“The Eternal Wheels of Intellect”: Dissertations on William Blake

G. E. Bentley, Jr.

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"THE ETERNAL WHEELS OF INTELLECT": DISSERTATIONS ON WILLIAM BLAKE

G. E. BENTLEY, JR.

William Blake has been the subject of doctoral dissertations for over sixty years, and a sufficient number have been completed and accepted—over two hundred—to make it possible to draw some interesting conclusions about patterns of interest in William Blake and about patterns in higher education. In general, the conclusions which these facts make possible, at least to me, confirm what one might have guessed but supply the facts to justify one's guesses.

Before one places much weight upon either the facts or the conclusions based upon them, however, one must recognize the fragmentary nature of our evidence and whence it comes. About 60% of those theses of which I have records are listed in Dissertation Abstracts (1938-1969) and Dissertation Abstracts International (1969 ff.); about 60% are in Blake Books (1977); each work is supplemented by the Comprehensive Dissertation Query Service of University Microfilms which includes many dissertations not in \textit{DA} and \textit{DAI}; and a number come from elsewhere. No Blake dissertations at universities outside North America are listed in \textit{DA}, \textit{DAI}, or the Query Service, and a number of universities in North America, such as Harvard and Chicago, apparently never or rarely list their dissertations in \textit{DA} or \textit{DAI}. For Blake dissertations at institutions such as these, or at those which occasionally do not list their dissertations there, or for dissertations (of which there are scores recorded here) listed in \textit{DA} and \textit{DAI} only three, five or more years after they were accepted for the degree, the information is likely to be accumulated here only in somewhat random fashion, and it is especially likely to be incomplete for the last few years, say 1973-78. In particular, it seems likely that there were more dissertations on Blake written in Germany and Japan than are recorded here.

The national distribution of the universities at which the degrees were awarded is striking: Canada 14 (mostly from Toronto), England 24 (mostly Oxford, Cambridge, and London), Finland 1, France 3, Germany 4, India 3, Ireland 1, Japan 2, New Zealand 1, Scotland 1, Switzerland 4, the United States 204. I have no record of Blake doctoral dissertations in Austria, Italy, or South Africa. About 96% are from the English-speaking world, which is not surprising, and about 77% are from the United States, which I suppose is not really surprising either, considering that there must be about as many Ph.D. granting universities in the United States as in most of the rest of the world put together. Of the some 23% from outside the U.S.A., a curiously high proportion has been published: fourteen out of fifty-eight. The proportion is doubtless inflated because information about such dissertations is likely to come to hand most readily when they are published—publication is sometimes the condition of their being recorded. I don't think it would be a fair conclusion that dissertations written on Blake outside the United States are, by international standards, more publishable. Though the minimum Ph.D. standard in Europe and New Zealand is probably higher than that in the U.S., these countries have produced no Blake dissertations so influential as those in the United States, of, say, Mark Schorer, Margaret Ruth Lowery, and Albert S. Roe.

In all, some hundred universities awarded about two hundred sixty doctorates for dissertations on Blake, an average of about 2.4 apiece. The list of
institutions (see Table below) includes a number not very familiar in international scholarship, such as Ball State University, The University of Lucknow, The University of the Pacific, Abo University, and The University of Arkansas, but most of the great universities in England and the United States are included; the most conspicuous exceptions I have noted are The University of Michigan and The University of California at Los Angeles. A little less than half the universities represented here have produced only one Blake dissertation, while nineteen universities have fostered one hundred nine of the known Blake dissertations, or nearly half the total. These universities are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Dates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brandeis</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1969-75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>California</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1966-75</td>
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<tr>
<td>Berkeley</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>Cambridge</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1939-74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columbia</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1953-74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iowa</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1960-75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johns Hopkins</td>
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<td>1954-74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1967-71</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Carolina</td>
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<td>1951-73</td>
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<tr>
<td>Northwestern</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1954-73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohio State</td>
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<td>1934-73</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>California</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1958-75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toronto</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1949-76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1941-75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1924-74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yale</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1935-73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Two of these institutions, Columbia and Wisconsin, have produced almost as many known Blake dissertations (23) as all the universities in Britain put together (26). It is remarkable that these Blake-prolific institutions include most of those with the greatest university-reputations as well: Berkeley, Cambridge, Columbia, Johns Hopkins, London, Oxford, Texas, Toronto, Wisconsin, and Yale. There is some reason to believe that the universities which produce more than the average number of Blake dissertations are also among the best.

