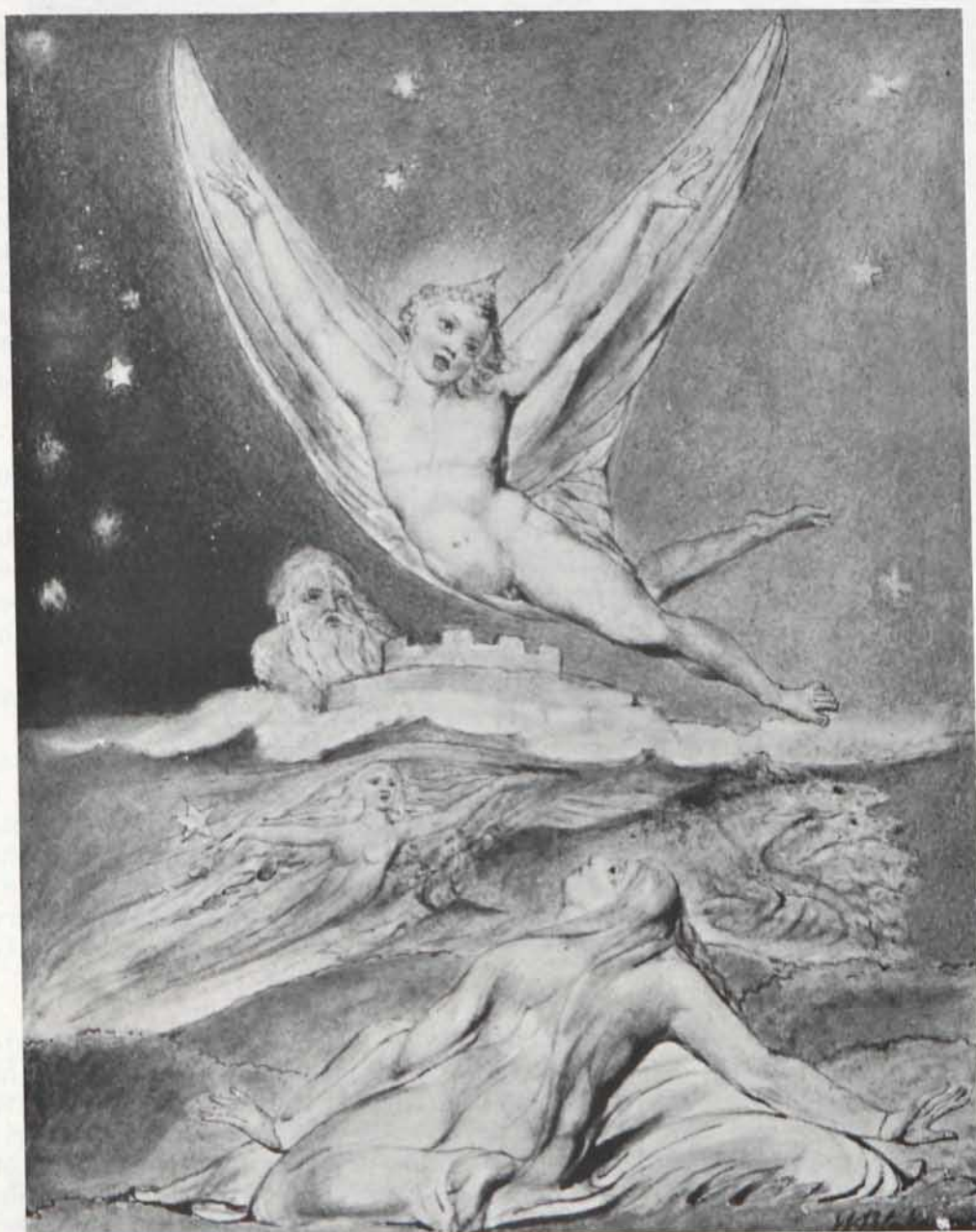
MIRTH [fig. 1] Of the balanced groups of buildings the one on the right has a

distinct area of water in front of it. Most of the figures are significantly altered in the engraved versions. Even without using the altered engraved versions as a standard, the indistinctness of some of the figures is more noteworthy in this than in any other of the designs. The female figure at the right does not have cat whiskers in the watercolor, as she does in the engraved versions, but wears a remarkable twist or cue of hair quite like that of the flyer at two o'clock as he is represented in the watercolor version only. At first he is depicted carrying a wand in his left hand and seems to be controlling four small balls, but in the engraved versions he trails a scroll, being closely related in posture and deed to the figure in the Upcott auto-



