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Q U E R Y

“The Lute Player”

Martin Butlin

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In the four British Museum copies, the figure in question is clearly an angel with wings. In fact, in the posthumous, uncolored volume it is obvious that the wings were etched on the plate before the color was added. If Grant is willing to generalize from the facsimiles of copies Z and AA and conclude that the figure must be the mother (although it is in no sense clear how he can justify identifying that figure as earthly female as distinct from angelic being) about to take over, is he not falling into the very error that he attributes to us; namely, generalizing from too limited evidence?

Where then does such criticism as Grant offers lead us? Are we to be reduced to countering four winged angels to two figures whose backs are hidden, or a vaudeville Christ who sometimes appears without a beard to a conventional Christ who sometimes appears with a beard, or Blake's conception of busts to Schiavonetti's? Surely the aim of scholarship tends to get lost amidst such carping considerations. We all too readily admit that we have much to learn about Blake's complex art--both from Blake and even from John E. Grant--but we doubt if knowledge is greatly advanced by such arguments as those that have been presented in these pages.

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Notes Continued...

How "when" came to be printed for "where" in editions of Blake is not clear. Perhaps Ellis and Yeats started the tradition. Sampson (1905) printed "when," but Sloss and Wallis (1926) reverted to "where." Keynes printed "when" in 1925, but afterwards substituted "where"; the Erdman-Bloom edition has "where." There appears to be no textual authority for any reading but "when."

MDP

QUERY

Martin Butlin (The Tate Gallery, London, SW1) asks for "information about the present whereabouts of 'The Lute Player', with a drawing of a profile of a man on the back, sold 15th July, 1959 at Sotheby's (lot 52), bought by Jacob Schwartz and almost certainly now in the United States. It may have been given by Mr. T. E. Hanley to some educational body."

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