

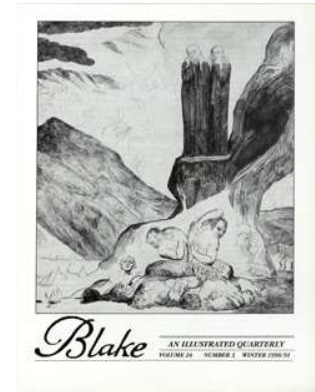
AN ILLUSTRATED QUARTERLY  
**BLAKE**

R E V I E W

David W. Lindsay, ed., *Blake: Songs of Innocence and [of] Experience*; Robert F. Gleckner and Mark L. Greenberg, eds., *Approaches to Teaching Blake's Songs of Innocence and of Experience*

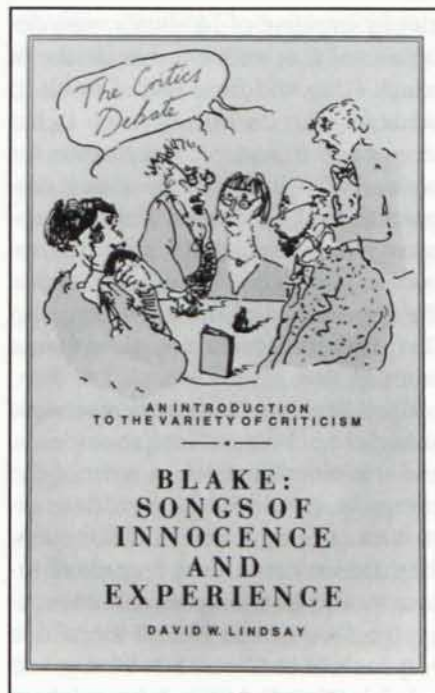
Edward Larrissy

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courting Helen, Faust was moving backward in time as misguidedly as his son later tried to move forward." To observe that "Rebellious Euphorion, overcompensating both ontologically and psychologically, seeks to violate others and succeeds in killing himself" (155) is to state only a partial truth, since Euphorion's "killing himself" serves what, as the threnody on his Byronic death makes clear, we are to recognize as a noble-humane cause, Greek Independence (the historical equivalent in *Faust* of the more general good of mankind that as he dies Faust will believe he has furthered).

To the extent that Goethe was a romantic thinker, as in his Storm and Stress years, or that his ideas coincided with those of romantic contemporaries, Bidney's observations in *Blake* and Goethe persuade one of their validity, especially since they are offered with scrupulous documentation and scholarly accuracy. Exceptions to this last generalization are so few that in no way do they diminish his book's merits: (6.15 himself [for itself], 41.24 and 119.7 dumb [for stupid, Ger. dumm], 43.30 sullen [for, probably, unenlightened, Ger. trübel], 60.33 un [for the Eng. article an], 95.39 the heart [for our heart], 96.29 enjoy [not the imperative Laßt, but Läßt, can be enjoyed], 104.5 O to sink down [for O had I but sunk down], 104.21 Faust's relief [none at given point in Goethe's text], 127.18 jealous [for inconstant], 157.28 the good Lord [for a great—orfine—gentleman], and 158.27 Lusty Person [for Clown]). It might now be rewarding to compare Blake and Goethe as artists as well as thinkers, although Goethe's fondness for idealized realism and for the classics (in contrast to Blake's "it is the Classics . . . that Desolate Europe with Wars"), his limited respect for Flaxman, and his lifelong love of landscape and landscape painting suggest that here might prove to be less "spiritual kinship" between them in this area than in the areas that Bidney has so thoughtfully examined.



David W. Lindsay, ed.  
*Blake: Songs of Innocence and Experience*. The Critics Debate Series. General editor, Michael Scott. Basingstoke: Macmillan and Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities, 1989. 92 pp. £18.50 cloth/ £4.95 paper; \$29.95/ \$8.50.

### Reviewed by Edward Larrissy

David Lindsay's book is part of a series the aim of which is to introduce students to "a variety of critical approaches to specific texts." He pursues that aim with lucidity, impar-

### Approaches to Teaching Blake's *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*

Edited by Robert F. Gleckner  
and Mark L. Greenberg



Robert F. Gleckner and Mark L. Greenberg, eds.  
*Approaches to Teaching Blake's Songs of Innocence and of Experience*. Approaches to Teaching World Literature 21. Series editor Joseph Gibaldi. New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1989. \$32.00 cloth/ \$17.50 paper.

ality, and method. The book is divided into two halves: the first is a survey of critical approaches; the second, called "Appraisal," in fact "traces the evolution of *Songs of Innocence and Experience* [sic] in the context of Blake's other writings and gives closer attention to eight poems."

