

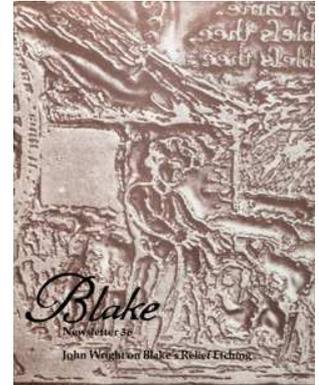
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P A R T I C U L A R

Blake's Appearance in a Textbook on Insanity

Raymond Lister

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QUERY

Gates of Paradise and Quarles' