

Illustration 1

## This is Not Blake's "The Tyger" (With Apologies to René Magritte) · *John E. Grant*

Anyone who knows "The Tyger" in the form Blake published it as an illuminated page in *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* (1794) has observed a discrepancy between the qualities of the pictorial and the verbal art. Since everyone agrees that the poem is a masterpiece, Blake's strategy of presenting it with a nonsublime and nonterrifying pictorial image of the beast presents a special challenge to whoever wishes to understand how the sister arts can be related. Although the Tyger as pictured is allowed more dignity in some copies of the twenty-nine versions of *Songs* issued by Blake himself than in others, even at its most formidable (Illustration 1 and back cover), it altogether lacks the cosmic dimension that is the overriding concern of the troubled questioner who addresses the Tyger in the poem. The beast is represented in a naive style compatible with the other designs for *Songs* rather than in the sublime mode of the poem; it is shown in this world rather than in its imagined place of origin among the stars. That portion of "the forests of the night" presumably illustrated does not especially suggest the habitat of a real tiger—the Indian jungle that an English audience two centuries ago might have imagined as the home of the Royal Bengal Tiger. And despite the currency, even among English radicals, of clichés about tigerish mobs in Robespierrean Paris, neither beast nor environment shows any sign of being a political allegory. The viewer who attempts to envision Blake's "The Tyger" through any of these available mind-sets will find such pictorial expectations disappointed. What I aim to show is that Blake provided a coordinated rather than a commensurate poem-with-picture. In effect, all of Blake's versions of this picture declare, without apology: This is not the Tyger imagined in the poem.

A picture that delivers less verity or spirit than it might be expected to do, especially one that appears to offer a less-than-adequate representation of a creature imagined to be vast and awesome, whether a prodigy of nature or an emblem of the sublime, inevitably calls into question either the skill or the judgment of the artist. If the picture is, moreover, manifestly at odds with an accompanying text, the complicating question arises as to whether, in addition, what may be involved is some inherent incompati-

bility between the visual and the verbal arts. And this leads, in turn, into larger questions of representation, symbolism, and signification. While such interpretive problems cannot all be covered in a single essay, I shall try to show how they bear on the particular problems of reading Blake.

In undertaking to review several books partially or exclusively on Blake—Ronald Paulson's *Representations of Revolution 1789–1820* (1983; rpt. 1987); Paulson's *Book and Painting: Shakespeare, Milton and The Bible* (1982); Morris Eaves's *William Blake's Theory of Art* (1982); and Robert N. Essick's *The Separate Plates of William Blake: A Catalogue* (1983)—I was struck by their overlapping interests in Blake the artist/illustrator/theoretician and thought to focus my own analysis of this complex area on the test case of "The Tyger." In this light, the complementary strengths and weaknesses of the various books under review became more interesting than the individual merits of each. Eaves's vigorous partisanship of Blake's theories of art, for example, effectively counters Paulson's revival of the charge that Blake didn't quite know what he was up to, and the fine reproductions in Essick's volume refute some of Paulson's deprecations of Blake's skill that the poorly reproduced examples of Blake's work in his books serve inadvertently to bolster. What began as a review has swerved into a reexamination of "The Tyger"—the poem, the design, and persistent critical and scholarly problems that attend them, separately and conjoined.

In an earlier account of Blake's poem and design, "The Art and Argument of 'The Tyger'" (1960; rev. 1961), I emphasized the distinction between the speaker of the poem and "the Author & Printer W Blake" who was responsible for composing the poems, executing the designs, printing the plates, and assembling and producing the illuminated book *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*. I also argued that the tameness of the Tyger, as represented in most versions of the design, provides an alternative perspective on the vision of the Tyger conceived in the mind of the awe-stricken speaker. In the critical reconsiderations of the rhetoric of the poem that have proliferated since then, there has been a gathering effort to widen the cleavage between the views of the speaker and anything Blake himself might have thought, the effect being to discredit the audacious questioner in the mind of the knowing reader. But this is to deny Blake's poem, with its pounding rhythms and disturbing questions, the spirit that has made it one of the best-known literary works in English. Along another line of in-

quiry, the tameness of the design has become an object of scorn or lamentation and held up as evidence that Blake the artist could conceive but not execute, and could not manage in the graphic arts a visual Tyger at all close in spirit to the vision of the poem.

Most of the critical studies of the 1980s have continued to emphasize the verbal aspect of "The Tyger." The few that touch upon the relationship of the poem to the accompanying design tend to conceive of the design according to the norms of exhibition painting rather than as a unit conceived in the naive illustrative mode of *Songs of Experience*, where the available pictorial space, four-and-a-half by two-and-a-half inches (11 × 6.4 cm.), cannot aspire to contain either the spaces between the stars or the jungles of the Indian Sundarbans, where tigers still roam. By and large, critics of our time have lost interest in theological debates on the origin of evil or other attempts to wrestle with the questions built into the poem, and have drifted into poststructuralist or new-historicist lines of exposition, or the two combined. If every metaphysical question is undecidable or every event is to be situated in some past dialectical problematic, then a contemporary critic can hardly accede to the terms of inquiry set by Blake's poem.

To emphasize the need to see past partial or pseudo-Tygers in order to perceive Blake's "The Tyger" more clearly, I have borrowed from the Belgian artist René Magritte (1898–1967) the formula for my paradoxical title. An anti-metaphor of the structure "This is not that" can only be a warning label when it is displayed in a title, inscription, or other authorial guide to meaning—such as one of Magritte's pipe-picture captions. My point is that no one can approach an understanding of what the Tyger is without also recognizing what it is not. Any notion of the animal that is derived only from the text, or only from one of the many variations of the design, cannot be the whole of Blake's "The Tyger." And any conception of the Tyger, and of all that it signifies, that diminishes the sublimity of its presentation in the poem must also be something other than Blake's "The Tyger." I hope that Magritte's contrarian view of verbal and visual relationships, his cheerful breaking-up of assumed linkages between what is presented and what is conceived, between pictures and objects, signs and things signified, will help to clarify Blake's purposes in confronting viewers of "The Tyger" with a comparably unreconciled conflict among perspectives.

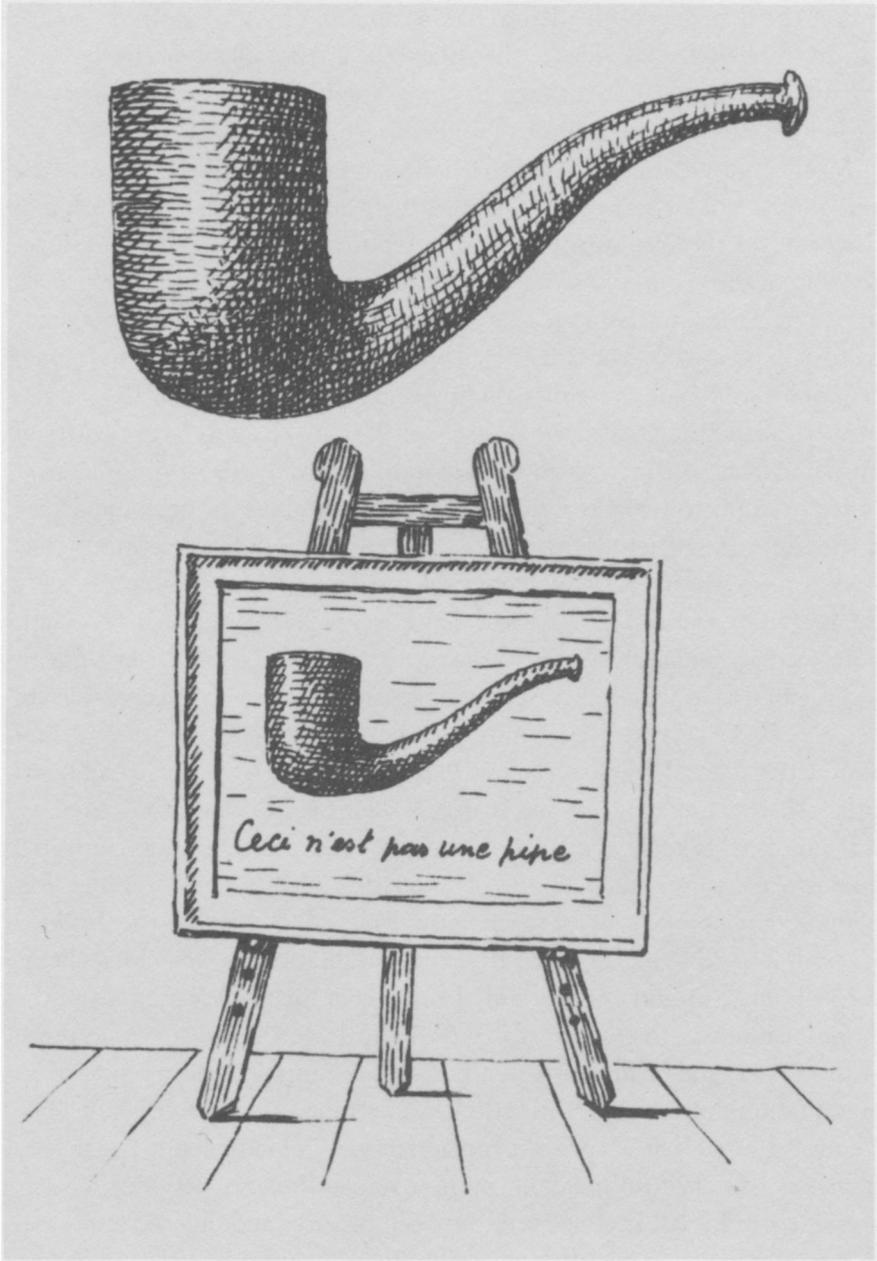


Illustration 2

## I: The Betrayal of Images

Initial reactions to a first encounter with one of the many pictures by Magritte in which a realistically represented pipe is captioned “This is not a pipe” are likely to be puzzlement or exasperation: “This has got to be a joke.” In a short book more or less about Magritte that adopted the inscription *Ceci n’est pas une pipe* as a title (1966), Michel Foucault attempted to bridge the vast discrepancies between Magritte’s pictures and inscriptions. The cover illustration for the 1983 American edition of Foucault’s book shows Magritte’s best-known version of the painting (c.1929, since 1982 in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art). Foucault also selected, as a benchmark work, a second picture, entitled *Les deux mystères*, “The Two Mysteries” (1966, now in a private collection in London); in it Magritte depicts a quite similar bent pipe, accompanied by the same inscription, but represented this time as a painting displayed on an easel in a bare room; near and above it a second, almost identical, larger pipe floats in the air, without any inscription (Illustration 2). Foucault makes this selective representation of Magritte’s pipes the occasion for extensive ruminations and pronouncements on such matters as Magritte’s pipes and pipes as objects or words or images. A version of his disquisition in a book, *Les mots et les choses*, stimulated two apparently favorable letters of response from Magritte himself.

