

NEWS AND WORKS IN PROGRESS

DOUBLEDAY TO PUBLISH NEW FACSIMILE

From David Erdman:

Doubleday has signed me to prepare a large Anchor paperback to contain all Blake's Illuminated Works in monochromatic facsimile (plus the Job illustrations), with brief descriptive commentary on each plate. The aim is a price under ten dollars, for a working handbook. But the photography is to be of the best, and although each work will be reproduced in a single color, the plan calls for using as many as five different Blakean colors for the different works. Trim size will be 7 1/8 x 10 1/4 inches; 352 pages. Nearly all the reproductions will be in exact size, with the smaller pictures sometimes doubled up two or more on a page. There will probably be a very slight reduction of the largest plates, *America . . . Jerusalem*.

The idea of trying to say what is going on in each illumination is, I realize, a mad one, and I know I'll need help. Suggestions about baffling details or whole pictures will be welcome. I shall also welcome ideas as to which copies of particular works will reproduce best in one color. And if anyone has a superb set of photographs of any Illuminated Work, that could be borrowed, I shall be happy to be apprised.

Target date: spring (or fall) 1972 publication.

Reward for the best title suggestion. "Blake's Illuminated Works Entire"?--"The Canon of &c &c"--"All In One . . ."? Hard to find the right words.

A VIDEOTAPE OF AMERICA PRODUCED AT YORK UNIVERSITY

Janet Warner, John Sutherland, and Robert Wallace collaborated on a one-hour videotape called *Blake's "America,"* which was made in October, 1970 at the television studio of York University. We wrote Mrs. Warner to find out more about the history, the nature, and the availability of the tape, and this is her reply:

The tape was very much a joint effort of John Sutherland and myself, who wrote the script, and Robert Wallace, my colleague at Glendon, who produced it. We wanted a program suitable for senior students, that is, those who were already acquainted with Blake's work, which would allow them to see all the plates of *America*, hear the whole poem read dramatically, and at the same time interpret the poem for them in a way that would link it to past and present historical events.

To this end, we obtained photographs of the black and white *America* in the Rosenwald Collection, and we used slides and photographs of many other works of art, including some by Blake, and many by early American painters. We also used pictures of modern student riots and other political events which bore out the themes of political

and psychological revolution.

The poem was read by Michael Gregory, our department chairman at Glendon, who is also an experienced actor; his voice and that of another narrator were heard always off camera. We used no "live" actors. Suitable music and sound effects were employed throughout to add emphasis and interpretation. The music consisted mainly of snatches of Charles Ives' "America Variations," while the sound effects concentrated upon both natural sounds (such as wind, thunder) and sounds of war and revolution (air raid sirens, machine gun warfare, bugle calls).

Most of our problems during production arose from our limited budget and the fact that York's television studio does not have a camera with a special close-up lens, which would have facilitated close examination of the plates and photographs. Consequently, because we could not afford to have all the graphics blown up to a suitably large size, some visual effects could not be maintained for every plate.

In addition, copyright stipulations covering both music and some photographs inhibited their expanded integration into the tape. Various other problems inherent to the process of adapting to a visual and rhythmic medium could only be discussed properly in a more academic paper, which, incidentally, Mr. Wallace is considering writing.

In general, we feel the tape was an artistic success and it has been well received at York, Glendon (a separate campus) and Colby College, Maine. In fact, it is likely we will receive money to do a second production on *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*.

Regarding distribution rights and costs, any institutions interested in *renting* a copy of the tape can do so by supplying their own videotape to York, which will transfer the production for a fee of \$75, with the stipulation that the transfer be erased after it is shown. Should enough institutions be interested in *buying* a copy of the tape, York would have it transferred to film, which could then be bought for approximately \$200.

It is interesting to find how suitable Blake's work is for adapting to television. We would be interested to hear if others have tried similar experiments.

BLAKE AT THE THOMAS GRAY CONFERENCE

A conference on "Thomas Gray and the Humanist Tradition" will be convened by James Downey at Carleton University in Ottawa, 18-20 May 1971. The brochure announcing the conference displays a detail from Blake's fifth illustration to Gray's "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" (illustrating the line "Oft did the harvest to their sickle yield"), and the conference program includes at least one paper on Blake and Gray: "Gray and Blake and the Human Design" by Ben Jones, Chairman of the Department of English at Carleton. Others scheduled to participate in the conference are Jean Hagstrum, Eli Mandel, Roger Lonsdale, Donald Greene, Donald Davie, Kenneth MacLean, Arthur Johnston, George Whalley, Alastair Macdonald, Ian Jack, and Louis Kampf.