1 "Mirth" From The Pierpont Morgan Library

graph. There is no figure standing on the upraised left hand of the ass-eared figure in the watercolor and the two flyers above him are uncertainly related, whereas in the engraving the upper flyer fills the goblet of the lower one from a pitcher. The bubble-blowing trumpeter at the top in the watercolor takes off from between the thumb and forefinger of Mirth, whereas in the first state of the engraving he is launched from her thumb, while in the second state Mirth's hand is shifted to support the infant that flies from the outermost to the innermost figure at one o'clock. In the watercolor the outermost figure seems to have her arms crossed over her breasts and to be hugging at least two objects to her, though what they are is not ascertainable. At



2 "The Lark" From The Pierpont Morgan Library

least five figures (the two at the right are very indistinct) surround the head of Mirth in the watercolor version, whereas they are distinctly figured as two pipers and two tambourinists in the engraved versions. Mirth's rose crown is clear in the watercolor and her unnaturally curved neck is nevertheless pleasingly drawn, though Blake rejected this piece of pictorial Mannerism (as Morton Paley correctly described it) in the second engraved state. The face of "Care" is covered with distinct red wrinkle-lines in the original. Sweet Liberty, the Nymph held daintily at the viewer's left, has no bow in the watercolor version, though a line near her waist indicates that Blake had considered drawing her with a weapon at this early stage. The male figure of "Jest" looks at "Youthful Jollity" in the watercolor version only, evidently behind Mirth's back, since they are not quite in line with her. The five main figures have a suggestive relationship with the mysterious and more sedate five who are lined up in the direction of eternity's sunrise in the Canterbury Pilgrimage picture.

THE LARK [fig. 2] One cannot disregard Blake's specific identifications of the figures in this beautiful, comparatively simple, picture. The bow being spread above the head of Dawn may be compared to that wielded by the Holy Spirit of Orc in the second version of the Genesis titlepage; she trails red flowers which become an important motif in the designs for *Il Penseroso*. Those who have contended that in Blake's pictures it is dawn invariably which is depicted as occurring on the right and sunset invariably on the left must alter their opinion. E. J. Rose declared that the long-haired figure arising in the foreground is Milton himself, but even if Blake had not explicitly told us that she is Earth we should know this from the pictorial analogies. In my opinion there is no critical justification for asserting (to anticipate) that this figure is "both Earth and Milton, depending on how you look at it." The figure of Milton per se only appears once in the designs for *L'Allegro*, the following one.

THE GREAT SUN [fig. 3] The Eastern Gate is carefully indicated with its threshold just above the central mountain peak, which has a group of buildings on the plain in front of it. The plowman with his ox, the milkmaid with two recumbent cattle, the mower with his scythe over his head, Milton standing looking up, with his back turned from two lovers, are all distinctly delineated between the two framing trees that have fly-people in them. The four distinct trumpeters are accompanied by two less distinct ones within the sun, while two more trumpeters stand in readiness on the threshold. Six clouds empty vials on the left, being directed by the regal sceptre of the Sun. The "clouds unfold" posture of the Great Sun is certainly impressive and is a foretaste of the apocalypse, but the curly flames given off by his head, which is adorned with a very sharply pronged crown, suggest to me that, although Apollo is a force of redemption, he is affecting the means of the Beast. The fact that he does not have his halo on straight and that it gives off long sharp dark beams is also not reassuring. We may at first recall the Spirit of Morning dispelling the creatures of the Night in *Paradise Regained*, illus. 9, but perhaps we should also remember Satan in His Original Glory, whose picture was inscribed as the Covering Cherub. An important prototype for the picture of Apollo is Flaxman's design of The Triumph of Christ for Dante's *Paradise*, Canto 25.