Curiously, Foucault ignores the Platonic implications of *Les deux mystères* and instead suggests that the levitated pipe in the latter picture resembles a cloud of smoke emitted by the pipe on the easel. It is particularly suggestive that in this context, which is abstracted from any literal suggestion of the pipe as an instrument for smoking, it occurs to Foucault to make virtually his only allusion to the real function of a pipe. This minimal reference to smoking may stand as an example of Foucault’s frequent manner of being, massively, beside the point: surely any discussion of Magritte’s pipe-pictures that hardly acknowledges what pipes are for must be considered a monumental repression or denial of the obvious.

In his series of images of the pipe, Magritte produced variations so bewildering in their interrelationship that no one has yet succeeded in describing all the pictures in the series, quite apart from interpreting them. Magritte’s own titles for the several paintings he inscribed *Ceci n’est pas une pipe* are not easily recovered from standard reference sources. Gablik gives

as the title of the most famous version (1929) *L'usage de la parole I*, “The use of the word I,” while in Calvocaressi’s book, as well as in the Los Angeles County Museum, this picture is entitled *La traison des images*, “The betrayal [or treachery] of images.” But in a 1969 exhibition catalogue by Sylvester, the author of the forthcoming *catalogue raisonné*, what appears to be the same picture was entitled *L’air et la chanson*, “The air and the song” – which also happens to be the title of a 1964 painting of a pipe that is actually smoking, a work that Magritte copied as an engraving (Illustration 3). There is also a 1948 painting, also entitled *La traison des images*, which is inscribed in heavy capital letters on a representation of a brass plaque (as opposed to being written underneath the pipe in a refined script): “CECI N’EST PAS UNE PIPE.” Magritte carried this assertive negativity still farther in a 1952 print (there seems to have been no painted version) where a similar plaque beneath a similar pipe bears the inscription: “CECI CONTINUE / DE NE PAS ETRE UNE PIPE” (Illustration 4), “THIS CONTINUES NOT TO BE A PIPE.”

According to the artist’s wife, Magritte both deliberated and sought advice before assigning his titles, with one of his chief consultants being the philosopher Scutenaire. Whichever picture or pictures the whimsical Magritte decided to entitle *L’air et la chanson*, he could be certain that his viewers would be aware that, whenever a pipe burns tobacco, the “air” is affected. And also, that with another kind of “pipe” one could play an



Illustration 3



Illustration 4

“air,” a “song.” In *La lampe philosophique*, “The Philosophic Lamp” (1936), Magritte went a bit further, depicting an ostensible philosopher smoking a bent pipe into which his own vast nose is thrust.

Two pipe pictures that fall outside the main series require special notice. Both were little known before 1987. The first, executed in an uncharacteristic thick dark brown impasto on a black background, is an untitled oil, dated 1928—that is, probably, a year before *La trahison des images*. It depicts two objects: the one at the left, uninscribed, could be taken to be, perhaps, a mitten, a person’s head, or a tobacco pouch; the one at the right, unquestionably a crudely drawn foreshortened bent pipe, is inscribed “la pipe.” However qualified by the style of representation and its inscrutable companion object, Magritte was willing, before setting out on his negative affirmations, to let a pipe be what it seems to be. The other picture, from Magritte’s so-called *Vache*, or “Cow,” Period, 1947, is entitled *Le stropiat*, “The Cripple.” In it the bust of a black bearded man confronts the viewer while holding up an enchained watch; this figure is smoking (or being smoked) from forehead, eye, mouth, and throat by no fewer than eight bent pipes, most of which are emitting smoke. The flames that lick about his shoulders reinforce the sense that this *grand fumeur*’s time is up and that he is already in hell. Considering that Magritte himself seems to have been an inveterate smoker of cigarettes, his candor about the condition of a tobacco addict is remarkable.

Another of Magritte's pipe pictures from the *Vache* period parallels *Le stropiat* in theme. In it a seated nude woman, who appears to be Georgette Magritte, the artist's favorite model, erupts male heads from various parts of her body, and two of the heads are smoking pipes. From the woman's left breast, in a cartoonist's bubble, depends an inscription: "Cancer." But the possibility that this was supposed to show a cause-and-effect relationship may be unlikely, considering the state of medical understanding in 1947.

The 1964 painting, *L'air et la chanson* (cf. Illustration 4), is of particular interest because it is the only one in the "Ceci" series that presents an unaccompanied pipe in which the tobacco is burning and emitting smoke. It is also distinguished by the crudely designed picture frame that surrounds the pipe, the shadow that adds a partial illusion of three-dimensionality, and (in the painted version) a bat-shaped blot that impinges on the first word of the familiar inscription. All these features take on significance when they are contrasted with their counterparts in Magritte's other pipe paintings.

This smoking pipe is not as graceful as the elegant 1929 pipe, and it lacks the "platonic" implications of the 1966 painting, but its having been amateurishly mounted in an apparently hand-crafted frame shows that it has been elevated to the stature of a votary or aesthetic object. With its meerschaum stem and gold band, it appears to be more expensive than other pipes displayed in Magritte's pictorial collection, but it is no model of the pipemaker's art. Part of Magritte's point must be that the fictional artist responsible for the picture betrays a lack of taste. At the same time as the crudely indicated shadow makes it seem as though what we are shown is (only) a "real" pipe that has been mounted on a plastic quasi-wood panel for display purposes, it also suggests that the implied "artist of the real," the artist behind the artisan who crafted the frame, had no more skill in drawing a shadow than did the handyman who laboriously put together the fancy moderne frame. As artist Magritte knows and expects his audience to recognize the shortcomings betrayed in the conception and execution of the picture, as well as the frame.

Like the shadow, the smoke from this 1964 pipe both suggests three-dimensionality and denies the "reality" that it suggests. The smoke does not stop at the painted frame but continues into the neutral blue atmosphere above it and perhaps from thence under the mat that separates the

whole picture from the simple, elegant blue-inlaid frame in which it is now displayed. (If Magritte himself didn't supervise the actual framing of this picture, someone equally attuned to his work must have done so.) But these details cannot create an illusion of reality, for the enshrined pipe, mounted, framed, isolated from the world of people, keeps going even when there is no smoker in attendance. The inept artist's smoking pipe with inscription contained within the amateurishly crafted frame could well be entitled: "This is not a work of art"—in spite of its pretensions. Yet, for an audience looking in from outside the outer elegant frame and blue surround, Magritte's entire work paradoxically attains artistic status—"This has become a work of art"—after all.

No doubt some sort of "Betrayal of images" is involved in every version of Magritte's pipes. The motto applies, ironically, either to any process whereby images are betrayed, perhaps by words, or in which images betray the unwary—those who believe images (however realistic) to be real. Quite possibly, this title also alludes to the famous phrase of Julian Breda: "La trahison des clercs." Thus we would be reminded that images may be either deliberately or, as it were, structurally, disloyal.

Although Magritte's extensive writings contain a number of philosophical passages that bear closely on what the artist was driving at with his pipe pictures, negative inscriptions, and riddling titles, none is more to the point than an extempore comment reported in a popular magazine in 1966:

The famous pipe. How people reproached me for it! And yet, could you stuff my pipe? No, it's just a representation, is it not? So if I had written on my picture 'This is a pipe,' I'd have been lying!

(Torczyner 1977, p. 118)

No artist can, of course, fully anticipate or control what others, including the artist himself or herself at a later time or in another mood, may make of a work of art. It is hardly likely that in the late nineteen-twenties Magritte could have foreseen all the pipe-pictures he was to paint in the sixties, nor could he have anticipated what Foucault and others would say about them. A picture or poem of mixed effects, one that depends in part on an element of humor or an allusion to an earlier work, often tempts an expositor to seize upon a single component at the expense of others equally

or more important. Thus anything funny may be treated as a joke, and nothing more.

Lewis Carroll, halfway between Blake and Magritte (and favorite author of the latter), provides a convenient link between the equivocations that adhere to Magritte's multi-captioned and enigmatically identified pipes and the perplexities that continue to surround Blake's "The Tyger," both poem and picture. Near the end of *Through the Looking Glass*, in a chapter entitled "It's My Own Invention," Alice has a humorous-pathetic encounter with the White Knight that can serve as a parable of the way works of art are historically appropriated for purposes remote from any that could conceivably have been envisaged by the original author. The White Knight, offering to cheer Alice up with a song, announces that "The name of the song is called, 'Haddock's Eyes.'" But that tricky locution requires immediate clarification: "That's what the name is called. The name really is 'The Aged Aged Man.'" As Alice becomes more and more puzzled, the Knight goes on to insist that the song itself "is called 'Ways and Means': but that's only what it's called, you know! The song really is 'A-sitting On A Gate'; and the tune's my own invention." Yet as soon as the Knight begins the song, Alice recognizes that "the tune *isn't* his own invention" but is, in fact, the well-known setting for "I give thee all, I can no more," a song by the poet Thomas Moore. And the words of the Knight's poem turn out to be a brilliant burlesque of Wordsworth's poem "Resolution and Independence" — which was first called by the author and his friends "The Leech Gatherer." How any English child in 1872 could have been expected to respond to all this wit and whimsy of allusion, to say nothing of what should be the responses of adults more than a century later, cannot be deliberated upon without breaking the spell that ought to surround even a boiled-down summary of Carroll's hilarious and touching parable. Coincidentally, in a recent essay, "'Haddock's Eyes': A Note on the Theory of Titles," in *Vision and Resonance: Two Senses of Poetic Form* (1985), John Hollander has also seen in Carroll an anticipation of Magritte's way with titles.

## II: The Questions of the Poem

It would distort "The Tyger" to consider technical aspects of the poem and picture without first addressing the primary questions that occur

naturally and properly to most readers: What is "The Tyger" supposed to mean? What does the Tyger in Blake's poem-with-picture, or picture-with-poem, symbolize?

Most of the many commentators on the poem proceed from the premise that the knowledgeable reader can somehow get behind the questions raised in the poem and reach a state of understanding beyond that of the questioner and approaching Blake's own. What is not sufficiently acknowledged is that the poem itself offers not even the appearance of answers. The voice heard in Blake's poem is that of a singer of a Song of Experience rather than of Blake himself, but the passionate interrogation raises questions to which no one has adequate answers. We cannot appreciate the force of the barrage of questions directed toward the Tyger as creature until we acknowledge the Biblical norm of affirmation, indeed of celebration, as set forth in Psalm 104: "The Lord's Care for His Creation," especially v. 1-6; 19-30. In this hymn of Innocence the Lord "maketh darkness, and it is night: wherein all the beasts of the forests do creep forth. The young lions roar after their prey, and seeketh their meat from God" (20-21). This vision is confirmed in Blake's own Song of Innocence, "Night"; but Blake could never be easy with the assurance of the psalmist that the Lord maketh "his ministers a flaming fire" (4) or that "Leviathan" (26) was ever sufficiently subject to a responsible Providence.

