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D I S C U S S I O N

On Mary Ellen Reisner's Locations of Copy U of
Songs of Innocence and Copy d of Songs of
Innocence and of Experience

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Discussion.

ON MARY ELLEN REISNER'S
"LOCATIONS OF COPY U OF *SONGS OF INNOCENCE*
AND COPY d OF *SONGS OF INNOCENCE AND OF EXPERIENCE*"
FROM *BLAKE NEWSLETTER 19*

John E. Grant

It seems odd that Mary Ellen Reisner should have had so much difficulty as she reported in locating *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* Copy U or that she should have thought it could be found at Harvard. As was reported in *Blake Newsletter 3* (15 December 1967), pp. 6-7, *Songs* Copy U was acquired by the Princeton University Library. Further particulars are to be found in Charles Ryskamp, *William Blake: Engraver: A Descriptive Catalogue*, (Princeton, 1969), p. 38, and there is also a reproduction of the remarkable general title page in this volume. Reisner's additional note that posthumous Copy d is not at Yale, as was reported in the *Census*, is of more interest.

Some further considerations: Reisner speaks of the "new *Bibliography* by Bentley and Nurmi" as being helpful in finding the locations of illuminated books; but the 1964 *Bibliography* is not "new" and does not attempt to duplicate the work of the *Census*. One gathers, however, that the real "new" Bentley *Bibliography*, which has been in the press for some time, will, when published, at last make up-to-date information as to locations generally available. It is certainly unfortunate that when the *Census* was reissued no effort was made to give current locations.

The problem of how information about locations should be used, however, is frequently mentioned in private but ought also to be frankly considered at least in the semi-public columns of *Blake Newsletter*. The question is, who wants to see a Blake work and why does he wish to do so? At present accessibility varies greatly in the several major public and private collections. There seems to be little relationship between the present condition of the works and their accessibility. Some copies of the illuminated books that are in poor condition and in which the pages have not been properly mounted are nevertheless quite easily available. In other cases one could argue that the security regulations are unreasonably restrictive.

But everyone who gets an urge to see a Blake book ought to ask himself why he needs to do it. Certainly no teacher should be party to the kind of make-work assignment that is too common of requiring his class in Introduction to Graduate Study to go, one by one, to look at a genuine

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Blake book. A Blake seminar is, of course, another matter. But even in this case one should expect that interested students will first carefully study Blake Trust facsimiles (or better, get to know photographic reproductions, such as will soon be available in the Erdman edited Doubleday edition) before seeking out the originals. It might seem as though such a stricture is of the Urizenic sort designed to postpone the day when at least a few more of the Lord's people become prophets. But it is not so. Until one has trained his eye up to seeing a Blake Trust facsimile he isn't going to be able to get very much from an original. Indeed, as I have pointed out elsewhere, he may never get as much from some putative "originals," since by no means all of them are as good works of art as the Blake Trust facsimiles. The great Princeton copy of *Songs*, of course, is much finer than the Blake Trust facsimile of the beautiful *Songs* Copy Z. But it is to be hoped that having Copy U now more clearly located will not much lengthen the lines at the Princeton Rare Book Room. The best Blake works are worth waiting for. Meanwhile everyone should take advantage of the abundance of materials that are generally available.

BRIEF RIPOSTES

John Beer and Irene Chayes

Mrs. Chayes and I have now each had a chance to defend our respective views of Blake's art, and Mrs. Chayes in fact states the difference between us with some precision when she declares roundly that while a work of art may be created through memory and imagination acting upon each other with equal force, an imagination which was *interpreting* the images presented to it "could not have created a single drawing, painting or etched design." What is for me the essence of "prophetic" art, as practiced by Blake, is for her a simple impossibility, and perhaps we ought to leave it at that.

While it might be tedious and repetitious to go over the same ground again, however, I should like to discuss briefly one or two of the new points that she makes. She is kind enough to re-

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