

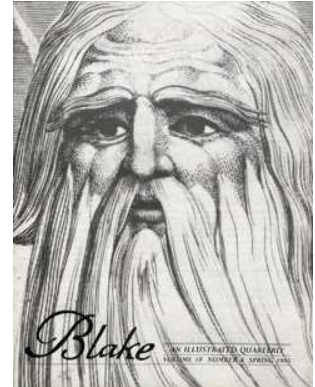
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D I S C U S S I O N

**Pudendaddendum**

Nelson Hilton

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## DISCUSSION

with intellectual spears & long winged arrows of thought

### Pudendaddendum

Nelson Hilton

In "Some Sexual Connotations" (*Blake* 16 [Winter 1982-83], 166-71), I attempted to detail the overt sexual referents in several polysemous, or "multi-stable," textual passages and illustrations. Such referents are significant not only in their own right, proof of Blake's practice of "No Secrecy in Art," but as well for the way in which they are contained in their overdetermined context, since "what is not too Explicit" is "the fittest

for Instruction because it rouses the faculties to act" (letter to Trusler, 23 August 1799). This context includes, as Blake puts it on the titlepage of *The Four Zoas*, "The torments of Love & Jealousy"; and it includes those torments in their most physical and emotional expression.

As for overt sexual imagery, I am happy to find Brenda Webster's independent suggestion of the Rahab-penis figure in *Jerusalem*, pl. 75 (*Blake's Prophetic Psychology* [Athens, Ga.: Univ. of Georgia Press, 1983], p. 286; reproduced in "Some Sexual Connotations," p. 170). But I am ashamed (*pudeo!*) to have to add another instance, and one, no less, from an illustration accompanying my earlier discussion. Perhaps there is consolation in thinking that the realization of such repression of the signifier is a promise of pleasure to come as we learn to read Blake with fewer inhibitions, in greater polymorphous perversity: with the enjoyment of all his senses. *Jerusalem*, pl. 85, copy E (illus.), like the other designs discussed in "Some Sexual Connotations," offers a "multi-stable" image as well, since the figure of Los's doubled right leg stands out from its ground as a side-on view of a tumescent penis (foreskin not yet drawn back). The two clusters of grapes might in this case suggest (re-



William Blake. *Jerusalem*, pl. 85, copy E (detail).



moved?) testicles, or sperm "removed" by being "fibred" over to/by Enitharmon: a sort of conceptual representation of intercourse (note how one collateral fibre does branch off toward/from the area of Los's heart). The difficulty in seeing such images—as this addendum witnesses—is that they are, at first, so unexpected. Here the viewer has to be able to enter the image and make some of the connections: to focus on the shaded body of the leg, treating it as one form, to continue the outline of the penis-form through the ankle lines, to disregard the light area of the foot, even to see the upper outline of the left leg as no outline but another fibre (not that difficult if one tries to conceive how, as an outline, it connects to the trunk of the body). The foreskin is marked by the kneecap and the orifice by the small circle, resembling an indentation, across from the top of the lower cluster of grapes. One need only trust the initial impression that there's something oddly emphasized about this (third) leg, that it seems to possess a life and existence of its own. This erection might serve to explain why Los and Enitharmon are so emphatically looking away from each other, not wishing to acknowledge the (pictorially-speaking, anyway) most important thing between them.

Which leads us to a reconsideration of the implied ascetic message of the lines quoted from "My Spectre" in "Some Sexual Connotations," p. 171 (ll. 49–52 [erroneously cited as 67–70]; see also Ostriker's remarks in the same issue, p. 161). It now seems to me that a truly "radical" argument might be read as, in effect, "let's forget about 'Love' and get physical—really 'tear up,' 'root up' the 'infernal grove.' Then, having disposed of the lineaments of gratified desire, may we 'return & see / The worlds of happy Eternity.'" The crucial point, what allows the return and vision of the worlds, is the initial mutual agreement. This might explain why the phrase is repeated. Thus the speaker argues, at first:

Till I turn from Female Love  
And root up the Infernal Grove  
I shall never worthy be  
To Step into Eternity (41–44)

But it can't be done alone. Eternity, in fact, is nothing but this ongoing process of agreeing, rooting up, and returning. So, the speaker concludes:

Let us agree to give up Love  
And root up the infernal grove  
Then shall we return & see  
The worlds of happy Eternity  
& Throughout all Eternity  
I forgive you you forgive me  
As our Dear Redeemer said  
This the Wine & this the Bread (49–56)

So should all couples consummate "the fleshly bread . . . the nervous wine" (FZ 12.44).

## Richardson and Blake

Jean H. Hagstrum

Alicia Ostriker's brisk and "emancipated" view of *Clarissa* in the Summer, 1984, issue of *Blake* (pp. 52–53) is no doubt in part intended to make mine seem solemn, priggish, or otherwise old-fashioned. But it is in fact hers which is traditional or conventional, and I myself for many years clung to a version of it. This prejudice—for I now so regard what I once believed—I doubtless inherited from a learned and witty teacher at Yale, who used to wonder aloud whether anyone could possibly learn anything from that middle-class printer with a paunch. But when I came to read Richardson entire, from *within*, as it were, trying to understand why so many great critics and artists admired *Clarissa*, I came to see how unfair to Richardson and other great masters of sensibility the usual epithets about tearful, moralistic sentimentalism really were. No doubt the radically revised views of Richardson that have emanated from stream-of-consciousness novelists and from Marxist, Modernist, psychoanalytical, and, yes, even feminist criticism have also helped make Ostriker's judgments seem to me a bit archaic, deeply felt though they surely are. In any case, anyone interested in the context, the details, and the nuances of my position on *Clarissa* is advised to read my chapter on Richardson in *Sex and Sensibility*.

What interests the readers of this journal is of course how Blake reacted to Richardson. I do not have the time here—nor did I when I wrote my longish chapter on Blake for my forthcoming book, *The Romantic Body* (Tennessee, 1986)—to do justice to Blake's encounter with and absorption of a great predecessor. But I must record my view that Ostriker's speculation (" . . . the novel, and the feminization of culture it represents, would have deeply offended and irritated Blake") is much too simple and could lead to serious misapprehension. We should of course not neglect what Blake himself said. In a letter to Hayley dated 16 July 1804 he wrote: "Richardson has won my heart I will again read *Clarissa* &c they must be admirable I was too hasty in my perusal of them to perceive all their beauty." I take this to mean that Blake had once read all of Richardson—perhaps back in the 1780s when all the novels were popularly produced in *The Novelist's Magazine* and when Blake engraved a scene from *Grandison* after Stothard—and that now, perhaps on the advice of Hayley, he intended to re-read them, having had time so far to look at them only long enough to know that he was once more attracted. We may want to make considerable deduction from Blake's praise, remembering that he was