As has been remarked, the rhetorical pattern of the crescendo of questions in "The Tyger" is recognizably derived from the interrogation of Job and his companions by the Voice from the Whirlwind in the Book of Job 38-41. This is an episode that Blake repeatedly illustrated, together with its sequel, the vision of Leviathan and Behemoth. But the reversal of the parallel is the telling point. In Job, God prefaces each new wave of questions on cosmic origins by asserting his own prerogative as questioner, with a humiliating rebuke to his human creature: "I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me" (Job 38:3 and 40:7); "Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct him? he that reproveth God, let him answer it." This, too, is the burden of the rebuke in Isaiah, in another passage to which Blake must be alluding in "The Tyger":

Surely your turning of things upside down shall be esteemed as the potter's clay: for shall the work say of him that made it, He made me not? or shall the thing framed say of him that framed it, He hath no understanding?  
(Isaiah 29:16)

The image of the potter's clay and of framing is essentially reiterated in Jeremiah 18 (and only there), especially verse 11: "Thus saith the Lord; Behold, I frame evil against you . . . inhabitants of Jerusalem." As artificer the potter is congener to the smith imagined in Blake's poem.

In Job, the interrogation builds to the point at which the puny mortal partner in the exchange is utterly at a loss to reply. The whole purpose of the barrage from the Omniscient is to humble the all-too-human who has dared state that he cannot understand why he has to suffer. But in "The Tyger," the tables are turned: it is the human questioner who assumes the prerogative of posing unanswerable questions. He does not need to affirm the creator's existence; he simply assumes it, and imagines the consequences. Although he does not have the answers, he has the questions, and he is not afraid to ask them. That is Blake's reversal of the Biblical precedent. The questions of both Blake's poem and Isaiah's prophecy will not take no for an answer, but if a simple yes were sufficient for either, the tone of urgent insistency would be pointless. The questioner of the inscrutable Tyger interrogates only "the thing framed," but the inaccessible framer is so strongly implied that the questioner's audacity, even blasphemy, is hardly mitigated by the indirection. What the questioner demands to know is the nature and power of an intelligence capable not only of conceiving and bringing into being the Tyger, but of wishing to do so. "Did he smile his work to see?" Did he look on his monstrous (if beautiful) creation and pronounce it good?

Rather than asserting that Blake's Tyger represents energy, or evil, or the malignancy of the natural world, or some other allegorical quality, we can get closer to the spirit of the poem if we think of the beast as symbolizing much the same thing as does the whale in Melville's *Moby Dick*, a work written about sixty years later, probably without knowledge of Blake's poem. In each work the prodigious natural creature is placed in a supernatural-natural context which resists translation into conventional religious, historical, or psychological terms. Any interpretation of *Moby Dick* must begin with the recognition that the odd narrator, who has the assumed name "Ishmael," is the source of all the reader can know about the White Whale. A judgment that *Moby Dick* represents "Evil" would commit the reader to the mad world of Captain Ahab and thus discount a full half of the epic novel Melville subtitled "The Whale." To enter this world would be to deny Ishmael's perspective and to oversimplify all that is even-

tually revealed in the whale's appalling whiteness. Hardly more banal, of course, would be to start at the other end with an assertion that *Moby Dick* is about the object of the whaling industry in the 1840s.

The magnificence of *Moby Dick* is almost too great for the mind of any beholder, and that is why Ishmael, the only witness to escape, is an odd deracinated man. The sanity of the teller of Yeats's "The Second Coming," one of the few twentieth-century poems to risk sublimity comparable to that of "The Tyger," is less shaken, but his vision of the Beast in the desert is mitigated by distance and by the fact that the hour has not yet come round, whereas Blake's forests might be here and now. One other poem of this century that formulates questions comparable to those in "The Tyger" is Robert Frost's "Design," uttered by the witness to a microcosmic disaster. Here the speaker is not overwhelmed or appalled, but he is troubled by the conjunction of the components of the disaster. His questions are not so much about the reason for predation as about the irony that this all-white configuration of predator, prey, and habitat have "Mixed ready to begin the morning right," in grisly coincidence. Frost, who does not make a point of distinguishing himself from the speaker, raises more directly than Blake the question of whether "design" is in the universe, the eye of the beholder, or neither:

I found a dimpled spider, fat and white,  
On a white heal-all, holding up a moth  
Like a white piece of rigid satin cloth—  
Assorted characters of death and blight  
Mixed ready to begin the morning right,  
Like the ingredients of a witches' broth—  
A snow-drop spider, a flower like froth,  
And dead wings carried like a paper kite.

What had that flower to do with being white,  
The wayside blue and innocent heal-all?  
What brought the kindred spider to that height,  
Then steered the white moth thither in the night?  
What but design of darkness to appall?—  
If design govern in a thing so small.

It is true that the last line of the sestet is not rhetorically quite parallel with the preceding three questions raised by the tiny lethal anecdote. But the conclusion is hypothetical, not declarative, and the conclusive doubt as to ultimate responsibility for such trivial disaster is harder to bear than any certainty that we cannot, shall not know.

The principle that criticism should accurately identify the speaker of any poem has frequently been denied in recent years, resulting in muddled exposition. Foucault, through misprision of a text from Beckett, was in the forefront of this critical enterprise. But in criticism of "The Tyger," the task remains to use this critical instrument. In my 1960 argument that the problem of the identity of the speaker in "The Tyger" is the key to the poem, I unfortunately characterized the speaker as "an average imaginative man." Aside from the sheer infelicity of my phrase, the word "average" is anachronistic and not a part of Blake's vocabulary, and "man" introduces a gender-limitation that is not in the poem at all. But the currency of my former attempt to characterize the speaker, at least as a point of departure, is suggested by the fact that two major commentators on "The Tyger," Robert Gleckner and Harold Pagliaro, have recently used it as a foil for their own interpretations. I wish now that I had found a more graceful way to express my view that the speaker is an exceptionally imaginative person who voices with compelling eloquence the deeply troubling questions about the created world that plague ordinary human beings. The speaker is ordinary only in the sense that he speaks for all who recognize that the world we know was not made for our comfort, if "made" at all, nor are its other inhabitants accountable to us in our terms.

Despite the limitations in perspective of the state of experience, I think the reader of Blake's poem is meant to admire the questioner's spirit: his pertinacity, his unwillingness to justify predation or to accept a providential view of creation, his outright refusal to be satisfied with the consequences of a conventional argument from design; in short, his audacious and uncompromising inquisition of a world order that he finds alien to his humanity. Though a questioner, he is utterly unlike the knave dismissed in Blake's "Auguries of Innocence": "The questioner who sits so sly / Shall never know how to Reply" (E.492). Quite to the contrary, should he persist in his interrogation, the questioner of "The Tyger" would match the audacity of the Blakean voice who issues this advice "To God": "If you have formd a Circle to go into / Go into it yourself & see how you

would do” (E.516). In his indignation, intensity of conviction, and moral rectitude, he nearly fulfills Blake’s radical definition of a prophet: “Every honest man is a Prophet . . .” (E.617). For those who imagine that honesty is too common a virtue to distinguish a prophet, Isaiah and Ezekiel explain in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (E.38–39) that honesty is the beginning and end of prophecy. Ezekiel does so by ending with a question.

General acceptance of the point that the speaker of “The Tyger” is supposed to be a personage distinct from Blake the author has, however, paved the way for ironic misconstrual. It is only a short step for Bloom or Shaviro or Paulson to consider that a speaker not in accord with either Blake or themselves must be imaginatively suspect, a victim of self-induced fantasies about the creation of the Tyger either as a sublime natural creature or as the symbol of an overwhelming (pre-)historical event. When subjected to the critique of such (Kenneth) Burkean perspectives by incongruity, the tonal evidence of the speaker’s honesty, sincerity, and authenticity of vision dissolves into expositional discourse that denies the Tyger the wonder Blake accorded it. Blake’s “The Tyger,” because of the complexity of the determination and also because of the opacity of some of the critical exposition, has proven to be a particularly recalcitrant critical occasion for sorting out these kinds of critical misprision.

The awe and indignation felt by the speaker of “The Tyger” at the spectacle of the imagined beast and its conjectured origins may seem so comprehensive as to authorize almost any equivalent that ingenuity can produce. Every thoughtful person now knows that as a species the tiger is in danger of extinction, but modern readers must disburden themselves of awarenesses that were unthinkable at the end of the eighteenth century. The tiger, east and west, has meant many things that have little bearing on Blake’s poem or its accompanying design: the twelve-year cycle of years of the Tiger on the Chinese calendar, for example, is clearly not relevant. But what of the strong English associations of the tiger with France, with both the top and the bottom of the structure of French power, and with the symbolism and exercise of regal authority in India? Where these associations have been recognized at all, they have not been well represented or properly related to Blake’s work.

A closer consideration of the tiger as beast apart from Blake’s design will show something of the complex of associations that Blake the poet-artist



THE LION.

The lion, justly styled, by all writers, the *King of beasts*, is generally of a lawny colour, with a tail from three feet and a half to five feet in length: his head is large and strong; his nose thick; his mouth wide, and armed with numerous and strong teeth; his eyes are red, fiery, quick, and hollow: each of his fore feet has five distinct claws, and the hinder ones, apparently, but four, as the fifth is placed higher up in the tarsus, or foot; they are of a whitish colour, about an inch and a quarter in length, crooked, moveable, sharp, and exceedingly hard. The female participates the same nature and qualities. She has no mane, which is proper to the male only, and to whose shoulders and neck it is a great ornament. She goes five months with young, and produces them in the spring; has a fresh brood every year, and four or five whelps at a litter, which she rears up with jealous fierceness, being most outrageous when any man or animal dares to approach her den.



THE TIGER.

The tiger is the most rapacious and destructive of all carnivorous animals. Fierce without provocation, and cruel without necessity, its thirst for blood is insatiable. Though glutted with slaughter, it continues its carnage, nor ever gives up so long as a single object remains in sight. Flocks, herds, and man himself, of whom it fears neither the sight nor the opposition, are its indiscriminate prey. The tiger seldom pursues his prey, but bounds on it with the swiftness of an arrow from thickets, and generally by the sides of rivers. It is chiefly a native of Asia, and the scourge of India. It will carry off a deer with ease, and is no impediment to its flight. Its ferocity can never wholly be subdued. It attacks all kinds of animals, even the lion; their combats are terrible, and often fatal to both. Its colour is a pale yellow, whitening toward the breast and belly; and the whole of its body is covered with beautiful streaks or bars of black.