Another way of judging this is by looking at the dissertations which became books, on the assumption that the better theses were published. One must of course be cautious here, for sometimes publication is a condition of acceptance of a dissertation, and inferior works are published at the author's expense; and sometimes a university press may publish a dissertation from its own institution when another press might not have published it. Some of the best Blake dissertations-become-books were published at presses outside the institutions which originally sponsored them--such as Mark Schorer's William Blake: The Politics of Vision, Irene Taylor's Blake's Illustrations to the Poems of Gray, Morton Paley's Energy and the Imagination, and Albert Roe's Blake's Illustrations to the Divine Comedy. (Contrariwise, of course, publication by the candidate's own university press is not necessarily a pejorative sign, as indicated by Bo Lindberg's Blake's Illustrations to the Book of Job, Helen White's Mysticism of William Blake, and Margaret Ruth Lowery's Windows of the Morning.) The dates of publication of Blake dissertations are interesting: 2 dissertations (100% of 2 finished) in 1910-19; 4 (80% of 5) in 1920-29; 2 (33% of 6) in 1930-39; 3 (37% of 8) in 1940-49; 8 (31% of 26) in 1950-59; 10 (16% of 63) in 1960-69; 7 (5% of 146) thus far in 1970-77. The average length of time from acceptance of the dissertation to publication of the book is about five years, ranging from simultaneous acceptance and publication (e.g., in the case of Bo Lindberg) to twenty-eight years (Norman). The institutions sponsoring Blake dissertations which were published were Abo (1973), Bordeaux (1924), Brandeis (1970--mostly not about Blake), Bristol (1964), Chicago (1966), Columbia (1964, 1967, 1968, 1970), Edinburgh (1970), Freiburg (1925), Harvard (1950), Johns Hopkins (1954), Japan (1950, 1963), New York (1915, 1947), Northwestern (1956), North Carolina (1951), Oxford (1946, 1956), Reading (1951), Stanford (1967), Sussex (1971), Switzerland (1956), Toronto (1949), Washington (1954), Wisconsin (1924, 1936, 1963), Yale (1935, 1964, 1969, 1970), and Zurich (1911, 1925). Of two hundred sixty dissertations on Blake, thirty-seven (14%) were published. Of the thirty-seven published dissertations, four (Ba Han, Bassallik-de Vries, Dickinson, and Norman) are negligible as books or as dissertations; twenty-two are respectable but not remarkable; and ten would be taken by most scholars as being among the most important works on Blake, works with which any serious student must be familiar. These are the theses of Helen White (1924), Margaret Ruth Lowery (1935), Mark Schorer (1936), A. S. Roe (1950), Robert Gleckner (1954), G. E. Bentley, Jr. (1956), Alicia Ostriker (1963), Morton Paley (1964), Irene Taylor (1967), and Bo Lindberg (1973). The dissertations which turned into distinguished books were from Abo, Columbia, Harvard, Johns Hopkins, Oxford, Stanford, Wisconsin (3), and Yale. Among Anglophone universities, this is a fairly familiar kind of honour-role, with no minor institutions among them. Assuming that all the best dissertations before 1972 have been published, it seems striking that the most distinguished among them were written at universities which have been long, and in this respect apparently justifiably, regarded as among the best of English-speaking universities.

Doubtless the percentage of Blake dissertations published will rise, particularly for those finished after 1966; after all, a dissertation of 1947 was not published until 1975. However, of the thirty-seven theses published thus far, only five took longer than seven years in the press, and in most respects we may regard the books as closed on theses finished before say 1970. This is particularly true of remarkably good books, for only one of them in the past (Mark Schorer's) took more than seven years to convert from a dissertation (1936) to a book (1946), and doubtless the special circumstance of the war helped to delay its publication.

The proportion of Blake dissertations published has declined from 100% in the first decade (1910-19)
to 16% for the last one for which the figures are probably nearly complete (1960-69). The first Blake dissertations published seem to be little more than vanity- or must-print-to-submit publications, and until 1940-49 there are so few Blake dissertations that extrapolating trends from them is not very meaningful. (It is, however, striking that the only two Blake dissertations of the 1930s which were published, Lowery's and Schorer's, were among the most influential ever to be printed.) The figures (37% to 16%) for the twenty published dissertations of 1940-69 are, however, steadier and more reliable and indicate that two or three in ten of the Blake dissertations finished then were turned into books. Assuming a continuation of the popularity of Blake and a steady demand for books of all kinds (very problematical assumptions, of course), we may expect something like 15% to 20% of the one hundred forty-six Blake theses finished thus far in the 1970s to be published—or twelve more than have yet appeared. If, as in the past, a third of these prove to be distinguished, we have great things to look forward to.

Of two hundred sixty Blake theses, more than half were finished since 1970; the average author of a Blake Ph.D. is not only living but, if an academic in North America, probably does not yet have tenure. More Blake dissertations were completed in 1974 than in the entire period from 1911 to 1950. The chart in Table II (see below) indicates the pattern of completion of Blake dissertations, with a scattering of none to six per year from 1911 until 1967.

