

or technical grounds. *Death of the Strong Wicked Man* and *The Grave Personified* are quite richly colored with considerable attention to flesh tones created through the application of very small brushstrokes in blue, brown, and rose. In contrast, parts of *Prone on the Lonely Grave—She Drops* are left uncolored or shaded only with broad washes. *The Day of Judgment* exhibits a wide range of coloring techniques. An area of dark sky above the dome in the lower right quadrant, probably applied with a relatively dry brush, shows the sort of fine reticulations we can also see on Death's face, right arm, right thigh, and torso in *Death Pursuing*—and in the same or a very similar color. The detailed brushwork in *Death Pursuing* also recalls Blake's work as a portrait miniaturist begun in 1801 under William Hayley's tutelage.<sup>16</sup> Butlin has interestingly associated *A Destroying Deity*, a drawing in the Philadelphia Museum of Art, with the *Grave* designs and has even identified a passage in the poem it may illustrate (Blake Trust publication, p. 54). This deity's bat-like wings are strikingly similar to Death's and, to my eye, executed in a similar manner with washes and pen-and-ink outlining.

Butlin's proposal that someone had "gone over" *Death Pursuing* "to make it more saleable in the later 19th century" prompts several questions. The history of the drawing after T. H. Cromek, who died in 1873, is somewhat speculative until it entered the collection of Mrs. Artemas Holmes, Philadelphia, no earlier than the 1930s. It may have been the drawing sold at Christie's in 1880 for £1.15s.<sup>17</sup> Thus, the work had very little market value in the second half of the nineteenth century. The tinting of Death's face and parts of his body is minutely articulated with small brushstrokes; the blue and red touches are hardly visible to the naked eye. Why would anyone go to all the trouble to execute such detailed work, principally in monochrome washes, when a few splashes of rich color (perhaps yellows and fiery reds, pink flesh for the Soul, prominent blood on her neck) would have added much more to the drawing's saleability? It is possible that a colorist may have believed that the labor required for detailed development of the drawing would be adequately compensated in the marketplace, but if prompted by a profit motive such a colorist must have been badly informed about the commercial value of Blake's art and sorely disappointed.

No amount of argument or theorizing can overcome the primacy of the vision and intuitions of the connoisseur's eye. I have no vain hope of changing anyone's opinion of *Death Pursuing*, least of all Butlin's. Rather, my purpose has been

16. See the miniatures of John Johnson, William Cowper, Thomas Butts, Mrs. Butts, and Thomas Butts, Jr., nos. 347, 353, 354, 376-78 and pls. 455, 459, 460, 476-78 in Butlin, *The Paintings and Drawings of William Blake*. For a discussion of this technique in the context of another attribution problem, see Essick, "A (Self?) Portrait of William Blake," *Blake* 39.3 (winter 2005-06): 126-39.

17. For this part of the provenance record, see Butlin, *The Paintings and Drawings of William Blake*, no. 635. At the time he wrote his catalogue, Butlin did not know that *Death Pursuing* probably remained in T. H. Cromek's possession until at least 1863.

to exemplify some ways of using reproductions and historical contexts in cases of attribution, particularly when a leading expert has vacillated between attribution and deattribution. Although I believe that *Death Pursuing* is entirely Blake's work, I must confess to some slight misgivings. If someone else fiddled with the drawing, I suspect that it was fairly early in its history and confined to Death's face.<sup>18</sup> The most likely candidate for any such intervention is T. H. Cromek, a skilled watercolorist, although I find little similarity between the techniques used in *Death Pursuing* and Cromek's renderings of landscapes and buildings. Whatever the truth, however, Cromek, Butlin, and I would appear to share a common fate, spending part of our lives brooding over *Death Pursuing*.

18. David Bindman has expressed doubts similar to mine in conversation in Apr. 2009.

## R E V I E W

Hazard Adams. *Blake's Margins: An Interpretive Study of the Annotations*. Jefferson: McFarland, 2009. viii + 212 pp. \$39.95, paperback.

Reviewed by Alexander S. Gourlay

HAZARD ADAMS modestly introduces *Blake's Margins* by describing it as "less for scholars ... than for people who want to know more about Blake's thought ... and for students in the early stages of study of his work" (3). Beginners will find most of this eminently sensible and learned book edifying, but in fact there are very few Blake scholars anywhere who would not benefit from reading it straight through. In some ways, Blake's annotations are among the least ironic of his writings, but every Blakean marginalium is a tail that wags a very substantial dog: we can't really understand a given one without attending to the interplay with the full annotated text and with the broader contexts that contributed to Blake's response. Since even the best Blake editions inevitably misrepresent the marginalia by supplementing them with (at most) snippets of the annotated texts, many of which are unfamiliar and/or out of print, it would be a good thing if Blakists were in the habit of reviewing the relevant chapter in Adams before quoting anything written in a margin. Of course it would be even better if we all reread, say, the last third of Berkeley's *Siris* with care before repeating "God is not a Mathematical Diagram," but if that is not to happen,

Adams's judicious summaries will help us much more with the nuances of that declaration than, for instance, the two barely relevant sentences from Berkeley quoted by David Erdman in his edition (E 664).