### Illustration 5

had to work with, that is, to maximize, minimize, or to create anew. Readers in Blake's audience were not necessarily clear that a tiger is a huge striped cat: in European consciousness, the species had not been clearly distinguished from spotted great cats, even though tigers were on view in the Tower of London, which in Blake's time was a menagerie. Why is the

poem addressed to the the Tyger as opposed to, for example, the lion? As a giant carnivorous cat (which also has a disyllabic name) the lion might have served almost as well (I am aware, of course, that “Lion, Lion, burning bright” now must sound like a parody). But, hypothetically, in 1792, the Biblical associations, which are lacking in the case of the tiger, would have helped to aggrandize the beast. The answer, I think, is that although the magnificence of the lion itself must always be a source of wonder, its place as a symbol is overdetermined because of its British heraldic associations. The lion is lacking in mystery; it is an emblem of royalty rather than savagery. And in the context of the natural world, the exotic jungle habitat of a Royal Bengal Tiger, made strange and identified as the “forests of the night,” may stimulate questions about origins more effectively than any evocation of the plains of central Africa.

What cannot be appreciated without some exposure to sources of information familiar in Blake’s time is how mythically compounded were almost every account of tigers. The tiger was supposed to be the most powerful of predatory land animals, not only larger than the lion, but also more ferocious; it was also thought to be more treacherous, solitary, and sometimes more cowardly. Such deadly characteristics made the tiger more difficult than other carnivores to explain or to assimilate into a providential universe. As a summary of what educated people soon after the first appearance of Blake’s “The Tyger” would expect to envision and understand of the Lion and Tiger as species, see Illustration 5, reproducing facing pages in Thomas Bewick’s *A General History of Quadrupeds* (1809; a somewhat different tiger was presented in the first edition, 1790). It can be immediately appreciated that the Bewick descriptions could offer a point of departure for the mighty questions of “The Tyger,” whereas the description of the Lion would not serve to provoke such radical concern. An even more lurid contrast of tiger and lion, called to my attention by Alexander S. Gourlay, appears under “Felis” in the first edition of *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1771), II, 585:

The tiger is more ferocious, cruel, and savage than the lion. Although gorged with carnage, his thirst for blood is not appeased; he seizes and tears to pieces a new prey with equal fury and rapacity, the very moment after devouring a former one; he lays waste the country he inhabits; he neither dreads the aspect nor the weapons of men;

puts to death whole troops of domestic animals; and attacks young elephants, rhinoceros's [sic], and sometimes even braves the lion himself. The tiger seems to have no other instinct but a constant thirst after blood, a blind fury which knows no bounds or distinction, and which often stimulates him to devour his own young, and to tear the mother to pieces for endeavoring to defend them. . . .

The subtext of "The Tyger," as delineated in the *Brittanica* and Bewick, places the inordinate savagery of the beast (somehow) within the realm of nature. And nothing in the poem suggests that the Tyger addressed is a whit less fearsome; the interrogator of such an egregious beast has ample reason to question the moral sense of its creator. Neither the creature nor the creator could begin to answer why.

The recognition that works of art take their origins in particular times and places and employ communicative and expressive codes current in their cultures has led to a persistent blurring tendency in critical exposition to identify foreground with background and thus to represent the work as a symptom of its historical or other setting. Serious reading is often sidetracked by adventitious similitudes: nonce-senses become attached to words, and critical barnacles may distract even learned readers from what authors expect their readers to disregard or forget. In "Blake's Lamb-Tiger," the central chapter of *Reflections on Revolution*, Ronald Paulson makes much of the fact that when Blake wrote "The Tyger," about 1792, the revolutionary populace of France was contemptuously referred to in English reactionary slang as "tigers" (normally in the plural). But Paulson's sampling of allusions to tigers in political contexts is too narrow to establish the tiger as an English reactionary metonymy for revolutionary France.

The will to connect works of the period with "The French Revolution" animates much of Paulson's *Reflections on Revolution*, extending not only to works of the period like "The Tyger," written about 1792, but also to *Frankenstein* (1818), written three years after Waterloo by Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin Shelley, who was not born until after the French Revolution was essentially over. A similar urge to "contextualize" also motivates the writings on the Romantics of programmatic Marxists such as Stuart Crehan. But to suggest, as Paulson and other recent critics have done, that the Tyger in Blake's *Song of Experience* should be associated pri-

marily with the violence of the French Revolution is first of all to misrepresent the concern of the poem with cosmic origins. Moreover, such a suggestion fails to confront the notorious fact that the accompanying poem shows an unferocious-looking beast, so that even if a reader in Blake's time might have momentarily wondered whether the title, "The Tyger," has something to do with France, such a reader—whether of conservative or radical persuasion—would soon have had the notion dispelled by the poem-with-picture.

There is no question, of course, that both tigers and French social upheaval seemed menacing to many English readers in the 1790s. And, as is abundantly clear in such poems as *The French Revolution*, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, *America*, and *Europe*, Blake was profoundly concerned with events in revolutionary France. In addition, as both Paulson and Crehan observe, in Blake's own *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Plate 18, the poet allusively employed current conservative argot linking the French of the 1790s with "tigers" in order to make a satirical point about "angelic" mentality—although, as I shall explain more fully, in this case Blake took special pains to call attention to the allusion to France, rather than expecting the reader to recognize it from "tyger" alone. But to import the French Revolution into a work in which it does not belong is to bring historical background into the foreground. In the context of *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, it is as irrelevant to link "The Tyger" with Marat or Robespierre as to link "The Lamb" with Marie Antoinette. In other poems of *Songs* in which "tygers" are mentioned—"The Little Girl Lost . . . and Found," and "Night"—they are so patently unconnected with "the French Revolution" that any such association would be almost unthinkable. Although *Songs of Experience* rings with poems of social protest—such as "London," "Holy Thursday," "The Chimney Sweeper," and "The Little Vagabond," it is the Englishness of injustice that arouses Blake. As we look more closely, however, at the usage of tiger imagery in Blake's time, whether or not it had a bearing on Blake's *Songs of Experience*, we encounter some interesting variations in the rhetoric of Franco-British polemics. In the later eighteenth century, tiger imagery was associated with violence generally and could be applied to either side according to the political orientation of the polemicist. It is to be found in traditional anti-Gallican sentiment in England, fed by an imperialistic rivalry between France and England that long antedated the French Revolution. And pre-

revolutionary French cartoonists had sometimes represented their ancient enemy across the Channel as a Tiger rather than as the traditional regal Lion. In the early 1790s it became a commonplace of anti-Revolutionary sentiment in Britain to compare the behavior of the French populace with that of bloodthirsty tigers. Even for English liberals, the conduct of the French mobs came to seem so inordinate as to demand comparison with tigers; in Mary Wollstonecraft's account of the 1789 phase of the revolution from the perspective of 1794–95—an account Paulson does not cite—"The mob were barbarous beyond the tiger's cruelty: for how could they trust a court that had so often deceived them, or expect to see its agents punished when the same measures were pursuing?" (*An Historical and Moral View of the Origin and Progress of the The French Revolution . . .* (1794–95), V, iv, 141).

One difference between liberal and reactionary usage is that in the latter the comparison with tigers sometimes extends beyond French ferocity to embrace revolutionary France itself; for example, in 1793 Edward Long declared in his *The Antigallican* that for "the tyrannicide mob of Paris" Burke's epithet "swinish multitude" should be changed to

tygerish *multitude*; the more so, as Voltaire, who knew his nation better than myself, has assured us, that it is a mixture of the Tyger and the Ape. The fact is, that the Monkey-compound has disappeared with the Aristocratical part of the Community, and left the wanton cruelty of the Tyger to be claimed exclusively by the Democracy. Now God protect the Nation, continued the satirist, when the Monkey extraction shall be worn out. (pp. 23–24)

Long cites as his source "Tyger Singe," but no such title appears in modern editions of Voltaire. What must have been then as now Voltaire's best-known employment of Tiger-Monkey symbolism to satirize the French national character appears in Chapter 22 of *Candide* (1759). When the naive German hero is told of both unsuccessful and successful attempts (a century and a half earlier) to assassinate the French King Henry IV, he exclaims: "Oh, the monsters! . . . What! Such horrors in a nation that dances and sings! Can I not depart at once out of this country where monkeys agitate tigers?" Here, it would appear that the tigers are the aristocrats and the monkeys are the populace.

In the fifth stanza of the *Marseillaise*, which Paulson cites to support the identification of tigers with the bloodthirsty mob, the “tigers without pity [who] tear the breast of their mother” are not revolutionaries at all, but rather counter-revolutionary royalists, “despotes sanguinaires,” who attack their motherland. The usage is more ambiguous in another passage from Wollstonecraft’s *An Historical and Moral View of . . . the French Revolution . . .*, where the tiger imagery may refer either to the British alliance against the revolutionary forces, or to violence from both the left and the right against the forces of freedom:

Lively sanguine minds, disgusted with the vices and artificial manners produced by the great inequality of conditions in France, naturally hailed the dawn of a new day, when the Bastille was destroyed; and freedom, like a lion roused from his lair, rose with dignity and calmly shook herself. — With delight they marked her noble pace, without ever supposing that the tiger, who thirsts for blood, and the whole brutal herd must necessarily unite against her. — Yet this has been the case; the dogs of war have been let loose, and corruption has swarmed with noxious life. (p. 213)

As with the mixed gender of Wollstonecraft’s lion of freedom, it is difficult to think of a parallel in nature to which her image of the mob as “brutal herd” would refer, but it is at least clear that the tiger is an enemy of the revolution, not its embodiment. In an earlier section (p. 159), Wollstonecraft had applied lion imagery to the revolutionary guard.