The great boom in Blake dissertations began in the 1960s and reached a peak in 1960-74, when there were twice as many Blake theses completed (153) as had ever been made before altogether (70). From 1969 to 1976 (the last year for which the figures are probably fairly complete), on an average eighteen Blake dissertations were completed per year, better than one a month. Blake clearly appealed to the troubled young spirits of the 1960s in the United States. Perhaps today he is in danger of becoming a figure of the Establishment. Certainly he is part of the Academic Establishment, and there is an orthodoxy in Blake studies as in work on more conventional authors.

Or perhaps all the best topics have been taken, and students hesitate to embark on a sea as large as that of Blake scholarship. It must seem difficult to find a plausible topic in Blake which has not previously been treated responsibly, and some of the recent theses seem to be stretching plausibility to cover a good deal of rather surprising matter. Ignoring the Ph.D. dissertations at Rutgers (e.g., G. L. Waters) as being not "theses" at all but merely collections of quite unrelated essays, there are still some surprising theses produced, often at surprising places. The length varies from 56 pages (Bassallik-de Vries, Dickinson) to three volumes (Gabbett-Mulhallen, P. S. Wilson), but it seems to be shortening. A good number are under two hundred pages, and not a few are under 155 pages; one reason there are more Blake theses in 1960-75 may be that they tend to be shorter than previous dissertations and presumably easier to complete. In the 1930s and 1940s there was a tendency to give evocative but not very descriptive titles to Blake books, such as *Windows of the Morning* or *Fearful Symmetry* or *Infinity on the Anvil.* Recent Blake dissertations have been more explicit, if no less modish. Their titles reverberate with critical cult words such as Alienation (1971), Apocalypse (1969 [2], 1970, 1972, 1973, 1976), Archetype (1973, 1974, 1976), Dynamics (1973, 1976), Kinetic Imagery (1975), Strategy (1972), Symbole (1975 [2]), and, once more, Vision (1963, 1966, 1967, 1970, 1971, 1973, 1974, 1976, 1977). Some deal with peculiarly Blakean problems, such as the relationship of text and design, or the nature of the Form or Structure of his writings, and some deal with problems peculiar to this generation, such as the role of the body in Blake (Christian [1973], Frosch [1969], Kostelanetz [1967]) or the role of women (Derderian [1974], M. E. White [1972], Fullbright [1973]). Many are perfectly responsibly on the borders of the Blake world, because they are tracing Blake's influence on successors such as W. B. Yeats or D. H. Lawrence or James Joyce or D. G. Rossetti, or because they see Blake as merely part of a long tradition of, say, Millenarian Literature (Gershoren) or Occult Traditions (Schuchard), or because Blake's poems are merely the context of a musical composition (Karvonen, W. M. Smith). More commonly, Blake is yoked with some other author (e.g., Tagore), often rather arbitrarily, to pull a dissertation which appears to be composed of fairly discrete parts, with wheels of different sizes. The excuse may be common imagery, say serpents (Pedrini), or parallel subjects of poetry, or contemporary responses to the same phenomenon (Arman, Kline, Lowenstein). But the results are not likely to illuminate Blake very much, whatever they may do to their authors. So far as the abstracts show, at any rate, the purpose often seems to be to indicate the author's ingenuity rather than to throw new light on Blake or on the other poets dealt with.

Almost all the two hundred sixty Blake dissertations have been literary in their orientation—indeed, almost all are for English Departments, though one is a Doctorate in Religion (Grimes), another in Sociology (Shain), and a third is a Ph.D. in "The History of Consciousness" (Singh). Only about 10% seem to take much account of the fact that Blake was primarily a visual artist and that all the poems he published were illustrated or "illuminated." Of the score of dissertations which consider his visual work extensively, only eight seem to be primarily concerned with the designs, and only three (Bindman, Lindberg, Roe) seem to be by art-historians. And even the dissertations concerned primarily with Blake's designs mostly concentrate on his book-illustrations, the Young, Job, Dante, Gray, Milton, Bunyan, Blake has never been treated seriously by the world of art-historians, and the resulting lacunae in Blake studies have largely been filled, *feu de misere,* by literary scholars venturing in strange seas. Just as very few Comparative Literature scholars are fully qualified in both their literatures, very few Blake scholars (indeed none, so far as I know) are fully qualified in both genres of literature and art. For a really satisfying treat-
The dangerous of depending upon Dissertation Abstracts or Dissertation Abstracts International for a complete list of dissertations of Blake is manifest. Not only do they exclude all the dissertations here from institutions outside North America, but they systematically omit some of the most distinguished U. S. universities (such as Harvard and Chicago), while some universities do not record all their dissertations. Theses from forty-three universities occasionally or regularly do not appear in DA and DAI so far as Blake dissertations are concerned, including Berkeley, Cambridge, Chicago, Cornell, Edinburgh, Harvard, Johns Hopkins, London, Oxford, Paris, Toronto, Wisconsin, and Yale; and 40% of the Ph.D. dissertations listed here are not in DA or DAI. And of course many dissertations, often the best, are not listed until three to five years after they are completed. We may have to depend upon DA or DAI, but we should recognize that they omit a good many Blake dissertations including some of the best. The danger of redundancy in Blake theses and studies is therefore a significant one.

