

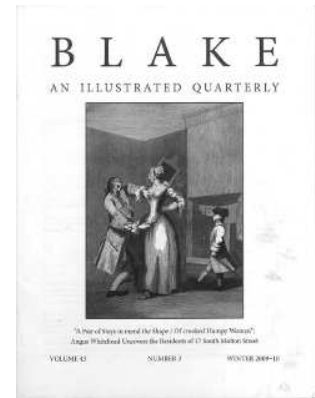
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The Early Marketing of The Grave in London and Boston

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The Early Marketing of *The Grave* in London and Boston

BY WAYNE C. RIPLEY

AS is well documented, Robert Cromek had a great talent for marketing that emerged in his promotion of *The Grave*.¹ He ran a two-year advertising campaign in more than ten newspapers and magazines across England and Scotland. These included the *Birmingham Gazette* and *Birmingham Commercial Herald* (July 1806), *Scots Magazine* (July 1807), *Artist* (August 1807), *Monthly Literary Recreations* (September 1807), *Literary Panorama* and *Manchester Gazette* (November 1807), *Wakefield Star and West-Riding Advertiser* (May 1808), *Monthly Magazine*, *Athenaeum Magazine*, and *Bristol Gazette, and Public Advertiser* (June 1808), and *Monthly Literary Advertiser* (July 1808).² As the list of subscribers in the published volume signifies, Cromek did not limit himself to the literary and artistic markets of London and was ready to find new subscribers across Britain.

If there was anything strange about his marketing strategy, however, it was his initial neglect of London for Birmingham during the summer of 1806. But a previously undiscovered announcement, which was reprinted two times, suggests that Cromek was very mindful of the London marketplace that summer:

Mr. Cromek intends to publish in the course of the ensuing winter a series of 12 [twelve] Engravings, etched in a very superior style of excellence by Louis Schiavonetti, from the original inventions of William Blake, illustrative of Blair's popular Poem "The Grave." In consequence of the originality of the designs and their vigorous expression, the work has been honoured with the patronage of the principal members of the Royal Academy, and the first professors of art in the metropolis, and by the subscriptions of upwards of 300 [250] of the most distinguished amateurs.³

1. In their facsimile of *The Grave*, Robert N. Essick and Morton D. Paley call Cromek "an energetic promoter" (*Robert Blair's The Grave, Illustrated by William Blake: A Study with Facsimile* [London: Scolar Press, 1982] 19). See also G. E. Bentley, Jr., *Blake Records*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004) [hereafter *BR(2)*] 208.

2. Except for the *Scots Magazine*, these references are found in *BR(2)*. See David Groves, "'Great and Singular Genius': Further References to Blake (and Cromek) in the *Scots Magazine*," *Blake* 39.1 (summer 2005): 47.

3. "Modern Discoveries, and Improvements in Arts, Sciences, and Literature," *Universal Magazine* 6 (July 1806): 47-48; "Monthly Retrospect of the Fine Arts," *Monthly Magazine* (Aug. 1806): 61; "Intelligence," *Monthly Anthology, and Boston Review* 3 (Oct. 1806): 559.

The *Universal Magazine* version is quoted above, with the numbers in brackets appearing in the *Monthly Magazine* and *Monthly Anthology*. In accidentals, these versions differ from the *Universal Magazine* notice in capitals, lineation, punctuation, and the use of the phrase "the [as op-

In London, the notice ran in the July issue of the *Universal Magazine* and the August issue of the *Monthly Magazine*. It is the only reference to Blake in the *Universal Magazine*,⁴ and was published in a section entitled "Modern Discoveries, and Improvements in Arts, Sciences, and Literature," alongside other forthcoming books. In the *Monthly Magazine*, it appeared in its "Monthly Retrospect of the Fine Arts," which included prints and books with prints. Since the text is nearly identical in both magazines, the announcement was presumably written by Cromek and not the editors. It is also found in the October 1806 *Monthly Anthology, and Boston Review*, which reprinted the *Monthly Magazine* version in its "Intelligence" section that provided notices regarding British books. This notice may be the earliest reference to Blake in America, and it might explain the presence of J. Brown from Boston in the list of the subscribers to *The Grave*. While it is possible that Cromek had his eye on the potential market across the Atlantic, it is more likely, given Blair's popularity in America, that the *Grave* project simply appealed to the Boston editor, who reprinted it without either Blake's or Cromek's knowledge.