A SUNSHINE HOLIDAY [fig. 4] The topography in this, one of the happiest visions in Blake, resembles that of the Arlington Court Picture. Note that Blake has expressly made a composite picture by combining two separate passages in the poem. This is a six-horn occasion: there are two in the middle of the resurrection procession, blowing as they are transcending the material sun, two more at the top left and right of the picture, and two more at the lower right, blowing as they arise from the humanized oak, who gestures upward. Neither the old oak man nor the butterfly spirit were apparent when we first saw this tree in "The Ecchoing Green," the second page of which features a comparable procession, though some of the figures in it are depicted in the title-page of *Innocence* and in "London." The dancers around the Maypole to the sound of the

3 "The Great Sun" From The Pierpont Morgan Library



rebeck recall Apollo and his company in the Gray designs; the church steeple should not pass unremarked because this motif will often appear hereafter. The humanized mountains, however, are in obvious distress, especially the female one who wears the battlemented crown of the Magna Mater and has a city in her lap, quite like the woman in *Vala*, p.44, and has hair that makes a waterfall, like the woman on the last page of *America*. Her male consort looks like both Old Night in design 2 and the redemptive oak below in this one. The S-Curve composition on both sides of the picture indicate that the vortexes are really working, if not quite as symmetrically as in Job 12. The basket on the head of the leftmost girl in the main vortex stream is a familiar motif

4 "A Sunshine Holiday" From The Pierpont Morgan Library



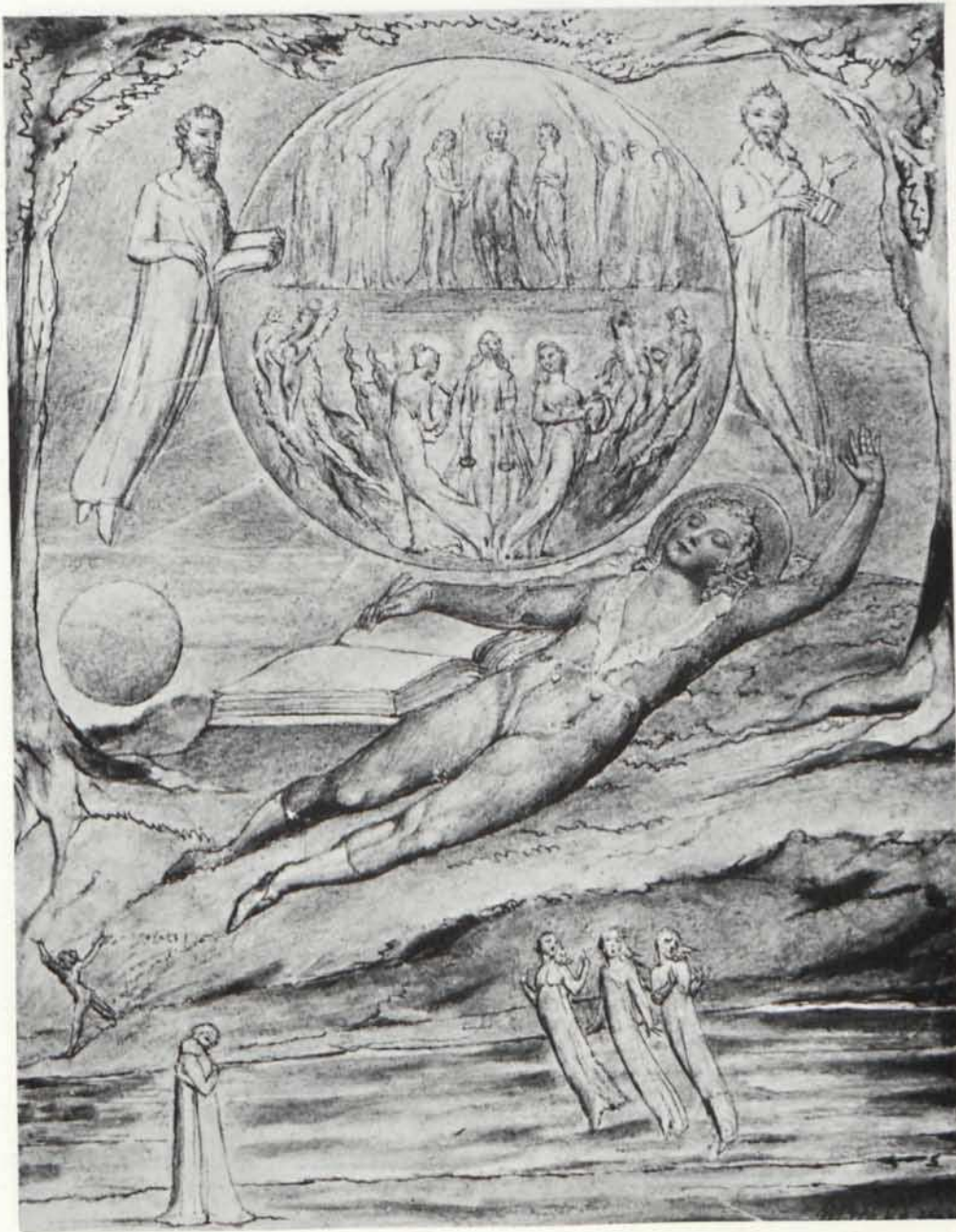
(see also design 3 at three o'clock) in Blake; he evidently derived it from Raphael by way of Marcantonio's engraving. I believe the river goddess is quaffing a regenerative dram, but the woman and man (he is quite sphinx-like--see "The Virgin and Child in Egypt," *Masters*, pl. viii) on a pyramidal mountain across the water are evidently not participants in the joy.