Of the two hundred sixty Blake theses, at least seventy-eight (30%) are by women. Of these, sixteen (22%) were completed in 1963-69 and fifty more (64%) are from 1970-77. For the period 1970-77, 35% of the Blake theses are by women. Of the nine really good dissertations-turned-books, an even larger proportion are by women (White [1924], Lowery [1935], Ostriker [1963], and Taylor [1967]). In Blake studies, the emancipation of women's intellectual energies has not been a recent phenomenon.

In terms of popularity of subject, the most common seem to be influences on Blake from the past, with forty-two theses on his sources and predecessors such as John Milton (8), Newton, and Pope (sic). There are thirty-eight dissertations on Blake and his successors, his reputation, or his influence, including three on James Joyce, two on D. G. Rossetti, four on D. H. Lawrence, and ten (sic) on Yeats. Thirty-three are on Blake and his contemporaries such as Burns (2), Byron (8), Coleridge (10), Goethe, Keats (7), Shelley (11), Thomas Taylor, and Wordsworth (15), though of course most are tracing little more than coincidental relationships with Blake.

For theses concentrating on Blake's writings themselves, the range of ambition is vast; some dissertations cover all his poetry, while a few spend years on just one lyric such as "The Tyger" (Shea) or "Laughing Song" (Warner). It is striking that most theses concentrating within a narrow range of the poetry focus on the Prophecies, especially the epics:

**Epics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
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<td>The three epics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vala</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milton</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jerusalem</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
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</table>

The popular conception of Blake as a lyric poet is scarcely reflected by the dissertations on him.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Book Title</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Songs</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;Mental Traveller&quot;</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Everlasting Gospel&quot;</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriage</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poetical Sketches</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The three epic dissertations on Blake have been published. Some ninety-four scholars (36%) published books or articles beyond their Ph.D. work on Blake; if we ignore degree-recipients of 1972-77, who have not yet had much time to publish, the proportion rises to 46%. The average length of time between the completion of the degree and publication of the first article is one year, ranging from eight years before the thesis was accepted to twelve years afterwards. Of the ninety-four Blake-doctors who have published on Blake, thirty-five (37%) published something on him before the dissertation was finished; another twenty-six (28%) published in the year or the year after the dissertation was finished; another twenty-six (28%) first published on Blake within two to five years of completion of the dissertation; and a final seven (7%) first published on Blake six to twelve years after completing the thesis. Assuming a year between

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**Shorter Prophecies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Europe</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urizen</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visions</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thel</td>
<td>1</td>
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</table>

**Lyrics Etc.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Songs</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>&quot;Mental Traveller&quot;</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>&quot;Everlasting Gospel&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marriage</td>
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<tr>
<td>Poetical Sketches</td>
<td>3</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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**TABLE I: Universities Awarding the Ph.D. for a Dissertation on Blake**

*Means not recorded in DA or DAI
Underlined dates refer to dissertations which were printed
"Oxford" or "Toronto" refer to Oxford
University or the University of Toronto

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>Year(s)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abo (Finland)</td>
<td>*1973</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agra (India)</td>
<td>*1967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arkansas</td>
<td>1971, 1972, 1975, 1977</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ball State</td>
<td>1974</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berne</td>
<td>*1955</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boston</td>
<td>*1941 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bristol</td>
<td>*1964, 1966</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British Columbia</td>
<td>1974, 1976</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buffalo; see State</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of New</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>York at Buffalo</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Davis)</td>
<td>1969</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Irvine)</td>
<td>1974, 1977</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Riverside)</td>
<td>1969, 1975, 1976</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Santa Cruz)</td>
<td>1973, 1974, 1977</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(San Diego)</td>
<td>1969</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Western Reserve</td>
<td>1975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(see also Western Reserve)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cincinnatti</td>
<td>*1931</td>
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<tr>
<td>City University of</td>
<td>1977</td>
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<tr>
<td>New York</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connecticu</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cornell</td>
<td>*1929, *1940, 1975</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Edinburgh</td>
<td>*1970</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emory</td>
<td>1967, 1977</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exeter</td>
<td>*1969, *1972 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida State</td>
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<tr>
<td>Freiburg</td>
<td>*1925, *1955</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>1974</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Harvard</td>
<td>*1950, *1963</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Howard</td>
<td>1976</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indiana</td>
<td>1965, 1969</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Japan</td>
<td>*1950, *1963</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kent State</td>
<td>1974</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lancaster</td>
<td>*1971</td>
</tr>
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<td>*Leeds</td>
<td>*1970</td>
</tr>
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<td>*Lucknow</td>
<td>*1951, *1969</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marburg</td>
<td>*1922</td>
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<td>Marquette</td>
<td>1974</td>
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<tr>
<td>Massachusetts</td>
<td>1973, 1974, 1975</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TABLE II: Blake Dissertations Completed, By Year, 1911-76**