The biggest question raised by the announcements is why the number of subscribers was reduced from 300 in the *Universal Magazine* to 250 in the *Monthly Magazine* version. Perhaps the *Monthly Magazine* version was written first but published later. This idea would accord with the fact that the number of subscribers seems to have risen steadily. In November 1807 Cromek reported getting seventy-two "at Manchester in less than 3 Weeks" (*BR(2)* 249), and the change in number in the announcements implies that he was working at a similar clip in the summer of 1806. By the time the book was published there would be "578 subscribers for 688 copies."⁵ Despite Cromek's success in garnering subscriptions, the idea that the volume would be published in the "ensuing winter" suggests that he envisioned a very truncated production schedule, meaning that the famous portrait of Blake was likely not part of the original plan, since Blake did not sit for Thomas Phillips until April 1807 (*BR(2)* 232). Finally, the newly discovered notices offer some evidence that Blake was aware of how *The Grave* was being marketed. They were the only advertisements for *The Grave* to reference "the most distinguished amateurs," and Blake's first recorded reference to the English amateur came in his letter to the *Monthly Magazine* (1 July 1806) defending Fuseli's painting of Dante's Ugolino. As Paley has recently stressed, "amateur" was still considered a novel, if not foreign, import in English discussion of the arts, and Blake's parody of it in his notebook quip

posed to "their"] vigorous expression." More significantly, the *Monthly Magazine* and *Monthly Anthology* leave out the reference to the patronage of Royal Academy members, deleting "the principal members of the Royal Academy, and."

4. The *Universal Magazine* 11 (Feb. 1809): 132-39, would give a very favorable review of Cromek's *Reliques of Robert Burns*.

5. G. E. Bentley, Jr., *Blake Books* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977) 529.

"The Cunning sures & the Aim at yours" may have been spurred by its association with Cromek's fashionable marketing language.⁶

6. *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, ed. David V. Erdman, newly rev. ed. (New York: Anchor-Random House, 1988) 510. As Paley observes, the first recorded use of "amateur" was in 1784, and it was still new enough in 1803 that Rees's *Cyclopædia* had to gloss it ("Blake's Poems on Art and Artists," *Blake and Conflict*, ed. Sarah Haggarty and Jon Mee [Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009] 214).

Waxed in Blake

BY NELSON HILTON

THOSE who write on Bob Dylan appear to take for granted the influence of Blake on his "Gates of Eden" (in performance by 31 October 1964, then issued on *Bringing It All Back Home*, March 1965, and as the flip side to the single version of "Like a Rolling Stone," July 1965). Michael Gray speaks for many, if at greater length, in stating that "the purposive force of what is palpably Blakeian impinges in every verse. It is the major Dylan song prior to 'Every Grain Of Sand' that is most like Blake, and like the most characteristic Blake at that." Without giving specifics, Gray argues that "the general themes of 'Gates of Eden' could not be more Blakeian and nor could their treatment. Dylan is treating of balances of opposites—of material wealth and spiritual; of earthly reality and the imaginatively real; of the body and soul; of false gods and true vision; of self-gratification and salvation; of mortal ambitions and the celestial city; of sins and forgiveness; of evil and good."¹ Lawrence Wilde suggests, more concretely but equally without evidence, that "William Blake's poem 'Gates of Paradise' may well have inspired Dylan's composition," and Mike Marqusee finds "an apt reference to Blake" in the song's seventh-stanza reference to "kingdoms of Experience."²

The recent publication in facsimile of a manuscript version of "Gates of Eden" enables further speculation about Blake's presence in the song's first stanza, at least, and how it came to pass.³ As published and recorded, the first stanza reads:

1. *Song and Dance Man III: The Art of Bob Dylan* (London: Continuum, 2000) 61, 62. See also John Hinchey, *Like a Complete Unknown: The Poetry of Bob Dylan's Songs, 1961-1969* (Ann Arbor: Stealing Home Press, 2002) 88.