THE GOBLIN [fig. 5] The chief spirit in this design resembles Pestilence, the Ghost of a Flea, and the Savage Man in "The Characters in Spenser's *Fairie Queene*," who also has a flail. Queen Mab evidently enjoys her solitary junkets alone, but "She" is

5 "The Goblin" *From The Pierpont Morgan Library*

being tormented by three tricky spirits who are about to be joined by another, while a fifth is just climbing out of the ground in order to participate in the fun. But it is the ghost at her feet, much like one in the Gray designs--which have many connections with this series--that especially fascinates her. The adventure "He" is undertaking was not told by Milton, one should observe: "He" is dressed like a Blakean pilgrim, though lacking a stick, as he follows the flame of the ghostly friar, thus becoming an older boy lost, it would appear. Blake introduced the "Convent" (doubtless in the popular sense of a retreat for women) and gave it one tower which is much like that of the church in the previous design. Clearly this night piece interrupts any clock-sense of

6 "The Youthful Poet" From The Pierpont Morgan Library



the diurnal cycle in this series; like the monthly analogy suggested by Rose, the diurnal cycle is merely a conventional standard against which Blake's designs work as counterpoint, as well as accompaniment.

THE YOUTHFUL POET [fig. 6] At this time there is little more that I want to say about this beautiful picture in addition to what I have said, in perhaps too condensed a way, in my essay in *Blake's Visionary Forms Dramatic*. I do wish to emphasize, however, that the woman in the marriage scene in the main sun carries a huge candle in her right hand and, though I had not noticed it before I studied the original picture

7 "Melancholy" *From The Pierpont Morgan Library*

again, she wears a distinct transparent veil. The relationship of these figures is much like that of Christ and Adam and Eve in the very great but little-known picture of "The Fall of Man." The chains "of harmony" are not in question in the lower part of this sun, but it is still not certain what the central figure holds; my present opinion is an unblown trumpet in the right hand and a censer in the left, there being no crossbar at the waist such as would occur on a pair of balances, which is what viewers tend to think of first. The overarching oaks on either side enclose even Jonson and Shakespeare and the split in the sun seems rather deflationary than prophetically discriminating. The curious little alarmist, who seems to have a wooden right leg,

must be legitimately distressed at the poet's somnolence. The reunion on this side of the water might seem reassuring if it weren't for the horizontal line of the river bank showing through the transparent figure on the right and confirming her to be the half-regained Eurydice. And what the three distressed daughters see is the terrifying source of the river of Darkness, as I am persuaded by an analogy in the *Night Thoughts* designs.

