

AN ILLUSTRATED QUARTERLY  
**BLAKE**

N E W S

**MLA: Seminar 55**

David V. Erdman

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the extraordinary synthesizing powers of Blake's imagination.

The proceedings were properly friendly and informal; the papers served well to indicate the kind of work that is being carried on. But I think one bit of general criticism might be offered: more and more people are studying and writing about Blake, and although exposure of their findings to a wider academic public is beginning, it is only beginning. Would it not be proper, at this stage, for programs such as that at the English Institute to concentrate on Blake's place within the literary and artistic framework in which he was working? In other words, for a general audience of literary scholars and critics, is it not necessary still to establish Blake as a poet and painter among poets and painters and not some kind of sport to whom no one but a small group of enthusiasts need pay much attention? Certainly many of the papers read did take this problem into consideration to some degree. But my general impression was still of one group of the knowing talking to another group of the knowing. To my mind, the paper that did the most toward furthering a general understanding of what Blake was about was one read in another section. In a profoundly suggestive piece on the changing attitudes toward imitation in eighteenth-century English literature, William K. Wimsatt presented both a paean to and a brief analysis of *Poetical Sketches* that, hopefully, left the audience with a feeling that Blake is a creator they'd better come to grips with if they are to understand fully the organism of literary history.

Robert P. Kolker  
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David V. Erdman adds:

Honorable mentions were awarded to three people: Alicia Ostriker (Rutgers) for "Thomas Wyatt and Henry Surrey: Dissonance and Harmony" (not a Blake paper but by a Blake scholar); W. J. Thomas Mitchell (Ohio State University, Columbus) for "Blake's Composite Art"; and Helen T. McNeil (Hunter) for "Blake's Confidence: A Study of Formal Originality in *The Four Zoas*." Altogether 25 Blake papers were submitted; more than half of them well worthy publication.

MLA: Seminar 55

Blake discussion was so lively at this year's English Institute; so many people seem to be "finding out how" to read Blake's illuminations or to be changing their opinions on the question, I was encouraged to pop the topic into this year's MLA list of scheduled discussion groups (now called "seminars, limited to 35!!"). The Annual Meeting program will announce: Seminar 55: Methods of Studying Blake's Illuminated Works and Illustrations, Malmaison 8, Americana (that's a hotel room). When? Like the third morning of the convention: Sunday, 29 December at 8:45 A.M. (to 10). Bring your own grapefruit. Seminar 60 sounds more feasible, at 1:15 P.M.: "Student Rebellions and the Profession of Literature." Same topic?

What shall we do, those of us who manage to reach Malmaison 8 before 10? No papers. No "presentation." But this: Come willing to discuss what goes on in certain puzzling plates--J 99 and J 100; America 4 and 6; Europe, the plate with the cauldron, woman, child. What others? The Arlington Court? I'll put some slides into the projector and be ready to listen.

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*The Gates of Paradise*

Scheduled for publication this month: a facsimile reproduction of the complete *Gates of Paradise*, published for the William Blake Trust by the Trianon Press (Chateau de Boissia, Clairvaux, Jura, France).

Volume 1 includes seventeen preliminary sketches from Blake's *Notebook*, reproduced in facsimile by collotype, together with Sir Geoffrey Keynes's Introduction, page-by-page explanation and comparative study of all three stages of the work, and a census of every known copy of the two volumes of engravings. In his illuminating text, Sir Geoffrey has outlined the origins of Blake's project from a series of sixty-four drawings in the *Notebook* which are listed and described. From these drawings Blake chose seventeen which he engraved and issued in 1793 entitled *For Children • The Gates of Paradise*. Later, in about 1818, he re-worked all the plates, adding three and issued them under the title *For the Sexes*. Volume 2 of this edition is a facsimile of the *For Children* series made from the Lessing J. Rosenwald copy in the Library of Congress, and contains additional states of an earlier version. Volume 3 is a facsimile of the Huntington Library copy of *For the Sexes*, together with a number of comparative plates from other sources.

The engravings have been reproduced in facsimile by two-tone collotype with the plate mark impressed from hand-bevelled copper plates. The paper is pure rag Arches Vergé. The edition is limited to 700 copies for sale: 50 copies numbered 1 to 50, containing extra plates and material used in printing the book, are bound in full morocco and presented in a cloth slip-case (49 gns.); 650 copies numbered 51 to 700 are bound in cloth and presented in a cloth-covered slip-case (16 gns.).

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