`Graph showing the number of Blake dissertations completed by year from 1911 to 1976. The x-axis represents years from 1911 to 1976, and the y-axis represents the number of dissertations completed, ranging from 0 to 28. The graph includes data points for each year, indicating the number of dissertations completed in that year. The number of dissertations completed each year is represented by a horizontal line segment above the x-axis. The data points are spaced evenly along the x-axis, with each year having a corresponding data point. The number of dissertations completed each year varies, with some years having a higher concentration of data points than others. The graph visually represents the trend in the number of dissertations completed over the years, showing a peak in the mid-1960s and another in the early 1970s. The data is presented in a tabular format within the text of the document, with the years listed horizontally along the x-axis and the corresponding number of dissertations indicated for each year. The graph provides a clear visual representation of the trend, allowing for easy comparison and analysis of the data.`
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University/Institution</th>
<th>Year(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Miami</td>
<td>1976</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mississippi</td>
<td>1973</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missouri</td>
<td>1973</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nebraska</td>
<td>1969, 1970 (2), 1976</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Mexico</td>
<td>1969, 1971, 1973</td>
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<tr>
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acceptance of an article or book and its publication, this means that sixty-one authors (65% of those who published on Blake at all) had something accepted for publication before the dissertation was accepted. Those who do not publish early are likely to publish little if anything.

In all, authors of dissertations on Blake have published thirty books beyond the dissertation (sixty-seven books including the dissertations) and three hundred fifty-seven articles (4,271 pages). Of these ninety-four authors, sixteen (17%) have thus far published less than six pages, while ten of them (11%) published over one hundred pages of articles each—2,209 pages in all, or 51% of the total number of article-pages by authors who wrote doctoral dissertations on Blake. Five authors have produced one hundred seventeen articles (32% of the total) and seventeen post-Ph.D. books (57% of the total)—and three of these five also published their dissertations. Of those who published theses on Blake, thirteen wrote nothing more on him (save perhaps reviews), one wrote another book, seven wrote books and articles on him, and fifteen wrote articles on him. And one hundred sixty-eight authors of Blake theses have as yet published neither book nor article on him. The labours of Blake scholarship have not been very equally divided.

The vagaries of energy and accomplishment are wonderful and difficult of prediction. We can neither predict nor produce another Sir Geoffrey Keynes, who has thus far produced over seventy articles and fifty books on Blake, but we can train and foster the intellectual energies of young women and young men so that they can recognize genius and evaluate it, in a Keynes or a Blake. There is a wonderful paradox in these hundreds of literary doctors, diagnosing the work of an uneducated poet, a paradox which would, I think, have tickled the subject. The energy now devoted to Blake around the English-speaking world, particularly through studies by scholars with a doctorate about Blake is likely to multiply works and, I hope, knowledge about the man who wrote that "Energy is the only life."13

**DISSERTATIONS ON WILLIAM BLAKE 1911-76**

The supplementary information is derived from *Blake Books* (1977).


Ba-Han, Maung. *The Evolution of Blakean Philosophy*. Rangoon [1926]. A pastiche of commonplaces (94 pp.), originally a 1925 Freiberg Ph.D.

Ba-Han, Maung. *William Blake His Mysticism*. Bordeaux, 1924.

Blake’s mysticism consists in "his insights on the supreme value of the 'self'" (p. 237); this was a Bordeaux Ph.D.


Bain, Mary Rion. "Satan and the Satan Figure in the Poetry of William Blake." *DAI*, XXXV (1975), 5335-6A. Georgia Ph.D., 1974.

Blake’s mysticism consists in "his insights on the supreme value of the 'self'" (p. 237); this was a Bordeaux Ph.D.


Blake’s mysticism consists in "his insights on the supreme value of the 'self'" (p. 237); this was a Bordeaux Ph.D.


"This analogical study" discovers "striking similarities."


"I discuss how Joyce treats Giambattista Vico and William Blake as visionary predecessors. . . ."