MELANCHOLY [fig. 7] The companions of Melancholy are, from left to right, Peace, Quiet, and Spare Fast, all of whom are over the curious medial line that separates two distinct ground areas, and retired Leisure, who seems contented with the delicious company of lilies and roses. The varieties and colors of nimbuses are suggestive and challenging, as is the effective separation of the sexes who stand on the ground. I do not at present believe that a strong case can be made against the figure of Melancholy, in spite of her dark clothing and the snaky fold of her gown as it hangs from her left forearm. It is my guess that Blake saw in Durer's "Melencolia," which he kept by his table, a visionary figure, despite her propensity for compasses. But I am confident that those eight or more Muses around Jove's altar are the Daughters of Memory, who told Milton that he would be a better poet if he would cultivate self-denial like Spare Fast. Cynthia's dragon team has its place in the visionary economy, but Romantic moon enamorment is for less strenuous artists than Blake. The fiery cherub Contemplation is a near relation to the Four Zoas as they come on in "Ezekiel's Vision," but he also portends the God as central Man in Job 14. At the left, however, we have not Apollo and his team but Night, who appears much like Darkness as depicted in Gray's "Elegy," though she is being roused by the Nightingale, who also does her best in *Night Thoughts* no. 34. But Night seems to be sitting on a harp, a distinctly inartistic gesture which, like the jagged lines on the ground at the lower right, indicates that there is a distance to go before visionary order is established.

MILTON AND THE MOON [fig. 8] Though it seemed questionable to some members of the Seminar, I continue to see the human form of the Moon as a fugitive from the starry whips beside her and the spear tips of the cloud beneath her. Cynthia has been disarmed since design 1 (engraving) and no longer is complacently eating, as in design 5, or equipped with imposing dragons, as in design 7. Again one notes the continuity of spires from designs 1, 4, 5, and water from 1, 4, and 6, and the distinct and deliberate presence of the small red flowers at the lower left. Several of the Gray designs are quite closely connected with this one.

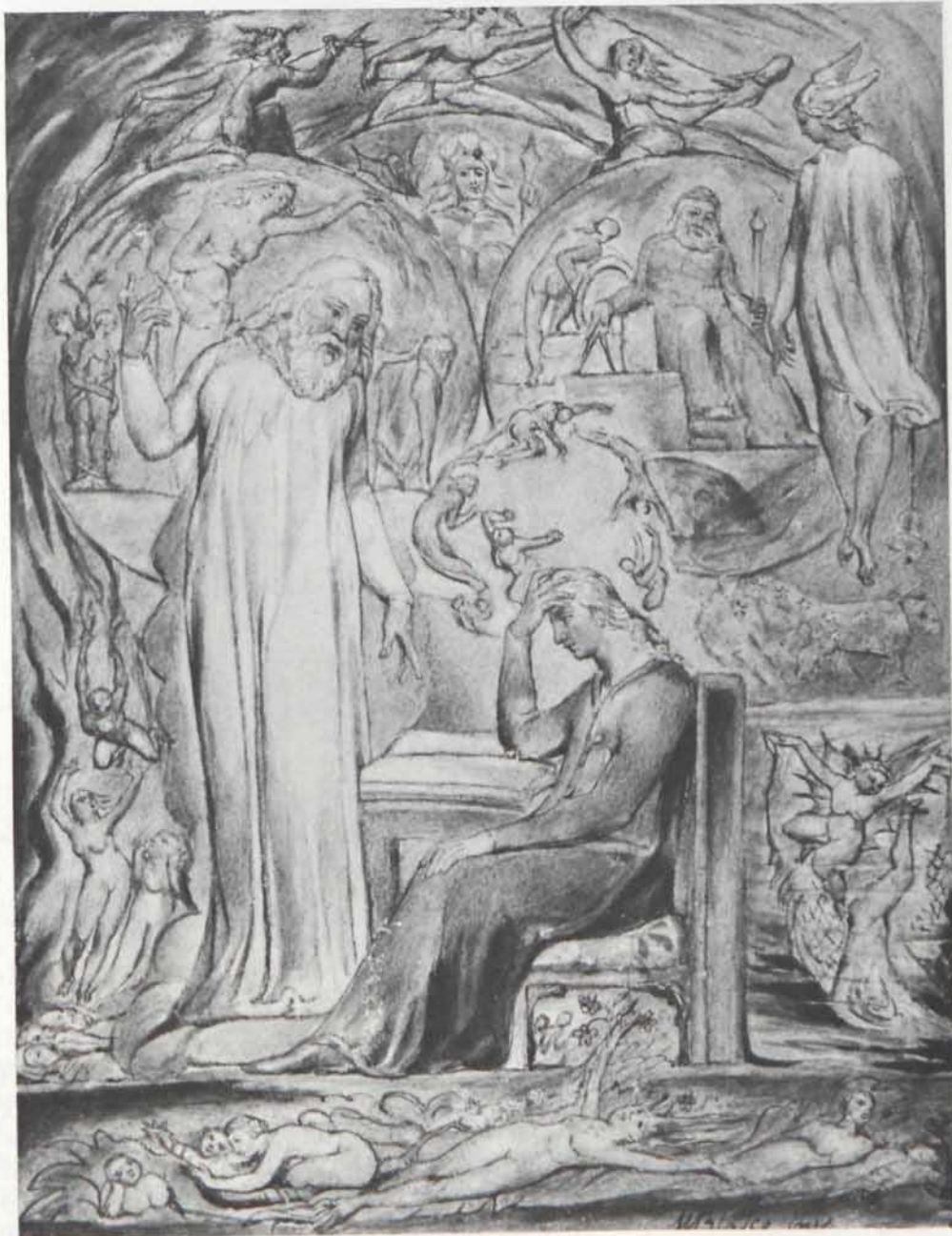
MILTON AND THE SPIRIT OF PLATO [fig. 9] The higher things Plato tells of in his book are put in their proper place at the bottom of the Arlington Court Picture; that is, the three Fates are the decisive forces of the three Sun-Worlds of Venus, Mars, and Jupiter respectively. Interestingly, Venus, who is connected by a line to the left toe of Atropos, is depicted vegetating like Daphne. In her realm man and woman are tied back-to-back by serpents, like Bromion and Oothoon in *VDA*, or in process of divorce, as in the Notebook drawing "Go and; trouble me no more." Mars sits wearing a plumed helmet, like the Valkyries in Gray, and has a bat-bug familiar, such as tries to escape in the engraving of "Albion rose." At the right Jupiter plays with his compasses, with one leg drooping like the enfeebled God of the Job designs. The darkened sector of the world beneath his footstool may be the smoke-obscured wheel of his chariot (or even a haunted tunnel) but whatever it may be it is benighted because he is unenlightened, though he presumes to rule a sun. The unmentioned man behind him is Vulcan futilely employed (like Sisyphus) with the Shield of Achilles; all this will be straightened out in the last plate of *Jerusalem* when the Spectre carries the sun and the compasses become tongs in the hands of the creatively re-established blacksmith Los. If one should read a real Classicist like Aeschylus he would learn that Hermes, far from being a mere messenger of oppression, can be understood, in effect, as the

