

After Blake's Songs of Innocence and Experience

WILLIAM DERGE

(on a work of art by Lisa Sheirer entitled *Water Stories – Lilypons 2*)

I.

Things were pretty clear then,
the pencil thin lines of reeds,
curved like the hairs on a stevedore's arm,
the sculptured reflections of clouds,
scabbing bark of sycamores or
rust scars on seasoned machinery,
the *koi*, streaks of welder's sparks
against the pond bottom, black
flaked with sunken leaves, all which,
cross-eyed, I could double and overlap, or
flatten with one eye denied, or
smear with a squint, but not
split the infinite, confine to time or border,
but jump to the call to a disciplined Labrador
on a falling kill.
How some scenes stick
like blue-ambered grease augmenting
the whirr of engine and axle,
stirring the oil slick to
an industrial sublime

II.

Ankle deep in Parris Island muck,
black leather reddened
to South Carolina clay, from which
no Canada escape
or faked heart
condition can extricate, but
with each sucking step sink deeper in.
Every black reed is the gnomon
of a steady sundial.
It is never cool here.
It is never night.
The door to the season's passing
is rapidly closing, and
the fish that circle your naked flesh
are piranhas in goldfish clothing.