

AN ILLUSTRATED QUARTERLY

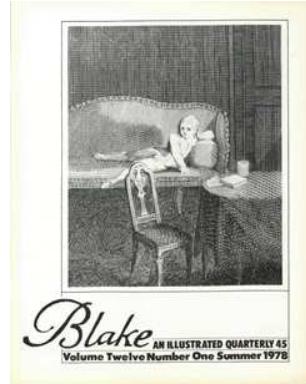
BLAKE

P O E M

Two Poems

Gunnar Harding

Blake/An Illustrated Quarterly, Volume 12, Issue 1, Summer 1978, pp. 39-40



Blake AN ILLUSTRATED QUARTERLY
Volume Twelve Number One Summer 1978

POETRY

TRICKSTER'S SONG

After reading E. B. Murray's "Jerusalem Reversed" in *Blake Studies* vol. 7 no. 1, I opened my copy of Blake--conscious of imitating Blake's use of Bysshe--and began reading "The Voice of the Ancient Bard" as "in a mirror, darkly." The result is not the finest poetry, but note the energy of Blake's words is not destroyed and in some cases is enhanced with new meaning: "Her perplex roots tangled / there!" This is not meant as an example of extending Murray's criticism or of promoting a Cabalistic dabbling in Blake's good book--just one poet's playful response to England's greatest.

Videmus nunc per speculum in aenigmate. . .
Paul, I Corinthians 13:12

Hither comes delight of youth,
morn opening to see. And
born new truth of Image.

Reason of clouds!
And fled is doubt
teasing artful, and dispute's dark
maze. Endless is folly's
way. Her perplex roots tangled

there! Fallen have many how
dead, the bones over night.
All stumble. They
care but what not know they feel. And
be led, should they? When others lead. Wish.
And

Joe Napora

MR BLAKE'S SPECTACLES

At the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge

Through Mr Blake's spectacles
the ranked Swedenborgian angels
ruffle their wings, as if in an aviary.

Flamingoes shower over Lambeth,
and the horses that draw the constellations
may be seen sparkling,
for the tiles of the roof are translucent.

Through Mr Blake's spectacles
intersecting vortices
cannonade
over a strewn sea.
On the orlop deck
the suture moans for its lost friend.

Yet the bridges of London are held up by tawny
young giants the colour of Bath stone,
and the sky balloons like a tent over Primrose Hill.

The poet's work is done; follow him home
into a room contoured like an engraving
where Mr Blake's spectacles
are oriel windows looking over
the architectonics of Jerusalem.

Morton D. Paley

TWO POEMS

I.

SONG OF INNOCENCE

Deeper into September
the rose-hips are little spots of hares' blood.
In the perpetual cardgame
between the rowan and the bramble
the ace of spades has come up
in the shape of a rook
with folded wings.

Deep in there
in the wet grass
he was born, in 1757,
was born directly from the wet grass.
They threw him in the river.
He rode on the waves.
They threw him in the fire.
He rose from it
with eyes of fire.

He is William Blake
with a blue hat and pink cheeks.
Alive, he wandered
on the grass of death.
Dead, he wanders
in a humming cloud of bees
over Hampstead Heath.

II.

AN EVENING AT HOME WITH WILLIAM BLAKE

Even as a child he drew people
the way they look, as houses
with long legs
beginning under the chin. They
grew out of the ground
like grandfather clocks from the floor
like tables and chairs from the parquet. Houses
are built from within, built
from below, by hands
reaching up from the soil. They grow
out of dark basements.

And this house around you
is hell, and this house around you
is the law, is the power over you. In there
they buy you and sell you.

The lines in his brow know
that the time of the Tiger must come
before the time of the Lamb,
that there are words other than those
that fill the mines with children
and the colonies with soldiers
in red coats. The engraver's burin
cuts lines in the metal. The contours of the world
are etched in the acid bath, his veins
in the boards of the walls.

Walls around us. Walls
within us. Shut in
we speak to a wall
we speak to a wall
within ourselves.

2.

William Blake's wife lifts the clothes-iron
from the stove, carries it to the table. Heavily
it slides over the damp shirt
over warm white cloth. His thoughts
are so heavy. They have stuck in the clothes
that are so full of thoughts
that they will never be really clean again.

She comes to him
lies down beside him on the bed.
Their shoes meet under the bed
in front of the china pot
with the green garland of flowers. His sex
presses in between her thighs
among soft curly hairs, presses
into the moist cleft
where the Universe is created, slippery wet walls
becoming tense and then lax. The Universe pulsates
with their movements
from star to star
from darkness to darkness.

Freedom comes flowing in
through their nostrils, opens
doors and shutters, draws the wind
through the chimney
kindling the fire. A gust of wind
goes through the houses, shakes them
so that the pans fall down
from their racks.

Only their heavy breathing
separates them from the darkness
until it too begins to breathe violently
dies and is born again, is filled with light
growing up around them. Another house
where the sky comes flowing blue through the windows
where the clouds glide through the rooms, the floor
greens and is covered with flowers
when his semen falls on it.

Quivers and creaking
from the bed, soft liquid
running between their thighs. For a second
it was they who made the Universe grow,
who made men rise and continue their journey,
roots of trees
press deeper into the earth
for water.

3.

The same grey-headed God
his muscular body covered with silvery down.
The same white Goddess
made pregnant by a flow of stars.
The same rain
between the furrows. The oxdriver's cry
forces the plough through the soil
with the power of brown muscles.

The same sun
chained among the boughs of the trees.
The same face
nailed to the trunk of a tree. The same blood
on the wet clay
making everything move forward
making the new Albion rise
from the sea of Time.

4.

With the shutters wide open
their house is filled with light.
Their brains are burning
like overheated lamps, burning
the air in the room, lighting up
the whole city. Giant cats
come out of the alleys
showing the tattered men
the way home.

It is the beginning of the time of the Tiger.
The cries
of the masses flow in through the windows.

When the walls are falling within you
the walls of the Bastille will fall. When
the walls fall within us
we become a single living force
that rifle bullets cannot harm
not a river but a sea
like time, not a river
but a sea.

Tomorrow or a thousand years from now
we will open the roof hatch
and arise
our faces turned toward the sun, arise
from our houses
as from murky wooden coffins. Tomorrow
or a thousand years from now
we will live the lives
we were meant to live. William Blake
blows out the candle. Tommorrow
we will color the pictures,
he says.

Gunnar Harding

Translated from the Swedish by Gunnel Tottie

THE LAST JUDGEMENT

1.

Sometimes
fishermen haul in their nets,
or an ox tongue curls
to lick a word from its eye, or from the earth
a diaphanous rain