"This dissertation . . . places the form Blake uses in an appropriate historical context . . . primarily concerned with the language that prophets use."


A "study [of] Blake's poetic relationship with Milton"; "Blake challenged Milton to a full epic contest."


America "presents the outlook and spirit of the London radical movement." He has published 1 article (11 pp., 1971) on Blake.


She has published 8 articles (96 pp., 1961-74) on Blake.


He has published 2 articles (19 pp., 1969-70) on Blake.


"The Marriage is, to a surprising extent, a work writing about itself."


Deals with "the works of Richardson, Gray, Chatterton, Cowper, and Blake."


A sound, thorough study. He published one article (3pp., 1957) on Blake.


He published 2 articles (13 pp., 1972-74) on Blake.


Dilgard, Cynthia Corlew. "Blake structures . . . [it] according to the Divine Analogy."


"Blake transforms" the "tradition of merging religion, politics, and art" which he shares with Milton "into an almost historical materialist one, a breakthrough celebrated in Vana Night VIIa. She has published two essays on Blake (51 pp., 1972-75).


A reading "without recourse to external sources and to other works of Blake" in 144 pages.


"Jerusalem displays a thematic rather than a narrative unity."


About Blake's "manipulation of dialectical progression in text and design to effectively eliminate alienation between the reader and the objective work"; "the reader must participate in the Marriage."


"The mode of operation of imagination is primarily visual."


Tries to understand the poem "through a systematic study of the poem's [?] critics."


"The chaotic form of the prophecies" results from Blake's theory of art.

"Blake’s rationale in Jerusalem involves a concerted and sophisticated attempt to confuse and yet tantalize the reader. . . ." He has also published 1 collaborative book (1972); co-founded and edited Blake Studies (1968 ff.); published 6 articles (35 pp., 1971-77) on Blake.


"This dissertation addresses itself to transformations which took place in English printing and book illustration from 1780-1820," dealing with Blake in Chapters IV-V.


A useful study of the illuminations through the Visions (1973). He has published 2 collaborative books (1972-73) and 15 articles (352 pp., 1969-78) on Blake.


He has published 1 article (17 pp., 1976) on Blake.


Printed as The Valley of Vision: Blake as Prophet and Revolutionary. Ed. Northrop Frye. (Toronto 1961) University of Toronto Department of English Studies and Texts, No. 9. Reprinted (Toronto, 1971). Part II does not form part of the thesis and was reserved "for inclusion in the book which I hope to produce" but which was apparently never written. Fisher also published 2 articles (42 pp., 1959-61) on Blake.


"The purpose of this study is to relate Yeats’s editorial emendations to his critical and interpretive commentary and to conclude how he beheld Blake’s subject matter, symbolism, and poetics."


"This dissertation addresses itself to transformations which took place in English printing and book illustration from 1780-1820," dealing with Blake in Chapters IV-V.


Wisconsin Ph.D., 1957. He has published 1 article (12 pp., 1969) on Blake.


The Marriage "is a carefully organized narrative of the training of a prophet." He published 1 collaborative article (1 p., 1972) on Blake.


A 118-page essay on Blake’s ideas of 1778-93 and his relations with such "close friends" as James Barry and Mary Wollstonecraft.


Approaches Blake's poetry "as a record of growth and discovery."

"Analysing Yaza from a Jungian viewpoint."


"My dissertation establishes the nature of the affiliation between Blake and Yeats and Blake and Joyce through a study of the later artist's knowledge."


On their "thematically and structural complementarities and antagonisms."


Deals with "historical studies of myth."


The five Prophecies are Thal, Visions, Urizen, Ahania, and The Book of Los.


Printed as The Neoplatonism of William Blake (Chapel Hill, 1961). Occasionally persuasive arguments that Blake was extensively and deeply indebted to Plato and to his 18th Century disciple Thomas Taylor.

Harper has also published 10 articles (128 pp., 1953-75) on Blake.


"The purpose of this dissertation is to discuss Blake's development of a theory of knowing which would permit man to see past his fallen state on to the state of the Eternals," especially in a few of the early Prophecies.


He has published an essay on Blake (20 pp., 1972).


"Blake is not a mythmaker but a poet who exploits mythic modes of perception."


"Blake is not a mythmaker but a poet who exploits mythic modes of perception."


On Blake's fight with 18th Century thought.

Hertzog has published 1 article (16 pp., 1974) on Blake.

Hill, Gillian McMahon. "Blake as Interpreter: His Illustrations to Young, Gray and Blair, with a
Descriptive Catalogue of, and Subject Index to the Drawings for Young's Night Thoughts." Exeter Ph.D., 1972.