The survey first defines the text, discussing the different editions. It goes

on to look at literary and artistic antecedents of the *Songs*, bringing in (according to the brief) the ways in which knowledge of these has modified critics' responses. The fact of the *Songs* being an illuminated text is then broached, and we encounter important interpretations of visual motifs, including some from such critics as Keynes, Erdman, and Mitchell. The ideas of the dramatic lyric, and of an occasionally ironic use of the represented speaker, are introduced, and then Lindsay adopts the useful ruse of using "The Chimney Sweeper" as a peg on which to hang typical reactions to Blake, because it exemplifies so many of the complexities of the *Songs*, both in its strategies and in its allusions. The discussion then moves on to the relationship between the *Songs* and Blake's "system," glancing at the opposed implications of Frye and Hirsch. It also looks at paired poems ("Counterparts"), at speakers in *Experience*, and at the symbolism of flowers.

The second part, "Appraisal," has much less to do with "the critics": hardly anything, in fact. It is Lindsay's learned and astute introduction to the *Songs*, looking at eight poems chiefly in the light of Blake's other work. The readings are tactful, and responsive to many different contexts, although the allusions to Blake's prophetic books suffer from a brevity imposed by the format of the series. In this respect they share their suffering with some previous sections of the book. There are occasions when one wonders if a student will be able easily to digest the various buffet of critical approaches so briskly served up. But this is not always a problem,

chiefly because of Lindsay's wise decision to be selective in his choice of songs. This will be a useful book to students who do not succumb to the temptation to make it a substitute for wider reading, not least because it suggests the value of many different approaches to so subtle and rich an author. It may, however, be a pity that the approaches of Hazard Adams and David Wagenknecht do not receive a mention here.

Gleckner and Greenberg's book is aimed at teachers rather than students, and this aim does control most of the essays in it. As well as providing instances of approaches to Blake, then, they are very much the records of instructors on how they go about teaching the *Songs* in the class. I found this emphasis of the book fascinating and helpful. W. J. T. Mitchell is useful on ways of talking about the "composite text," as one would expect. David Simpson, in "Teaching Ideology in *Songs*" follows almost precisely my own way of raising questions about "The Chimney Sweeper," referring to Erdman, "false consciousness," Glen, Raine, and the "corporeal" soot from Swedenborg. Joseph Viscomi recounts a most interesting method he uses of asking classes to copy designs from Blake plates. This has at least the merit of focusing attention on the facts of a given design (an important consideration in itself) as well as on the materiality of Blake's production methods. But most of the approaches treated here could yield something of value to most teachers. The editors have included an extraordinarily full reasoned bibliography to the essays.

Steven Blakemore. *Burke and the Fall of Language: The French Revolution as Linguistic Event*. Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1988. 115 pp. \$20.

Reviewed by  
Lisa Plummer Crafton

Starting with the basic premise that linguistic interpretations of revolutions are as viable and important as economic, sociopolitical, or ideological ones, Steven Blakemore's book contributes to revisionist critiques of the French Revolution. *Burke and the Fall of Language* explores the language of revolutionary and counterrevolutionary discourse. Although Blakemore focuses on Burkean texts and themes, he also analyzes the "special linguistic self-consciousness" (2) that shapes all visions of the revolution. While the author makes no mention of Blake (nor of literary tradition per se), this exploration of the nexus between language and ideology contributes much to a methodology for analyzing Blake's revolutionary texts. Not only has Blakemore assembled valuable historical material, for instance on the debates over constitution, authority, and patriarchy, but also his contextualizing of the poles of revolutionary and counterrevolutionary texts amidst these themes provides a revealing, albeit narrowly focused, account.

The title, which implies that language is the unified focus of study, is misleading in that only the last half of the slender book deals specifically with the language of revolution. The first three of the six chapters offer background information on what the author considers the significant bases of the arguments and how Burke and Paine exploit various *topoi* for their respec-