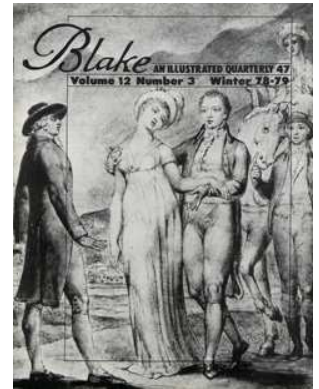


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N E W S

Letter to the Editor

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for the unconscious as he encouragingly speaks to the reader who has not yet dared to descend into it." Blake also claims to speak the "Testimony of Jesus" and "God's words," thus utilizing the archetypes of Christ and God to preserve his conscious ego in the face of an overwhelming unconsciousness. Blake thereby identifies his first-person voice with that Self that includes both the conscious and the unconscious. Gallant then discussed the nine first-person passages in *Jerusalem*. The first six (1:1-5, 5:16-26, 15:4-35, 36:58-9, 34:27-48, 74:14-75:27) tell of Blake's life in an Ulro that grows closer and closer and in which he is increasingly separated from Jesus; the last three (97:5, 98:40-41, 99:5) define Blake's hard-won conviction that he has guided us through Ulro to the divine vision. By using the first-person voice in the last line of the poem, Gallant concluded, Blake emphasizes that this is a journey that we must *each* undergo, again and again.

Robert N. Essick's "William Blake: The Printmaker as Poet" traced Blake's use of imagery drawn from his etching and engraving techniques. The minute particulars of his discussion are too rich to be crudely summarized; readers should go to his forthcoming book on Blake as a printmaker (Princeton University Press, 1979) for a full exposition of this imagery. But his concluding argument can be described. Blake had a love-hate relationship with his commercial profession. He deliberately identified many of his printmaking activities with Urizen, thus suggesting that "commercial copy engraving could become a trap, a degradation of the artist's vision, and an aesthetic-economic system antithetical to Blake's highest aspirations." On the other hand, print-making can be "a medium for the expression of imagination and the transcendence of this world"; hence Blake *reverses* Urizen's unintelligible forms in the process of printing. As Essick emphasizes, "Urizen does not print his books. The *reversal* inherent in the printing process makes all the difference, just as it does in various forms--turning around, converting a state into its contrary, transforming finite into infinite--at key points in the journey towards apocalypse in Blake's poetry." Through *Milton*, *The Four Zoas* and *Jerusalem*, Blake struggled to define the proper relationship of craft to art, of his potentially destructive Spectre to the imagination of Los. As Essick concluded, "the drama of Los and his Spectre in *Jerusalem* is in part a mythic portrayal of the subordination of copy work to original composition presented in the *Public Address* and a vast metaphor for the redemption of traditional techniques underlying the maturation of Blake's graphic style from 1804 to the end of his life." Finally, Essick suggested that the physical labor and disciplined energy required of the engraver acted as a necessary counter-balance to Blake's "speculative and digressive mind," enabling him to combine in his best poems "his mental adventures and his keen sense of physical reality."

Morton Paley's essay on "Blake's Spectre" emphasized the *personal* aspect of the Spectre, i.e., Blake's Spectre as the embodiment of what Blake didn't like about *himself*, namely his fearful anxiety, his hostility (both passive and active), his envy, pride, and black melancholy, and his

extreme sexual jealousy. Paley stressed Blake's use of the Spectre to reveal his "deep ambivalence about sexual feeling" in "My Spectre around me"; Blake characteristically separated sexual desire (which he associated with the Spectre) from a healthy love, and thus, Paley concluded, Blake is far from being "the exemplum of sexual harmony that some readers may wish to make him."

Paley then analyzed the strategies that Blake used to dominate and control his own evil "spectrous" feelings. He first had to recognize them, as Los does when he divides the Spectre from his Emanation (*J* 86:54); he then attempted to dominate and control them. But rather than merely casting them out, which Blake knew well could not be easily or permanently done, Blake offered an alternative solution. In Night VIIa of *The Four Zoas* and on plate 100 of *Jerusalem*, Blake envisioned a triumphant resolution in which his healthy imagination embraced the Spectre, acknowledging that the Spectre too has his place in the story. Only by coming to terms with his own jealousies, pride and vindictiveness could Blake attain his ultimate vision of imaginative unity: "Therefore the Sons of Eden praise Urthonas Spectre in songs / Because he kept the Divine Vision in time of trouble."

The questioning centered on the degree of success Blake achieved in his acceptance of and control over his Spectre, and especially on whether he liberated himself from a possessive, sexist attitude toward women (let me say, parenthetically, that I happen to think he did not). Even if Blake's self is imaged in his poetry as finally integrated, does that integration lead to productive relationships with other people, and especially with women? It was suggested that these questions could be fruitfully explored in another MLA Special Session on Blake and sexuality. ANNE K. MELLOR, STANFORD UNIVERSITY.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editors:

Without wishing to seem ungracious to Mr. Andrew Wilton for his generous review of my *Samuel Palmer a Biography* and *The Letters of Samuel Palmer*, may I make one observation?

In the latter Mr. Wilton takes me to task for my transcription of a phrase from a letter of 1839, viz., "inveighed Hannah into the conspiracy," and he says the word "must be 'inveigled'." Has Mr. Wilton examined the MSS? If not, I can assure him that "inveighed" is what is written in the originals. If Mr. Wilton consults *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* he will see that one meaning of inveigh is "to entice, inveigle."

Raymond Lister
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15 December 1978

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