8 "Milton and the Moon" *From The Pierpont Morgan Library*

villain responsible for the crucifixion of Prometheus. For some reason Milton couldn't recognize the consequences of accepting the authority of Hermes the triplicator, but Blake did the best he could to expose it. The confusion and violence that enwreath Milton's head ought to have been a sufficient warning to classicistic partisans, but the elements of fire and water to the left and the right confirm how basically wrong things become under such guidance: the top spirit in fire plies whips to put down pity or resurrection while the finny nymph of water deploys her gin from a clamshell (a stratagem nearly repeated in *J* 45 [31]). Whatever vitality is to be observed is underground, but the six human figures there are variously compromised and will remain so

until Milton frees himself from such airy superstitions.

Let me be still more explicit: this picture has been used by Raine as an excuse for Platonizing Blake, and even Damon in the *Dictionary* ("Plato") tends to blur this critique of Platonism. Yet it is impossible to make sense of this design as other than an attack on Hermetic Classicism. Look again at the "Judgment of Paris," whence all that fury came: Hermes was likewise responsible for that seminal disaster, which cannot truthfully be palmed off on triform Discord, unlovely as she is, since Hermes was there to put a prepossessing face on the conspiracy.



9 "Milton and the Spirit of Plato" From The Pierpont Morgan Library

MILTON LED BY MELANCHOLY [fig. 10] Here the poet's regeneration is begun by removal from exposure to the pestilential "Apollonian" arrows (near allied with the arrows of Satan in Job 6) which as yet he cannot bear. Milton has wisely not given up the book, but he has gotten over fasting and is now of equal stature and a fit companion for haloed Melancholy, whose halo renders her impervious to the maddening effects of the noonday sun. The two main trees are animated with spirits as in designs 3, 4, 6, 7, and the earth in 9: being in bondage, none of the dryads are joyful, though perhaps the humanized insects are happy. Despite the malign influence of Apollo, progress is being made again.



