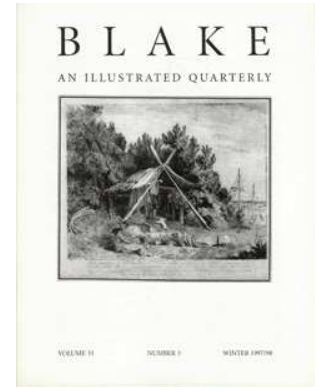


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N E W S

**Blake and the Book: The Materiality of Books in
the Life and Times of William Blake: Call for
Papers**

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Woe" of our own period. Blake's joyful epiphanies were also rehearsed in modern London: the innumerable heavenly host crying "Holy Holy Holy is the Lord God Almighty," and the tree full of glistening angels on Peckham Rye.

The program's use of Blake's own words was a very successful strategy. Performances of his poetry by Loughnan and by Allen Ginsberg did justice to Blake in a way that some of the invented monologues did not. Ginsberg's delivery of Blake was fascinating and oddly compelling. Reading the words from a facsimile, he sang the "Introduction" to the *Songs of Innocence* and "The Tyger," in an improvised recitative style with a rhythmic accompaniment from a hand-held pump organ. The effect was completely unlike an ordinary folk ballad, such as "The Maid of Islington," which was featured in the program: it was much more direct and intense, more bardic perhaps. The performance of "The Tyger" was surprisingly pacy and joyful, dispensing with the fear which the poem can evoke when spoken aloud, but retaining the sense of awe.

As well as Blake admirers from the literary and artistic worlds, the film featured representatives of modern science and commerce: the biologist Rupert Sheldrake and the industrialist Peter Parke. Sheldrake echoed Blake's critique of Newtonian abstraction, blaming this kind of science for causing radical damage to our civilization: "It has split the sciences from the arts. It has split science from religion. It has fragmented our whole culture." He predicted that the science of the future would validate Blake's objection to the dead mechanistic universe posited by Newton. The world of future science would be "a living world. A world permeated by consciousness and spirit, full of life and quality."

Peter Parker said that "The Sick Rose" had changed his life, opening up a channel of Blakean influence throughout his career. This has amounted to a conviction that Blake's anti-materialist stance, his determination to see through the eye, not with it, is "crucial to the health of modern society." In the spring 1995 inaugural edition of *The Journal of the Blake Society at St James's*, he wrote that Blake's refusal to be dominated by reductive rationalistic thinking had fed directly into his own attitude to management: "His purpose was not to generalise, but to raise the faculties of the individual to action against poverty, privilege, cruelty and inequalities to sex or race, intolerance - in short, unimaginativeness." Blake's rejection of Newton's dead world has become an ethical imperative to see human situations as particularly and minutely as possible. The documentary both began and ended with the hymn usually known as "Jerusalem" (And did those feet") Ackroyd pointed out the incongruity between the patriotic emotions usually associated with the hymn and Blake's own attitude to the monarchy and the Established Church. However, as Parry's music soared to its final crescendo and the camera came to rest upon the rapt features of the engraved

Blake portrait after Phillips, I felt that this most famous lyric may have attained its hold on the British public partly through Blakean merits of its own, similar to those which the documentary had celebrated. What we find in Blake is a yearning for vision, a capacity for faith, and a mighty determination to transcend the empty cruelty of nature and create a world full of meaning and value, to build Jerusalem amongst the dark satanic mills.

N E W S L E T T E R

Twenty-First Century Blake: Call for Papers

"Twenty-First Century Blake." The Wordsworth-Coleridge Association invites papers for a session on William Blake at the MLA Convention in San Francisco, 27-30 December 1998. Papers should explore new directions in Blake studies, particularly the convergence of Blake and hypertextual media, the development of computer-based approaches to Blake's poetry, new methods in textual editing, and the relevance of Blake's work to the approaching millennium. Send 15-minute papers or detailed abstracts by 1 March to: James McKusick, Department of English, University of Maryland, Baltimore County, Baltimore MD 21250. Email: mckusick@umbc.edu.

Blake and the Book: The Materiality of Books in the Life and Times of William Blake: Call for Papers *St. Mary's University College, 18 April 1998*

Proposals are invited for 30-minute papers on all aspects of William Blake and the production, consumption, and reading of books. Blake was involved throughout his life in the illustration of texts (his own and those of others); he subscribed to books by friends; he created "bookworks" that sought to bypass his period's normal avenues of publication. The general theme of the conference is the book as material object in Blake's time. Morris Eaves (University of Rochester) will deliver the keynote address, "Graphicality: The Problem with Pictures."

Suggested topics might include: Blake's relationship to children's books, emblem books, book illustration, booksellers and publishers, book collecting, printing technology and other aspects of the art, culture, economics, market, history, and production of books in the romantic period. Abstracts (2 copies) of no more than 400 words should be sent to: Keri Davies, Blake Conference, St. Mary's University College, Waldegrave Road, Strawberry Hill, Twickenham TW1 4SX, UK. Fax: +44 (0) 181-967 9376. Email: keri@efirstop.demon.co.uk.