The British right-wing polemical cliché that the French were a compound of Monkeys and Tigers continued into the Napoleonic era, and the Monkey component did not wither away as in 1793 Long had thought it would. In 1803 the virulent anti-Gallican artist James Gillray issued one of his most brilliant cartoons, *The Arms of France* (Illustration 6). For some reason this satirical picture does not appear in collected editions of Gillray’s work and is thus little known; I include it for its bearing on the emblematic associations of tigers in Blake’s time, not because it sheds any particular light on Blake “The Tyger” or any of Blake’s other tigers that do have some connection with British thought about France and the French Revolution. Of Gillray’s picture we can declare that what it represents is not Blake’s the Tyger, though it stands in itself as a powerful example of



Illustration 6

polemical semiosis of tiger symbolism. We need only acknowledge here that from the centerpiece of the bloody guillotine hangs a medal bearing the head of Napoleon and that the major flanking figures are a grotesque monkey bearing the banner of “Atheism” and seated on the volumes of Rousseau, Voltaire, and Paine, balanced against a snarling Tiger bearing the banner of “Desolation.” Chiefly beneath the latter is a heap of decapi-

tated heads including a clergyman, a politician, a Turk, a judge, a woman, and children. These and many other details of word and picture are more cleverly coordinated and deployed than in any other British satire on Napoleonic France. This cartoon cogently answers the question of how British ideologues justified their interminable wars with France.

From his less-partisan perspective of 1859, Dickens even-handedly applies the codes of tiger-symbolism in *A Tale of Two Cities* to both sides of the class conflict in France. He repeatedly employs tiger imagery in descriptions of the pre-Revolutionary situation of potential violence at the Defarges' establishment in Saint Antoine (I:5, II:9, II:16), and Mme Defarge herself is finally revealed as a "Tigress" (III:14). But Dickens also constructed this tiger allegory to epitomize his characterization of Monsieur the Marquis, the sinister representative of *l'ancien régime*: "Rustling about the room, his softly-slippered feet making no noise on the floor, he moved like a refined tiger:—looked like some enchanted marquis of the impenitently wicked sort, in story, whose periodical change into tiger form was either just going off or just coming on" (II:9). In William Godwin's novel *Things As They Are: or, The Adventures of Caleb Williams*, published in the revolutionary year 1794, the four references to tigers (tp; I:3, III:6, III:7) associate the beast with the English ruling class, rather than with the lower classes or with France.

In an epigraph to *Representations of Revolution*, Paulson announces that his book will be preoccupied with shortcomings in the art of 1789 to 1820:

If a symbol is a concentrated image, then a revolution is the master-builder of symbols, for it presents all phenomena and all relations in concentrated form. The trouble is that the symbolism of a revolution is too grandiose; it fits badly with the creative work of individuals. For this reason artistic reproductions of the greatest mass dramas of humanity are so poor.

Although Paulson does not refer again to this statement written by Leon Trotsky in 1932, it appears to be his premise for judging what he takes to be the attempts of Blake and others to deal with "The French Revolution." But it becomes incumbent upon the critic who adheres to a theory dooming a whole class of art to failure to discover the particular cases of inade-

quacies that bear out the theory. If, as I have tried to show, Blake did not write “The Tyger” or make the accompanying design as a way of dealing with the French Revolution, then Paulson’s mingling of political and psychoanalytic premises cannot reveal much that really applies to the work. Paulson, if pressed on this point, would probably argue (as Trotsky did) that even if artists didn’t attempt to represent the revolution they should have—even though by definition they couldn’t have succeeded. Such a contrived double-bind, however, can only seem persuasive to someone already committed to such an ideological standard of judgment. Under these circumstances, the work of art can’t win.

### III. The Questions of the Picture

The picture that accompanies the text of “The Tyger” should provoke a different set of questions in the viewer, having to do with the design of art rather than the design of the universe or with the shape of public events. Why offer any picture together with a poem when the poem itself is powerful enough to communicate an overwhelming impression? How could what the viewer sees be commensurate with what the speaker of the poem sees? Does not the usually mild image of the Tyger imply that the mind of the speaker of the poem has been agitated beyond cause? What would a tiger adequate to the vision of the poem look like?

Like the literal questions of the poem, few of these implicit questions are subject to concise response. Yet they hover around all attempts to make assertions about Blake’s purposes. Much criticism intervenes with value judgments rather than pondering the problem with which Blake has confronted us. If one declares that, in the order of things, there is an inherent discrepancy between pictorial and poetic media and that, in consequence, this picture ought never to have accompanied this text, the artist’s questions are denied in favor of the critic’s answer. Usually those who wish to maintain the latter position do not consider that in the forty-seven other pages in *Songs* containing illuminated printing, suggestions of disabling discrepancies rarely occur, even though the subjects presented in picture and text are frequently not identical.

Illustration per se is the exception rather than the rule throughout Blake’s work in illuminated printing. In the case of *Songs*, moreover, Blake chose for these unusually small pages a mode of representation em-

ploying naive conventions, in the sense of appearing suitable for simple children or, more probably, for the child who dwells within the adult. Having set this naive pictorial mode in *Songs of Innocence* (1789), Blake continued it, with minor variations, in *Songs of Experience* (1794). With such decisive determinations as these, the artistic issue cannot be understood as a question of whether Blake's design for "The Tyger" is adequate to some theoretical standard, or even to the range of the sublime available to an eighteenth-century artist, but whether the representation of "The Tyger" is compatible in visual idiom with the fifty-three other designs in the book. On the whole, I think it is compatible: some distortion may help more than symmetrical miniaturization would to save the beast in the jungle from being overcome by the aggrandized "Sick Rose" on a nearby page.

Another kind of explanation for the discrepancy between text and visual image is that the difference in feeling, as well as representation, is intentionally humorous. Taking off from the word "smile" in the penultimate line of the marvelous fifth stanza of the poem, Wicksteed wondered in 1928 whether it wouldn't be "best to regard the whole design as a mask, deriding those who expect on a mortal page the pictures of the Deity at work." There is indeed some justification for discovering incongruous wit in the design. In one copy (but only one, copy Y in the Metropolitan Museum of Art), the Tyger smiles, as a few of the many commentators on the work have observed. My own use of this atypical copy, cropped and in monochrome, to illustrate the text of "The Tyger" in the Norton Critical Edition of Blake (eds. Mary Lynn Johnson and John E. Grant, 1979) may have contributed to an emphasis on the smile out of proportion to Blake's own preference in depicting the tiger. Gene W. Ruoff concludes his recent discussion of the poem and picture in *William Wordsworth and the Age of English Romanticism: A Guide for Teachers* (1987) with this question: "Just what are we to make of the famous smile on the face of the tiger?" But, as is the case with the atypically formidable Princeton Tyger (Copy U, Illustration 1), the only responsible thing to say about the atypically smiling Tyger is "This continues not to be Blake's 'The Tyger,'" even though Blake made both and even though they resemble each other in most significant particulars.

More important, because it describes a discordant aspect of the design in most copies (though *not* the one that accompanies this essay), is Blake's

treatment of the huge tree that looms over the Tyger. David Erdman, a critic not given to the invention of Romantic ironies, pointed out in 1974 that on this tree there appears a kind of cartoon humanoid face, to which the uppermost branch seems appended as an arm. Once this whimsical element in the design has been pointed out—a comic monster which is distressed at what it sees, presumably the Tyger—it cannot be denied. It is futile to maintain that this incongruity between poem and picture, which occurs in most but not all copies, cannot and should not be and therefore does not exist. The question must be whether such a discrepancy in tone is accidental, due to a blindness or failure in judgment or execution on the part of the artist, or whether it, like other incongruities, is incorporated into Blake's overall design, both for the page and for *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* as a whole. Although I can conceive of arguments that might extenuate Blake's introduction of the man-in-the-tree, I believe his art was better served when he suppressed this feature of the design.

Blake's varied pictures of "The Tyger" sometimes fall short of significant representation of an earthly tiger, sometimes are equal to it, but are never so formidable as to suggest an overwhelming social reality such as "The French Revolution," to say nothing of the conception behind the image in the mind of the speaker of the poem: the Wrath of God. In most copies, the Tyger's excessively lean belly and the inordinately large round eye make for a comic incongruity that affects even viewers aware that actual tigers often don't look as imposing as they ideally are supposed to. The habit real tigers have of stalking around with their mouths hanging open can make them seem more amusing than formidable—at least when they are safely secured in zoos. But the discrepancy in angle of vision between Blake's picture and poem is too great to be encompassed from any single imaginative point of view. Rather, what we are to read and what we are shown are related as are the double plots in Shakespearean drama: they are pitched on different levels, requiring an audience as ready to be moved by the one as amused by the other.

In Paulson's *Representations of Revolution* appears a full-page monochrome reproduction of "The Tyger" (p. 100), distorted and rendered dim by excessive enlargement. This image of the Tyger, who looks ill, together with a barely legible text of the illuminated poem, is from a copy at the Yale Center for British Art (copy F; erroneously identified as being from *Songs of Innocence* and dated 1795). This version of the design, from

one of the few copies of *Songs of Experience* in which Blake unsuccessfully attempted to employ color printing instead of his usual brush, pen, and watercolor techniques, is a technical failure; its most legitimate use would be as an example of how Blake the graphic artist could go wrong, not as a representation of his most characteristic work. One is bound to observe, however, that "The Tyger" has suffered more than other designs from an unlucky post-Blakean publication history. I have already referred to my own unwise choice of copy Y for the Norton Critical Edition. And in both Joseph H. Wicksteed's *Blake's Innocence and Experience* (1928) and Kathleen Raine's *William Blake* (1970) a wretched color-printed copy of the page was selected (copy T), surely for no better reason than the convenience of obtaining photographs from the British Museum. In selecting copy F for reproduction in *Reflections on Revolution*, Paulson could hardly have foreseen the misleading consequences of illustrating his argument with an inferior version of the design, or that the poor choice would be compounded by his publisher's enlargement of the image to fill a whole page. But when the reader has only this reproduction in view, it becomes easier to accept Paulson's negative assessment of the design. (To be fair, however, Paulson does not advert to the reproduction to heighten his argument).

At any rate, the inferior image of the tiger does nothing to counter Paulson's approbation of a complex Freudian interpretation by Steven Shaviro, to the effect that the animal is "an empty signifier, a screen or mirror which reveals only the desire and fears of his interpreter" (p. 101). Even if, on other grounds, we should construe the poem to be the utterance of a speaker who projects upon the Tyger his own teratoid though not contemptible imaginings (as I had previously argued), the signification of the image need not be "empty," as Paulson and Shaviro would have it be. It is neither a projective test, undefined so as to elicit whatever response a reader may be stimulated to make, nor an illusion, or "Error," which, as Blake later declared, is "Burnt up the Moment Men cease to behold it" (E.565). An interpretation that emphasizes the eye of the beholder is made possible by two considerations: first, the poem's involved rhetoric, and second, its relations to the accompanying picture. In the poem, Blake provides for the Tyger a cosmic context that is mythological but not quite identifiable as part of any known story, either traditional or of Blake's own creation; nevertheless the prodigious event in the great fifth stanza,

“When the stars threw down their spears,” seems so deeply imagined in the mind of the speaker that the reader never suspects that it might never have occurred. It has the verity of vision. In the picture, Blake shows a beast possessing a low degree of sublimity in a setting that contains whimsical or perhaps satirical elements discordant with the evocation of terror. Another consideration in interpretation is the poem’s relation to other *Songs of Experience* and (especially because of the reference to “The Lamb”) to *Songs of Innocence*. From there the interpreter can move to the rest of Blake’s symbolism and, eventually, to historical events that can be sighted in the distant background. But the interpreter hampered by a premise of indeterminacy and consequently unwilling to assess the priorities of relevance of the several backgrounds of Blake’s design will produce “an endless maze” (E.31) or conceptual gridlock in which any plausible context may be allowed to emerge.