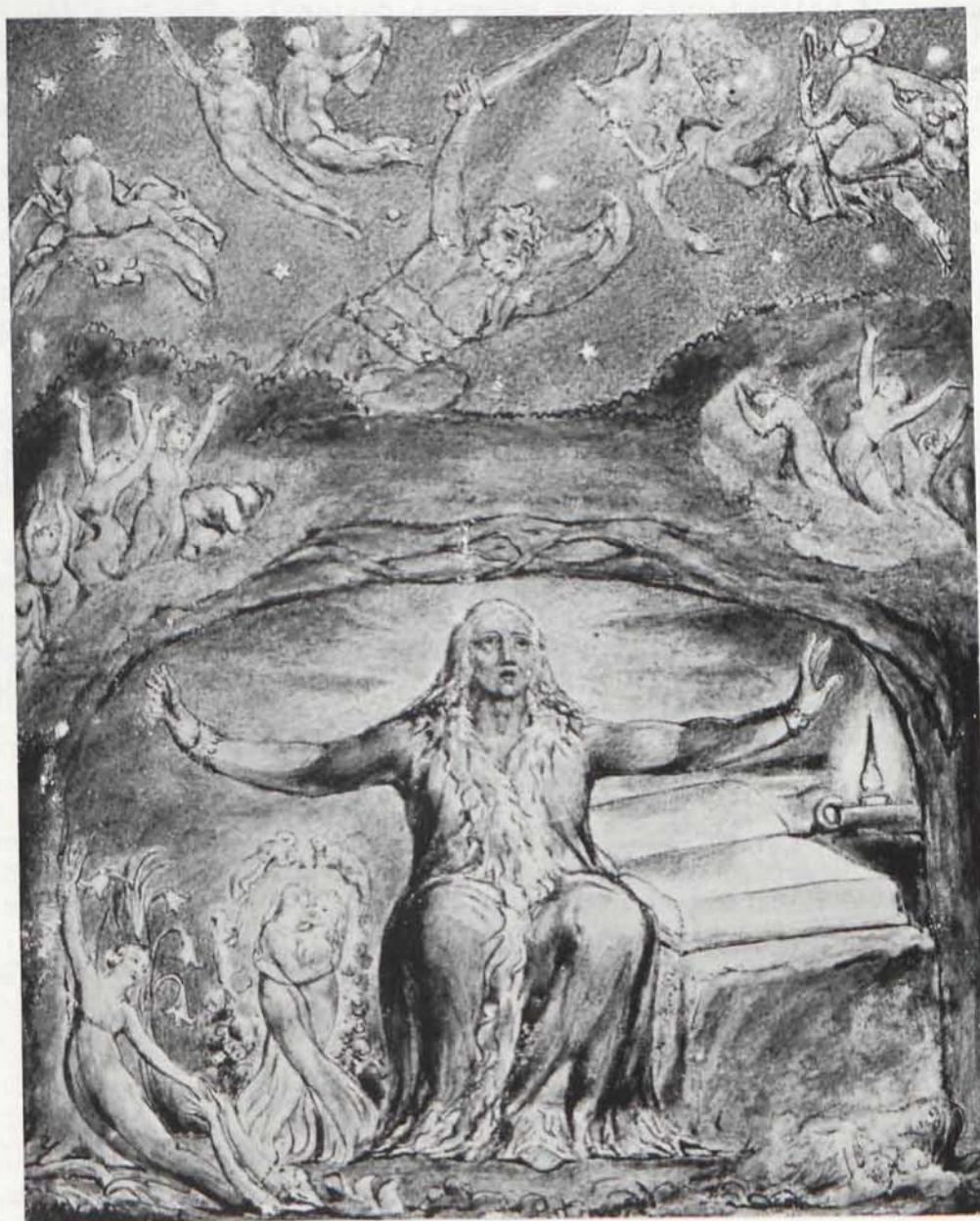
10 "Milton Led by Melancholy" From The Pierpont Morgan Library

MILTON AND HIS DREAM [fig. 11] Here the Dream, who may be the spiritual form of Melancholy, starts the vortexes cooperating again for Milton, partly by the development of scrolls off both wings and partly by sharing its plate-halo with Milton. As Damon has remarked, Milton is still covering up, but he will be released by the music of his emanations. The angel's right wing acts as a suction to draw netted figures (perhaps including an ant!), such as were represented in design 9, out of the river of death. Note that at the lower right there are tiny red dots, indicative of the vital flower, as earlier. The redeemed figures are becoming lovers, as in Dante 10, "The Whirlwind of Lovers." Those below are prompted by a Blakean redemptive lady, but those above



