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R E V I E W

Stanley Gardner, Literature in Perspective: Blake

Paul Miner

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Robert F. Gleckner supplies a good essay on the important functions of adjectives in Blake's poetry, particularly the *Songs*. Hazard Adams has a neat retort to one of Wimsatt's slurs on Blake. Martin Butlin presents a scholarly survey of the development of Blake's techniques and interests as a printer evolving the great 1795 colour prints, concerning the quality of which he is, excusably, over-partisan. Daniel Hughes dares to open his essay by refuting Damon. George Mills Harper studies Blake's "theological arithmetic".

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2. *Literature in Perspective: Blake*
by Stanley Gardner
published by Evans Bros., Ltd, 1968

This book will not serve as remedial reading for the Compleat Blakist in the sense that, with the exception of an occasional aperçu, it must be categorized as a primer to Blake. Considering the audience of the *Newsletter*, another introduction to Blake has only minor significance. The major merit of the volume, to my view, is additional light that is focused on several aspects of Blakean London. One forgivable error is Gardner's statement that Blake moved to Lambeth in 1793. Actually, the move took place, probably, in the autumn of 1790 but certainly by the first quarter of 1791--significant in that this earlier date extends the crucial Lambeth canon.

Gardner notes that Carnaby market, near where Blake was born, was built on a Pest Field, and the market included a slaughterhouse, where the howling of cattle could be heard while the animals waited to forgive the butcher's knife. Nearby also was Pawlett's Garden burial ground, and here was located the St. James's Workhouse, capable of containing 300 poor. Ultimately, the parish took over an old riding school, about 100 yards west of Blake's birthplace. This was Foubert's Academy, and the younger children of this school of industry were sent to nurse at Wimbledon. Gardner takes the speculative leap that "the mire" and "the lonely fen" in *The Little Boy Lost and Found* specifically relate to the watercourse of Vauxhall Creek or the area of Rush Common and Water Lane to the east of Brixton Hill, and he concludes that it "seems beyond question" that Wimbledon Common and the hills immediately south of the Thames are the "visual location of *Songs of Innocence*. . . ."

Previous scholarship has conjectured that Dacres Street and Dacres Alms Houses (to the west of the street) might possibly have dictated Blake's use of the name "Tom Dacre," and Gardner, fruitfully and independently, extends this supposition. Also there has been speculation that the fire at the Pantheon in 1792 possibly influenced Blake's imagery, for though Blake had already moved to Lambeth the fire could be seen as far away as Salisbury Plain. Gardner also adds to this fact that at the back of the Pantheon was a menagerie in the garden of Joshua Brookes, the anatomist. And the animals were panic-stricken by the Pantheon blaze. Blake, conveniently, could have seen a stuffed tiger at the Leverian Museum in Leicester Square when he was living at Green Street, and Gardner's evidence causes one to wonder if a tyger

burning bright might have, at one time or another, occupied the Brooke's menagerie (?).

Gardner is probably correct in asserting that Blake's "golden builders" allude to the extensive building over of the Marylebone Park Vicinity, where were located the Jew's Harp House, the Green Man and Willan's Farm. Gardner, in error I believe, though some scholastic logic is on his side, rejects Blake's idyllic lines about Willan's Farm, et al, and he recalls that all places north of London laid Blake up for several days. To this Gardner also adds the negative element of the Foundling Hospital, to the east in Lamb's Conduit Fields, where one was exposed to the burial grounds in passing. "Clearly something is wrong with the notion that these [Willan's, etc] are evocative recollections of the poet's youth," says Gardner. Blake, presumably, did look upon the extension of Regent's Park as an architectural building up of Jerusalem, but I do not think this unequivocally demands rejection of the traditional nostalgia that has been assigned Willan's Farm and the Marylebone pleasure haunts, and a pointing of the text, so to speak, will at least avoid a categorical, though provocative, assessment such as Gardner's.

Insofar as the genus of introductory books is concerned, Gardner fulfills his purpose without cant or humbug, and the interesting material on London assists in orienting the 18th-century environs to which Blake was exposed.

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On another subject -- reviews. When we began the *Newsletter*, we published no reviews, on the assumption that Blake books were amply and expeditiously reviewed elsewhere. We soon discovered that this was often not the case and that, besides, there existed a need for reviews aimed at a more specialized audience. Our policy is to give reviewers complete freedom, both as to length and as to opinion: there is no editorial policy concerning "rightness" of views, and the editor is of course not responsible for the views of contributors. In addition, our pages are open for disagreement in form of discussion articles. We would like to have a wide variety of reviews and reviewers, and we invite readers who have published on Blake to correspond with us if they are interested in reviewing.

This June issue contains once more the annual checklist of Blake scholarship. Its chief virtue, as we have said before, is timeliness rather than completeness. It would, however, be more complete had more of you sent offprints.

-- MDP

CORRECTION

Sir Geoffrey Keynes wishes to point out that the second edition of *Blake's Letters* contains four letters not included in the first edition, and not one, as was stated in the Spring *Newsletter*. In addition to the brief letter to Mrs. Aders, there are two complete letters to Hayley and one to Linnell. Furthermore, the inverted commas in the poem sent to Butts are not editorial, but form part of Blake's original letter.