In another of his recent studies, *Book and Painting: Shakespeare, Milton, and the Bible*, subtitled “Literary Texts and the Emergence of English Painting,” Paulson discusses a subject he knows more about than most literary critics, the development of English art in the eighteenth century. Unfortunately for Blake, however, two of Paulson’s central tenets, like his epigraph on literature and revolution from Trotsky, lead to an undervaluation of Blake’s achievement. In Blake’s time the stereotype that English genius is literary rather than pictorial was widely accepted as sufficient reason for seeking foreign artists to execute major artistic projects. Despite the modernity of many of his terms and conceptual systems, Paulson continues to think that the eighteenth-century connoisseurs were basically correct about the limitations of English art. In his view, most English artists of stature, such as Hogarth or Blake, are more significant from a “literary” than from an artistic point of view: “There is a real sense in which English painting (that is, painting by Englishmen, not by foreigners who happened to reside in England) was a branch of literature rather than art” (p. 3). Paulson does not undervalue English art altogether: he recognizes real greatness in Turner and Constable, artists he discusses in yet another recent book, *Literary Landscape*. But he does not put his thesis about “English genius” fully to the test, as neither George Stubbs nor Henry Moore is considered in his several studies of English art. The mystique of a national identity can be manipulated for economic or political purposes, but art, as Blake understood and insisted, has nothing essential to do with either

money or empire. The most that ought to be conceded along these lines is that, in a given culture during certain periods, artistic talent will be encouraged toward some modes of expression rather than others; it is obvious that, for example, a culture having pervasive objections to graven images is unlikely to develop a strong tradition of portraiture. The notion that there are limits to national imagination which have (somehow) been set in the nature of things perpetuates stereotypes and encourages critical captiousness in favoring artists of selected national schools.

Paulson's other tenet, that "the verbal and graphic traditions" are inherently in "conflict," also works to Blake's disadvantage, since Blake always strove to bring the two media into coordination. Paulson complains that the composite art of *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* doesn't work because, as a member of the audience, he is unable to read and take in the visual effects and the poetry at the same time: "The words alone expand to fill the empty space with their energy (their double and triple meanings, their immense connotations, their verbal contexts, their ambiguities); on the illuminated page they seem cramped and crowded and one's attention has to be drawn to them forcibly away from the pictures" (p. 123). One can accept this description of the reading process on the illuminated page without, however, impugning Blake's art or judgment. Reading and re-reading (as even the most astute audience must do to savor the "ambiguities" of any poetry) a plain printed text undoubtedly offers a different experience from reading even an illustrated text, such as *Alice in Wonderland* embellished by Tenniel's pictures. A Blakean illuminated book is a still more involving experience, one more subject to distraction, to the breaking of one spell to enter another; it demands a reader willing to follow the words as their calligraphy animates them and takes them into the design. At times no marriage of pictorial and poetic dimensions has been arranged: like players in separate rings of a circus, text and design work simultaneously but independently. In the cases of the two pages which lack texts, the frontispiece to *Innocence* illustrates a subsequent poem, and the frontispiece to *Experience* does not illustrate any text but requires the reader to make up a story to account for it. Paulson's complaints against Blake are like Romantic strictures against trying to experience Shakespeare in the theatre; even those lucky enough to attend a performance directed by Shakespeare and acted by Burbage in the Globe Theatre would undoubtedly have missed verbal nuances that, two hundred years later,

Charles Lamb could appreciate at leisure in his study. But that is a tribute to Shakespeare's genius, not an argument against either reading or theatre-going.

Paulson reinforces his negative view of Blake's art by referring to judgments by other critics as different as the late W. K. Wimsatt and Harold Bloom. The latter argued that as poet Blake measures up to his literary precursors, Milton and Pope, but as an artist in comparison with his obvious pictorial precursor, Michelangelo, the relationship, "however we interpret it, becomes an esthetic embarrassment when we stare at the works of the two artists side by side" (p. 123). This sort of *ad nominem* evaluation seems at first persuasive because both Bloom and Paulson write authoritatively, but their project recalls the test case posed by a "Philosopher" in an early satire by Blake: "then Suction askd if Pindar was not a better Poet, than Ghiotto was a Painter" (E. 454). How can anyone "stare at" Michelangelo's forty-foot mural of the Last Judgment "side by side" with, say, Blake's Michelangelesque figures in pictures less than five inches tall in his twenty-seven-page *Book of Urizen*? It would constitute a Dadaist gesture to pretend to do so. Even if one could arrange an *in situ* comparison of Michelangelo with the greatest of illuminated manuscripts, Pol's *Très Riches Heures du Jean Duc de Berry*, or with the small pictures of other masters who were broadly in the tradition of Michelangelo, such as Botticelli's illustrations for the *Divine Comedy*, nothing could be concluded because the pictures are incommensurate.

Undoubtedly what Bloom and Paulson had in mind was comparing a reproduction of Michelangelo's Last Judgment in some book — most fairly, in an engraved version because that is all Blake himself could have seen, since he was never able to afford to go to Italy. Some idea of how such a test would come out can be seen from the pictures by Michelangelo and Blake assembled by Irene Chayes in a 1984 article on Blake's artistic sources. Unfortunately, the final version of Blake's own *Last Judgment*, a painting seven feet tall that contained more than a thousand figures, has been lost. But Blake's preliminary drawing, in ink, is extant, and (when properly reproduced) it will stand comparison with an engraving of Michelangelo's masterpiece.

A meaningful evaluation of Blake's accomplishment might have occurred if either Bloom or Paulson had considered that as a graphic artist Blake ought to be compared with another graphic artist of commensurate

stature whether he happens to have been English or not. Paulson's thesis about the inferiority of English art allows him a brief comparison of Blake with Hogarth, but he does not consider the one encounter in which their work might most fruitfully be compared: Blake's beautiful engraving, *Beggar's Opera, Act III*, after one of Hogarth's own famous paintings executed sixty years earlier. Blake himself repeatedly held up Dürer as one of his three artistic masters and even hung one of Dürer's famous prints, *Melencolia I*, above his work table, no doubt to set himself a standard of creative mood and execution. But in Paulson's Anglocentric narrative, Blake is represented as a graphic artist without forebears of comparable style and mastery. As author of the wonderful suite of engravings, *Illustrations of the Book of Job* (1825), Blake at his best need not suffer by comparison with the greatest masters of graphic art in the Renaissance.

## V. The Apparition

I have reserved for the end a closer look at the first references in Blake's work that unquestionably connect tigers with "The French Revolution." Since Blake had employed tiger-imagery in his work long before 1789, not even someone inclined to accept Paulson's "Tiger-Lamb" thesis could suppose that "tyger" was simply Blake's code for "The French Revolution." But that the brilliant fantasy on plates 18–19 of Blake's *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (published anonymously and dated 1790, in one copy) refers to the revolution has been clear to modern readers for more than thirty years. The question raised by Paulson's attempts to deal with the "Tyger" symbolism is how it should be generalized and applied elsewhere in Blake's work.

In this "Memorable Fancy" in the *Marriage*, a free-spirited narrator (often referred to by critics as "Blake," despite the fictional framework of the satire) engages in conversation with a rule-following Angel, and they take turns "impos[ing] on one another." First the Angel takes the narrator to Hell in order to warn him of what is in store unless he mends his ways. As, sitting on a root that hangs over the abyss, they gaze into the fiery gulf, they see a "monstrous serpent" appear, "to the east, distant about three degrees. . . . And now we saw, it was the head of Leviathan; his forehead was divided into streaks of green and purple like those of a tyger's forehead . . . advancing toward us with all the fury of spiritual existence . . ."

(E.41). The Angel, terrified at the prodigy, runs back to the sanctuary of an angelic “mill,” which is underneath a “church,” abandoning the unregenerate narrator, who is then freed of the obsession and enabled to perceive a spiritual alternative to the tygerish menace. Later the narrator reports to the Angel: “All that we saw was owing to your metaphysics: for when you ran away I found myself on a bank by moonlight hearing a harper”; to the reader he had summarized the harper’s “theme”: “The man who never alters his opinion is like standing water, and breeds reptiles of the mind.” Nevertheless, the next plate of *The Marriage* presents a picture of the triple-coiled sea serpent, head raised above the gulf, but with the “forehead” away from the viewer, thus displaying its (presumably) “tygerish” feature only to a witness duly stationed on a root, as the beast departs from him—not advances.

Without commenting on the picture, Paulson reviews the written account of this famous episode and concludes that “in short, both Leviathan and the tiger are only in the mind of the angel” (p. 99); he then goes on to represent the speaker of “The Tyger” as having the same sensibility. But Blake’s narrator acknowledges that he also saw what the angel did, gaudy stripes and all. By contrast, for a reader of Blake’s *Songs of Experience*, no such confirmation occurs in “The Tyger.” The Angel in this episode of *The Marriage* is cast in the role of one who is incapable of entertaining real questions about any ultimate problem. As such, his mentality would be totally unsuited to articulate the radical speculative questions that “The Tyger” is built upon.

The narrator, who acknowledges that he too saw the apparition of Leviathan, evidently in all its absurdity, showing its allegedly tygerish stripes in hues never known on land or sea, shares more of the spirit that animates “The Tyger.” He might well have been scared too, though he didn’t run off to church, like his “friend,” the Angel, but stayed and was rewarded by instruction in vision. What he learns, by inference, is not that Leviathan wasn’t real but that everything had been fantastically or conventionally distorted by the conservative imagination of the Angel. The point is not that the French Revolution, in Paris, “to the east, distant about three degrees,” could be understood, even in 1790, as merely an entertaining or amusing diversion, like a horror story, or even that it offered no threat to England. At the end of the eighteenth century, literate English people of every political persuasion, left or right, were fluent in eschatological refer-

ence and almost without thinking fell into the traditional symbolism of the last days as set forth in the Book of Revelation. Leviathan, therefore, would be recognized not only as the creature named by God to Job and acknowledged by the psalmist but also, as in the language of the Book of Revelation, “the beast that was, and is not, and yet is” (17:8).