And of course it's even more complicated than that: as Adams shows, the relevant context of Blake's annotations to *Siris* includes not only Berkeley's *Principles of Human Knowledge*, but beyond Berkeley, John Locke, with whom Blake had his own extensive dialogue. Sometimes the wagged dog is a whole pack: for the two (somewhat conjectural) annotations to Spurzheim's *Observations on the Deranged Manifestations of the Mind, or Insanity*, Adams adduces the relevance of "Spurzheim's career, that of his mentor Franz Joseph Gall, phrenology as practiced by them, and the contents of Spurzheim's book," as well as the various physiognomical texts derived from the work of Johann Caspar Lavater (139-40).

Covering thirteen surviving or recorded instances of annotation,<sup>1</sup> Adams proceeds author by author in the approximate order in which Blake wrote his remarks. He introduces each annotatee briefly, locates the annotated work in the annotatee's career, discusses the general reception of the work, and then moves through it, remarking upon Blake's most notable responses. Adams is alert to both variations in Blake's mode of reading and modulations in his rhetorical stance: at times Blake seems to be an earnest student taking notes, or a helpful editor, sometimes a cheerleader or contentious crank, more often an acidic antagonist. In many cases, the stance changes as Blake reads the book, and at other times he seems to have read the text through at least once, then returned, loaded for bear. Although Adams often comments about how a given remark fits into Blake's thought as expressed elsewhere, he is careful not to squeeze all expressions into a universal Blakean ideology, and regularly reminds us when the critical vocabulary of the annotations is the annotatee's, not Blake's.

The most successful chapters are those in which Adams can bring to bear his wide learning in literature and philosophy at large, as in the chapters on Bacon, Watson's *Apology for the Bible*, or Wordsworth's *Poems*. He also seems more confident when the cultural contexts are primarily verbal—he knows Blake's visual art well but rarely discusses pictures by others, even when Blake appears to be responding to visual art and artistic practices.

The substantial chapter on Blake's mostly vitriolic responses to Malone's edition of Reynolds's *Discourses* covers the territory that is most familiar to Blakeans, and is probably the subject most thoroughly considered by Adams himself, but for me this chapter was less efficiently helpful than, say, that on Swedenborg, which is roughly as long. Adams, whose procedure throughout is eminently reasonable, strives mightily to establish terms in which bitterly unreasonable Blake and smooth, slippery Reynolds might have been able to discuss

important questions about art, but for Blake at least, the encounter with Reynolds is a battle to the death with Error, and he seems to have found very little to be reasonable about. Adams's deft summaries of the thrust of the annotatee's arguments are less relevant here than elsewhere in the book: when responding to Reynolds, Blake isn't much interested in the ostensible arguments, which seem to him a mere cloak for wicked intentions. Even when Blake agrees with something Reynolds says, it is because the Sheep's clothing necessarily has something to do with the Lamb, not because Blake is any friendlier to the Wolf.

A brief addendum on Blake's reading summarizes discursively the information assembled about Blake's library by Keynes, Bentley, and others. This could have been an entire book on its own—and if Adams were to write such a book it would be a wonderful thing—but even at this length it is a helpful list. And yet "books read" is a much more complicated category—and subject of study—than "books annotated," because one has no way to tell which of Blake's diverse modes of reading he applied to a given book that he demonstrably read. Further, the criteria used to decide whether to report that Blake read a book or an author are not discussed, so dozens of complicated questions are skirted. One can't tell whether Marshall's *The Life of George Washington*, which Blake told Hayley he had but hadn't read "yet" (E 749), is omitted because we can assume he never read it or simply because it was overlooked; similarly, Potter's (not "Palmer's") translation of Aeschylus is listed as read (196) even though the book in question is unmarked beyond Blake's signature, and as far as I know unmentioned by Blake, though it is reasonable to suppose that he would have been interested in it. Further, we know that Blake owned and read a copy of Bysshe's *Art of Poetry*, with its extensive collection of snippets of verse, so one can't be sure he actually read all the poets whom he quotes if the quoted texts are included in Bysshe. Another problem is that we can't tell from the fact that he engraved plates for a book whether he ever saw, much less read, the actual text of it.

*Blake's Margins* is hardly the last word that will be written about the marginalia. It is sturdily unpretentious in method as well as modest in its claims, and its virtues are more likely to prove durable than those of, say, Jason Snart's much more ostentatious study, *The Torn Book: UnReading William Blake's Marginalia* (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 2006), which Adams praises faintly as "interesting" (6). But it will probably be some time before there is much need for another comprehensive treatment of the marginalia as a whole. Adams has found a level of discussion that suits the annotated volumes in all their variety, and the most fruitful of the next round of studies will probably focus on Blake's responses to individual authors.

1. To which should probably be added now the Cardinales' recent discovery of Blake's annotations to Thomas Taylor's *Mystical Initiations* (see *Blake* 44.3 [winter 2010-11]: 84-102).