Johnson's *Rambler* essays, Burke's *Reflections*, and Blake's *Marriage* have "a common rhetorical pattern," i.e., "spatial rather than linear," "the structure of a montage."


Printed as Anne Kostelatz-Mellor, Blake's *Human Form Divine* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1974). She has also published 1 article (15 pp., 1971) on Blake.


Applies "three interrelated dicta of William Blake" to Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*, Spenser's *Mulioptomos*, Wordsworth's "Matthew" poems, and Blake's "Little Girl Lost" and "Found."


"Their poetry seems strongly to counter the possibility of madness." She has published 2 articles (27 pp., 1972-74) on Blake.


Blake's *Vala* and Byron's *Don Juan* indicate "that both the conception of the epic hero and the vision of a desirable society changed in the Romantic age."


"The purpose of this dissertation is to provide both a review of criticism on 'The Mental Traveller' and an interpretation of the poem."


He has published 2 articles (30 pp., 1969-71) on Blake.


"ultimately he [Cary] re-creates for us the entire Blake myth-complex."


A major work. He has also published 3 articles (42 pp., 1968-74) on Blake.


It includes "a survey of criticism" and "a reading." She has published 4 articles on Blake (11 pp., 1969-75) and is co-founder and editor of *Blake Studies* (1968 ff.).


Their responses "to the situation of the laboring poor."


"Where does Los begin and how does he evolve?"

It includes identifications of "Blake's borrowings and use of biblical material."


He has published 3 books (1957-75) and 5 articles (73 pp., 1956-69) on Blake.


A 177-page essay concentrating, in the Blake section, on the Songs.


A thesis in Japanese. He has also published two more books (1972-73) and 10 articles (115 pp., 1948-75) on Blake.


On hermeneutics in Blake, Wordsworth, Shelley, and Keats.


Printed (Oxford, 1970). As Blake's myth develops, Orc (energy) diminishes in importance and Los (imagination) becomes central. He has also edited three books on Blake (1969-78), published 16 articles on him (213 pp., 1962-78), and founded and edited *Blake Newsletter* (1967 ff.).


On "the relationship between vision and form."


He published 1 article (11 pp., 1958) on Blake.


She published 2 articles (120 pp., 1960-61) which are probably the same as her thesis.


He has published an essay on Blake (14 pp., 1974).


Examines "the opening lines of each of these prophecies." She also published an article on Blake (13 pp., 1973).


He has co-edited a book (1973) and published 3 articles (38 pp., 1970-73) on Blake.


"Blake remained centrally important to Yeats throughout his critical career." He has published an essay on Blake (11 pp., 1973).


A sound, responsible study. He has published a note (2 pp.) on Blake in 1977.


"Blake's use of Joy is distinguished primarily by the wide variety of contexts and associations in which he places the term."


"The second chapter is a detailed examination of Swinburne's critical essay on Blake," discussing "his important misreadings of Blake with respect to... his own poetry."


A study of William Blake's philosophy of social and cultural reform.


"The thesis contends that Blake's metaphors, images, and symbols describe the creative process" (p. 11 of the thesis). He has published 24 articles (344 pp., 1964-77) on Blake.


He has published an article on Blake (2 pp., 1974).


Perhaps this is his work printed as The 'Heaven' and 'Hell' of William Blake (N.Y., 1973), the "main aim" of which "is to present the whole of Blake in a coherent and comprehensible way," with emphasis upon Blake's "consistent materialism" and his "social context" (p. vii).


Seems to be mostly about Tiriel and The French Revolution.


Uses "the application of allegory as an interpretive process of reading.


"The study attempts to show how industry and its cities shaped his language," particularly in Vala, Milton, and Jerusalem. She has published an article on Blake (15 pp., 1971).


Syracuse Ph.D., 1969.

"The purpose of this thesis is to demonstrate that... [the three works] redefine the nature of the descent into hell as part of a process leading to psychic regeneration," foreshadowing Jung.


Blake is "a lucid and consistent thinker.


Blake and Novalis are "surprisingly similar" in their "arguments on... the effectiveness of poetry in life."


Schuchard, Marsha Keith Mannatt. "Freemasonry, Secret Societies, and the Continuity of the Occult
Traditions in English Literature." Texas Ph.D., 1975. See DAI, XXXVI (1975), 2792-3A.
A gallimaufry of cobbled coincidences "based largely on circumstantial evidence" (p. 425) is used to place Blake in a "Masonic" context (pp. 307-550); the composer of The Ancient of Days and the "Universal Brotherhood" of Milton are Masonic (pp. 465, 472).

A 147-page "computer-assisted statistical study...written in COBOL for use on the Dec10 system."