I have referred to the Tyger of Blake’s poem as being an apparition rather than a spectre because it is not a fuzzy-edged illusion that may be there but probably isn’t. Blake’s Tyger has mysterious origins, but its reality “in the forests of the night” (wherever that may be) is not in question. In status it is therefore, like Leviathan, a “beast that was, and is not, and yet is.” Where within the poem the vision of “The Tyger” is most unlike one that ought to be referred to as Blake’s own is in the final stanza, which differs from the first stanza by only a single word: “could” is changed to “dare.” The latter word marks a development in attitude rather than a clarification of vision: whatever may have been responsible for the Tyger, its origins and all it represents provoke indignation, more than admiration. Anyone tempted to take a providential view of the scheme of things will find the Tyger almost impossible to justify. Blake selected a beast that truly could not be confronted with equanimity.

Blake’s “The Tyger” is one of the first attempts by a European artist to acknowledge the natural/supernatural problem aroused by a beast possessing such power that it may be imagined to represent ultimate power. Among visual artists, the tigers of Blake’s predecessors or contemporaries Rubens, Stubbs, and even Delacroix are either natural or lurid-natural, rather than supernatural. Animal artists later in the nineteenth century, such as Landseer, continue the tendency to situate the beast in this world. Not until 1880 did another visual artist, Max Klinger, in his graphic sequence entitled *Eve and the Future*, show in the “First Future” that a figure Blake would have called the Covering Cherub, the guard who was stationed in the western gate of the Garden of Eden, ought to be a tiger. The chief keeper of the visualized tiger during succeeding decades was Henri Rousseau. His splendid *Storm in the Jungle* (1891), which features a frantic tiger, was followed about 1908 by a series exemplified by *The Jungle: Tiger Attacking a Buffalo*. In between, such a minor picture as Rousseau’s *Tiger Hunt* (c 1897) serves as a visionary testimony of the extermination of natural tigers that was then proceeding apace.

During this period a succession of writers attempted to refine the imagi-

native situation of the tiger as it had been realized by Blake and the painters: Thomas Mann, Wallace Stevens, T. S. Eliot, Basil Bunting, J. L. Borges. A related beast is Rilke's panther. Perhaps the most significant post-Blakean tiger in English literature is the crucial felt presence in Henry James's "The Beast in the Jungle" (1903). John Marcher could not bring himself to envision the Beast that stalked him distinctly enough to name it as the tiger, so naturally James's narrator doesn't commit the indiscretion of doing so. But when in the end the Beast pounces on Marcher, the mourner for his own lost life, the reader is left with no doubt as to the species it has to be. Sometimes I think that many commentators on Blake's "The Tyger" belong to the family of John Marcher; they seem to make it a way of life to avoid confronting the Beast except as a "symbol" of something they feel must be, or was once, out there somewhere. It would be more bracing to recognize how Blake's Tyger was absorbed by the Sphinx into the "rough beast, its hour come round at last" of Yeats's "The Second Coming." Is that easier to account for?

### Bibliography

#### I. On Blake's "The Tyger" and Other Tigers

In order to think clearly about "The Tyger" one must bear in mind that at present just under thirty copies of Blake's *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* are known; only about a half-dozen versions of "The Tyger" have ever been satisfactorily reproduced. For information on the various copies and the alphabetical system for designating them, see the section on illuminated books in G. E. Bentley, Jr., *Blake Books . . . Annotated Catalogues of William Blake's Writings*. . . (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), the standard guide to everything written by and about Blake. Citations of Blake's writings refer to David V. Erdman, ed. *The Complete Poetry & Prose of William Blake*, with a commentary by Harold Bloom; Newly Revised Edition (New York: Anchor Press/Doubleday; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), here abbreviated as E.

In order not to burden my essay with minute documentation I shall list only the writings on "The Tyger" that seem to me most noteworthy, positively or negatively, with particular attention to pieces too recent for notice in Mary Lynn Johnson's "William Blake" in *The English Romantic*

*Poets: A Review of Research and Criticism*, ed. Frank Jordan (New York: The Modern Language Association, Fourth Edition, 1985), esp. pp. 209–10, which lists almost everything of substance on “The Tyger.” The best accounts of the poem are those of David V. Erdman, *Blake: Prophet Against Empire* (1954; 3rd ed. 1977) and *The Illuminated Blake* (1974); Martin K. Nurmi in PMLA 1956 (rpt. in casebooks edited by Bottrall, Paley, and Weathers, all pub. 1969); Hazard Adams, *William Blake: A Reading of the Shorter Poems* (1963, incorporating a 1960 essay); Morton D. Paley, *Energy and The Imagination* (1970, incorporating a 1966 essay); Rodney M. Baine in *Philological Quarterly* 1967, and, with Mary R. Baine, in *SEL* 1975; Lionel Trilling, *The Experience of Literature: Poetry* (1967); R. L. Rumsby in *The Cambridge Quarterly* 1982; Edward Larrissy, *William Blake* (1985); David Fuller, *Blake’s Heroic Argument* (1988)—which cuts through much of the underbrush of commentary with the precise comment: “The poem wonders at; it does not explain or expound.” Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (1980) offers useful critiques of Epstein, Raine, Hirsch, Stevenson, and Swingle and parodies interpretive extremes with an absurd interpretation of the poem as an allegory of the digestive process. Among the more recent interpretations that seem to me essentially wrong are those of Harold Bloom in *Poetry and Repression* (1976, incorporating material pub. 1961, 1963, 1970, etc.), and Steven Shaviro, “Striving With Systems: Blake and the Politics of Vision,” *Boundary 2* (1982; rpt. in *Essential Articles for the Study of William Blake, 1970–1984*, ed. Hilton [1986]). David Simpson, “Literary Criticism and the Return to ‘History,’” *Critical Inquiry* 1988, endorses Paulson and Raine as the “most persuasive” commentators. Extensive accounts containing materials of mixed value are Nelson Hilton, *Literal Imagination: Blake’s Vision of Words* (1983); Stewart Crehan, *Blake in Context* (1984)—a less mystified attempt than Paulson’s to relate the poem to the French Revolution. Consolidating or elaborating on earlier lines of interpretation are Albert Boime, *Art in The Age of Revolution 1750–1800* (1987); Harold Pagliaro, *Selfhood and Redemption in Blake’s Songs* (1987); Robert F. Gleckner, “Blake’s ‘The Tyger’ and Edward Young’s Book of Job,” *Blake: An Illustrated Quarterly*, 1987–88; Zachary Leader, *Reading Blake’s Songs* (1981); and Stanley Gardner *Blake’s Innocence and Experience Retraced* (1986). An essay by Northrop Frye, “Blake After Two Centuries” (1957; rpt. 1963, etc.), incidentally focuses on the problem of the questioner in “The

Tyger” in a way that served as my own point of departure in “The Art and Argument of “The Tyger”” (1960; rev. rpt. in *Discussions of William Blake*, ed. Grant, 1961). I also debated some implications of the diction of the poem in *PMLA* 1966. If I had succeeded in delineating the problems of the speaker in “The Tyger” in my 1961 essay, a major concern of this essay would have been unnecessary. But the problem continues to elude most commentators, including those like Pagliaro and Gleckner who have recognized that it is a problem requiring deliberation rather than pronouncement. An unpublished lecture by Michael J. Tolley, “The Fearful Symmetry of ‘The Tyger,’ ” delivered at The University of Iowa in 1980, has influenced my thinking.

Other books incidentally reviewed in this essay include Ronald Paulson, *Book and Painting: Shakespeare, Milton, and The Bible* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1982); Morris Eaves, *William Blake’s Theory of Art* (Princeton University Press, 1982); Robert N. Essick, *The Separate Plates of William Blake* (Princeton University Press, 1983). Harold Bloom, “The Pictures of the Poet,” *New York Times Book Review*, 3 January, 1982, p. 2, was specially cited in Paulson’s *Book and Painting*. Earlier attempts to theorize about the relationship between Blake’s picture and poem include Rene Wellek and Austin Warren, *Theory of Literature* (1949; New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Third Edition, 1962) p. 128. One of the ablest of Blake scholars to pronounce the picture of “The Tyger” a failure is Jean H. Hagstrum, *William Blake Poet and Painter: An Introduction to the Illuminated Verse* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), p. 86. I also refer to an important discussion of Blake’s relations with Renaissance Art: Irene H. Chayes, “Blake’s Way With Art Sources: Michelangelo’s Last Judgment,” *Colby Library Quarterly* 20 (1984), 60–89.

For information about real tigers and for the currency of tiger symbolism in Blake’s time the following are of interest: Ronald L. Tilson and Ulysses S. Seal, eds. *Tigers of the World: The Biology, Biopolitics, Management, and Conservation of an Endangered Species* (Park Ridge, N.J.: Noyes, 1987); Nicholas Courtney, *The Tiger: Symbol of Freedom* (London: Quartet, 1980); Thomas Bewick, *A Natural History of Foreign Quadrupeds* (Alnwick: W. Davison, 1809); Vol. 2 of *Davison’s Natural History*; my reproductions of pp. 18–19 are from a copy in the Lilly Library, Indiana University. Bewick’s *A General History of Quadrupeds* was published in London by Longman, et al., 1811.

During the last two decades of the eighteenth century, the chief resistance leaders to the expansion of the power of the British East India Company were the Sultans of Mysore—a fact Erdman scarcely hints at in noting that the Sultan of Mysore planted a liberty tree (*Blake: Prophet Against Empire*, p. 294). In 1792, in the third of four British wars to overcome this resistance, Tipu Sultan emerged as a leader. He made a cult of the Tiger: his given name means Tiger; he chose a tiger throne and was reputed to have thrown prisoners of war to the tigers. (Not surprisingly, the perspectives of British and Indian biographers of Tipu in recent times are widely at variance.) The final defeat of Tipu, when his capital of Seringapatam was stormed in May 1799, revealed such notorious curiosities as “Tipoo’s Tiger,” a nearly life-sized mechanical statue of a European being mauled by a Tiger, complete with sound effects. This was soon displayed at East India House (and came to the attention of Keats—cf. Phyllis G. Mann’s illustrated article, “Keats’ Indian Allegory,” *Keats-Shelley Journal* 1957). The device is still to be seen in the Victoria and Albert Museum; see the popular monograph by Mildred Archer, *Tipoo’s Tiger* (London, 1959), which contains many illustrations and a useful bibliography. One omission, however, is the reasonably dispassionate account of this contentious episode in Robert Bissett, *The History of the Reign of George III* (6 vols. London, 1820).

