Birthday Wishes to Marià Manent

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The discussion following these two insightful papers focused first on Blake's partnership with James Parker in their printselling (as well as engraving) shop, which Ward suggested lasted for five (rather than one and a half) years and constituted Blake's primary source of income for this period; and on Blake's personal contacts with James Barry.

After lunch and a visit to the exhibition, where Robert Essick was on hand to answer numerous questions concerning the works in his collection, Morris Eaves gave a fascinating account of eighteenth-century art criticism, "An Inquiry into the Real and Imaginary Obstructions to the Acquisition of the Arts in England: The Comedy of the English School." He traced the attempts of English artists and reviewers to establish the triumph of English art over its competition, primarily French and Italian art, and to consummate the happy marriage of a heroic English art with the world of commerce.

Morton Paley brought the symposium to a delightful conclusion with a detailed and convincing examination of the influence of William Blake on his followers, "The Art of The Ancients." Emphasizing the elegiac elements in Blake's illustrations to Thornton's Virgil (actually, as Paley noted, Blake was illustrating a poem by Ambrose Phillips), Paley then extensively and convincingly documented the ways in which Samuel Palmer, Edward Calvert and George Richmond adapted both the pictorial vocabulary and the media techniques of woodcut, engraving, fresco and tempera in their own later works.

In the discussion that followed, Hazard Adams asked whether English artists had promoted a myth of origins; Eaves responded that while James Barry had hailed Greek art as having discovered what he called the "master art" (its line, color, harmony, etc.), Blake tended to see the origin of art in an eternity variously identified with the Ancient Britons and Christianity; John Grant suggested the central role of Blake's image of Joseph of Arimathea in this context. Dörrebecker emphasized the ways in which Fuseli, in his promotion of Winckelmann, one of the three demons (along with Montesquieu and Dubos) who obstructed the triumph of English art on the European art market, somewhat qualified the plot of conspiracy successfully thwarted that Eaves had told. Eaves then acknowledged that his account was intended to emphasize the story that eighteenth-century English artists and art theorists told in common, rather than individual revisions and digressions.

The papers from the symposium will be published in The Huntington Library Quarterly, where those unable to attend will have the opportunity to relish their subtlety, excitement, and learning in greater detail. The exhibition, which continued through February 1988, was accompanied by a superbly annotated and finely il- lustrated (in black and white) catalogue, William Blake and His Contemporaries and Followers, prepared by Robert N. Essick and available from the Huntington Library Bookstore or Publications Department for the phenomenally reasonable price of $5.95. I urge all readers of Blake to send for it immediately before the edition is sold out.