According to the abstract, "The findings of this study provide sociology with a new speculative model for resolving...why certain writers and artists of the Romantic age experienced extreme feelings of self-estrangement, even though they were creatively fulfilled by their work, and were not faced with the collapse of established values and institutions."

A 143-page effort to give "a more comprehensive view [of 'The Tyger']...than any of Blake's critics have thus far put forth" does not seem more comprehensive, in the abstract.

It places "an emphasis on the work of Blake and Byron."


"In sum, the results of the study are extremely modest." He published a note on Blake in 1977 (4 pp.).

"The argument of this work is that Blake not only talked about the 'Edenic Body,' but he also wrote his poetry with it. His poem [sic] commands to be read bodily...".

A 153-page essay arguing merely that they "have essentially the same assumptions..."

"It is a verbal organization of images of sight, sound, and movement."

Set for soprano and orchestra.

He published an article on Blake (18 pp., 1967).

"This study explores the significance of Los in terms of his role as the Creative Imagination."

"His strongest affinities are with the heretical seventeenth century."

He published 2 articles on Blake (11 pp., 1955-56).

A study of "their indebtedness to the apocalyptic books of the Bible and the intertestamental era."

A 150-page argument that "Blake's poetry was Romantic in nature."


A responsible study. He has published 9 articles on Blake (60 pp., 1957-73).


Tolley, Michael J. "William Blake's Use of the Bible." London Ph.D., 1974. Vol. II (pp. 267-522) is a checklist of biblical references. He has published 18 articles on Blake (154 pp., 1962-74).


Wardle, J. "Myth and Image in Three Romantics: A Study of Blake, Shelley and Yeats." Queen's


This essay, written in the summer of 1977, has had to be patched and supplemented repeatedly as new dissertations and publications on Blake by their authors appeared. The facts and conclusions are generally up-to-date to about September 1978, but they are not as consistent as I should like them to be.

1 The great majority of these dissertations are for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, but a few are for other degrees requiring work equivalent to some U.S. Ph.D.s: B.D. (Oxford), B. Litt. (Oxford), D. Litt. (Cambridge), Lancaster, and M. Phil. (London).


No doctoral dissertations on Blake have been found in directories of Australian, Austrian, European, French, French language, German, New Zealand, and South African universities, no doubt partly because some of the directories are not subject-indexed.

3 The Comprehensive Dissertation Query Service, like the DAI index and other University Microfilms services, is organized by computer and does not distinguish the poet from 1) Henry Robison Delany, BLAKE, or the Huts of America; 2) Henry BLAKE Fuller (seven theses); 3) The BLAKE Plateau, North Atlantic; 4) Gastrotrich, Lepidodermella Squamatta (Dumardin) BLAKE; 5) Balinosoga Ciliata (Ref.) (BLAKE) (a plant) (three theses); 6) Gutierrezia Dacunculoides (DC) BLAKE; 7) Artesmesia Carruthi (Wood var. Wrightii (Gray) BLAKE (Carruth Sagebrush); 8) Anna S. C. BLAKE Manual Training School; 9) Edward BLAKE (Irish Nationalist); 10) John BLAKE white (Southern Romantic painter and playwright). Naturally theses which do not name Blake or his works in the title, such as John Grant, "Studies in the Organization of Major Romantic Epics" (Harvard Ph.D., 1960), are likely to be omitted here, even though they deal significantly with Blake. Some exceptions are the theses of Rosenblum, Schuchard, and Struck.

4 Perhaps 98% are in English.


7 See Chayes, Coonan, Daly, Druan, Koper, Lechay, Lenta, O'Brien, Rhodes, Schicker, Vogler, Wilkes.

8 See Abel, Bandy, Campbell, Hoveveler, Howard, Jones, Kessel, Kremen, Lefcowitz, Schol, Skelton, S. H. Stevenson.


10 A number of these are included in the Comprehensive Dissertation Query Service, however.

11 For example, there are two theses on images of Satan in Blake, by Donke (1972) and Baine (1975), four on Los by Mandell (1972), Paley (1964), Spinks (1970), and Ruhman (1974), three on mysticism by Ba Han (1924), Kessel (1929), and Helen white (1924), and two on the criticism of "The Mental Traveller" by Dunlap (1974) and Leonard (1976).


13 This article, first completed in April 1977, has been finished a number of times since then, as the months passed and new Blake dissertations and publications by authors of Blake theses came to my attention. Of course, each new dissertation discovered required the revision of all generalizations referring to it (e.g., "two hundred sixty dissertations on Blake"), an exceedingly extensive and worrying process. The text above comprehends information I had absorbed up to September 1978; I learned thereafter of the theses by Bullard, Cox, D'Hoare, Rice, Tolley, Warner, Wieland-Burston, and Wilford, and have not attempted to alter the text yet again to refer to them.