2. Lawrence Wilde, "The Cry of Humanity: Dylan's Expressionist Period," *The Political Art of Bob Dylan*, ed. David Boucher and Gary Browning (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004) 92; Mike Marqusee, *Chimes of Freedom: The Politics of Bob Dylan's Art* (New York: New Press, 2003) 166.

3. Robert Santelli, *The Bob Dylan Scrapbook, 1956-1966* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005) 41 (insert).

Of war and peace the truth just twists
Its curfew gull just glides
Upon four-legged forest clouds
The cowboy angel rides
With his candle lit into the sun
Though its glow is waxed in black
All except when 'neath the trees of Eden.

The facsimile has in the third line not "four-legged" but "fungus forest cloud." This, together with the twisting of the truth, the black glow, and the setting "'neath the trees," seems strongly to recall "A Memorable Fancy" in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, plates 17-18. There the speaker, in the company of "An Angel," finds himself "sitting in the twisted root of an oak. he was suspended in a fungus" and beholding "the sun, black but shining" (E 41).⁴ In the facsimile the cowboy angel "lights his candle in the sun" (itself replacing the original "his candle burns the day"), which flips us a few plates forward in *Marriage* to the argument that a "man of mechanical talents" producing volumes—or vinyl recordings "waxed in black"—from the writings of inspired authors should "not say that he knows better than his master, for he only holds a candle in sunshine" (pl. 22, E 43).

It seems likely that Dylan may have come upon or have been reminded of Blake's work through a rapidly developing friendship with Allen Ginsberg that began in early 1964.⁵ Ginsberg's long-standing and idiosyncratic, deep involvement with Blake is well known, and he "had studied, in particular, the visionary masterpiece, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*."⁶ Dylan may have come to his title image not only through Blake's *Gates of Paradise*, but also through Ginsberg's very early collection *The Gates of Wrath*. Though not published until 1972, the unique manuscript of these "rhymed poems, 1948-1952," was, surprisingly, in Dylan's possession.⁷ There, beginning his twenty-fourth year in May 1964, Dylan could have read "Ode: My 24th Year" and its concluding line, "Here is no Eden: this

4. The power of this image is evident again several years later in John Gardner's *Grendel* (New York: Knopf, 1971), where the protagonist "recall[s] something. A void boundless as a nether sky. I hang by the twisted roots of an oak, looking down into immensity. Vastly far away I see the sun, black but shining ..." (137).

5. Michael Schumacher, *Dharma Lion: A Critical Biography of Allen Ginsberg* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992) 405; Bill Morgan, *I Celebrate Myself: The Somewhat Private Life of Allen Ginsberg* (New York: Viking, 2006) 383; Richard E. Hishmeh, "Marketing Genius: The Friendship of Allen Ginsberg and Bob Dylan," *Journal of American Culture* 29.4 (2006): 395-405.

6. Paul Portugés, *The Visionary Poetics of Allen Ginsberg* (Santa Barbara: Ross-Erikson, 1978) 101.

7. Ginsberg relates in a "Hindsight" to the 1972 edition published by Grey Fox Press (Bolinas) that "*Gates of Wrath* ms. was carried to London by lady friend early fifties, it disappeared, and I had no complete copy till 1968 when old typescript was returned thru poet Bob Dylan—it passed into his hands years earlier." The volume has Blake's "Right thro' the Gates of Wrath" as one of its epigraphs and two directly Blake-inspired poems, "On Reading William Blake's 'The Sick Rose'" and "The Eye Altering Alters All."