11 "Milton and His Dream" From The Pierpont Morgan Library

are in the keeping of a holy old man, who may not be as good as he seems despite his red halo and hopeful surroundings. The spirits that accompany him are comparable to figures of the errors of Job and his wife who fall in a Last Judgment with Satan in Job 16. Unless I'm mistaken, the left wing of the Dream is cracking under the strain of holding this burden up. This group of three figures is curiously backed by a fourth, who rides them at the bullseye of the rainbow. He clutches something which is so woolly that it must be a lamb; it would be pleasant if he were Esau. In any case, his mysterious burden recalls that of the little woman at one o'clock in the watercolor version of design 1. This pod of figures is comparable to the three groups of Woes in *Night*



12 "Milton and His Mossy Cell" From The Pierpont Morgan Library

Thoughts no. 84 (III, 9) which is reproduced in Damon's *Dictionary*. Above this pod of figures a long scroll is attended by five or more spirits. This is the redemptive counterpart of the devolution shown in *Night Thoughts* no. 7 (I, b), where the sleeping Young's imaginings are delivered down to Urizen beneath a blasted tree. This design has been reproduced in the important article on the *Night Thoughts* pictures by Helmsstadter published in *TSL*, 12 (Spring 1970), 27-54. It is also reproduced in *BVFD*, pl. 75.

MILTON AND HIS MOSSY CELL [fig. 12] Rose, arguing from the seasonal analogy, concludes that Milton is here in a wintry plight, but the picture and commentary make it clear that, at last, Blake's Milton has finally gotten straight. He has still retained his book, is open beside a lamp (as in *Night Thoughts* no. 18 [I, 13], *BVFD*, pl. 85) and he spreads his arms to open a center as he delivers his prophetic raptures. The flowers in his cell include the little red ones of designs 8, 9, and 11, and the lillies and roses of Leisure which were shown in design 7. The true lovers dance as the disciples of Venus were unable to do in design 9 attended by putti who have appeared before in designs 1 and 11. The woman and man at the left are effecting a resurrection, the precondition of bliss, though I confess to being a little uneasy about the not-yet-humanized form of her upraised right hand. The fact that the mother at the right is blessed with twins--compare *Night Thoughts* no. 4--is, however, a joyful sequel to the problems of the earth spirits in design 9. Perhaps there is even an incipient third behind this mother, as was observed in the Seminar. Milton's "cell" is half a cave and half a bower made by the entwining of two trees, perhaps to be understood as implicates of the two-trees motif of earlier designs. It is somewhat like the caves in the Arlington Court Picture and the "Philoctetes," the latter of which is reproduced in color as the cover for *Blake Studies*, 3 (Fall 1970).

The longing female figures above the cell, five on the left, three on the right, are arrested in a futile desire without hope, like those in Limbo, to ascend the sky. If Milton's cell is a bower, they are to be closely related to the forlorn dryads in design 10; if it is a cave, they are related to Blake's Sunflower. Their error is evidently that they pray to the stars rather than celebrate their human forms, as Milton does. The constellations from left to right include: the Crab, with a woman astride it, back to the viewer, and reading; this seems especially odd until one recalls that crabs move backward. The twins in Gemini seem to be having a fight with one another. Taurus is a formidable beast, but Aries has achieved a shepherd form wearing a hat like the benighted figures in designs 5 and 6, and carrying a crook like Peace in design 7. Orion is intervening to neutralize the charge of the Bull; Blake greatly respected Orion, depicting the stars of his belt in the engraving of Job 14 and making a great picture of him in *Night Thoughts* no. 502 (IX, 84). Indeed, Orion and Albion are in effect identified in *Jerusalem* 25, as Morton Paley suggests. The contrast between the redemptive counter-culture underground and the futile establishment above ground is one of the distinctive features of Blake's symbolism, as Frye has explained. The principle is declared unmistakably in the titlepage of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, which is why we looked at a slide of this design before turning again to more general considerations.

[to be continued]