The spectacle of the British triumph over Tipu in 1799 was celebrated in a panorama more than two hundred feet long by Robert Ker Porter, the *Taking of Seringapatam*, displayed in Leicester Square the same year; see Richard D. Altick, *The Shows of London* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1978), esp. pp. 134–35; also pp. 299–300 for Tippoo’s Tiger. Ker Porter’s panorama having long since vanished, the most imposing picture of this episode now extant is Wilkie’s *Sir David Baird Discovering the Body of Sultaun Tippoo Saib* (1838) in the National Gallery of Scotland; see H. A. D. Miles and David Blayney Brown, *Sir David Wilkie of Scotland (1785–1841)* (Raleigh: North Carolina Museum of Art, 1987), No. 42, pp. 251–57 and No. 97, p. 369, for the engraving after Wilkie by John Burnet, 1843. In view of the significant French presence in India, and indeed pre-Revolutionary diplomacy of the French government, it is not surprising that Tipu was negotiating with Napoleon to push east from Egypt, thus provoking the British to make their final move against him in 1799. Blake’s line, “While Fuzon his tygers unloosing” (*The Book of Aha-*

nia, 1795; III,8: E.86) seems to make more sense as an allusion to Tipu and his tiger cult than as an expression of a qualifiedly sympathetic view of Robespierre, as has been proposed by Erdman, *Blake: Prophet Against Empire*, p. 319.

Considering the currency of French-Tiger symbolism, as suggested by Gillray's *The Arms of France* (illus. 6) one might have expected that a print of 1806, by C. Williams, entitled *The English Lamb—and—The French Tiger* would prove to be significant. But, as reproduced in Altick's *The Shows of London*, pl. 79 and discussed on pp. 254–55, it is evident that "The English Lamb" was only the prodigious Daniel Lambert, who weighed above 720 pounds, shown eating a side of British beef while the (still) lean image of Napoleon must make do with a bowl of French soup.

For the tiger as species in the Romantic era see also Rodney M. Baine, with Mary R. Baine, *The Scattered Portions: William Blake's Biological Symbolism* (Athens, GA: Rodney M. Baine 1986), Ch. 2 "The Carnivorous Beasts," and the more interpretive essays by the same authors, 1967, 1975, listed above. These overlap with three articles by Coleman O. Parsons: "Tygers Before Blake," *Studies in English Literature* 8 (1968), 573–92; "The Spelling and Meaning of Tyger in Blake's Day," *Word Study* 43 (1967), 5–6; and "Blake's 'Tyger' and Eighteenth-Century Animal Pictures," *Art Quarterly* 31 (1968), 297–312. As I mention in the text of my essay, the history of the Tiger in European consciousness after Blake appears yet to be surveyed.

For "The Tyger" in an astronomical context see David Worrall, "The 'Immortal Tent,'" and Paul Miner, "Visionary Astronomy" in *Bulletin of Research in the Humanities* 84 (1981), 273–95, and 305–36. Both make the point that in the eighteenth century the constellation of the Lynx was sometimes called the Tyger and could be represented as a mild beast comparable to the depicted "Tyger" in *Songs of Experience*. Miner refers to Blake's depiction in *Night Thoughts* 246 (VI, 25) of the Prelapsarian Tyger—subordinated, with the Lion and the Horse, to Adam in Paradise—as Blake's "most magnificent Tyger extant" (p. 336). So it is, but Miner neglects to point out that this Tyger browsing meekly on the grass is merely maintaining the state of original Innocence (See Illustration 7). A much more significant picture for placing Blake's Tyger in the scheme of things occurs in the great watercolor of 1807 *The Fall of Man*—Cat. 641, Plate 869, in Martin Butlin, ed. *The Paintings and Drawings of William*

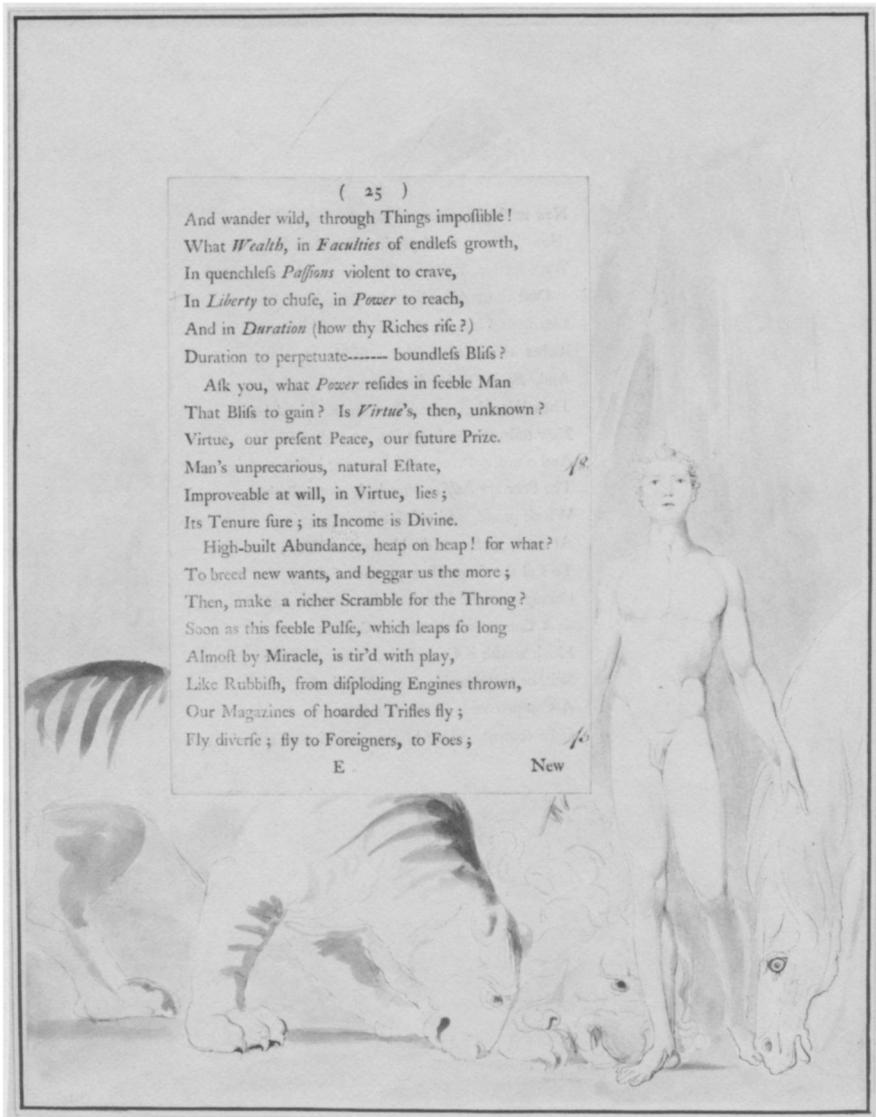


Illustration 7

Blake (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981): as Adam and Eve are led out of Paradise by the Savior, predation begins, “while the Lion seizes the Bull, the Tiger the Horse, [and] the Vulture and the Eagle contend for the Lamb” (see Illustration 8). The Lion who attacks the Bull is Blake’s most magnificent representation of the King of Beasts, but the Tiger who wor-



Illustration 8

ries the Horse is a miserable decrepit predator whose wide-open mouth is apparently toothless; it is unquestionably less awesome than any pictorial version of "The Tyger." As such, it demands of the viewer an explanation harder to formulate with certainty than is required for the *Song of Experience*. If, however, we note that this superannuated Tiger occupies the same

pictorial area as Satan and Sin, where “the Evil Angels are driven” down into the abyss, we can infer that Blake wanted to show the fraudulent beast in company with the authors of Evil; indeed, the eight shown falling, driven by the flames of loyal Angels, beneath a star-studded sky, may well correspond to the mysterious “stars [who] threw down their spears” in stanza 5 of “The Tyger.”

## II. On René Magritte and the Pipe Pictures

Serious discussion of the work of this major artist is hampered by the lack of a catalogue raisonné; one by David Sylvester is said to be in progress. The verbal Magritte, who can be observed in his *Ecrits Complets*, ed. Andre Blavier (Paris: Flammarion, 1979), is much more of a philosopher, much less of a Surrealist-provocateur, than he appears in many popular accounts. The best of these is Torczyner's *Magritte: Ideas and Images* (1977), which is to be preferred over the 1985 abridgment entitled *Magritte: The True Art of Painting*.

In the following list of books and exhibition catalogues one can achieve a fair overview of most of the artist's pipe pictures. The fame of Foucault tends to confer a disproportionate eminence upon his pamphlet-disquisition. Blavier's 1973 limited-edition pamphlet gives the fullest idea of the extent of Magritte's deployment of the pipe image, calling attention to many prints not acknowledged by Kaplan and Baum, though neglecting to mention several important pictures. The 1987 Sotheby's sale catalogue, written by Barron, offers a good color reproduction of the 1928 picture inscribed “*la pipe*.” The 1987 Fondation de l'Hermitage exhibition catalogue, written by Goemans, contains good color reproductions of the 1948 picture inscribed CECI N'EST PAS UNE PIPE and the 1947 picture entitled *Le Stropiat: The Cripple*.

Barron, Julian, et al., *The Remaining Contents of the Studio of René Magritte*. London: Sotheby's 1987.

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#### List of Illustrations

It should be noted that many qualities of Magritte's pipe pictures mentioned in my essay are not necessarily to be found in the graphic versions reproduced here—and chosen primarily because they are more readily available. And it cannot be said too often that even the best reproductions of Magritte's paintings and Blake's colored relief etchings, as with works of all artists, cannot possibly do justice to the originals.

1. William Blake, "The Tyger." From *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*. Copy U (c. 1815). Courtesy of the Princeton University Library. Reproduced in color on the back cover and in monochrome as a frontispiece for the article.
2. René Magritte, etching, inscribed "Ceci n'est pas une pipe." After the painting *The Two Mysteries* (1966).
3. René Magritte, etching, "Ceci n'est pas une pipe." Signed "Magritte." After the painting *The Air and the Song* (1964).
4. René Magritte, etching, "CECI CONTINUE / DE NE PAS ÊTRE UNE PIPE." Signed "Magritte / 1952." After the painting *La Trahison des Images* (1948).
5. Thomas Bewick, "The Lion," "The Tiger." From *A General History of Quadrupeds* (1809 edition). Courtesy of The Lilly Library, Indiana University.
6. James Gillray, *The Arms of France*. The British Museum, Department of Prints and Drawings.
7. William Blake, design 246 for Young's *Night Thoughts* VI, page 25. Watercolor (c. 1797). Butlin 330.246. The British Museum, Department of Prints and Drawings.
8. William Blake, *The Fall of Man*. Watercolor (1807). Butlin 641. The Victoria and Albert Museum. (Area of tiger outlined.)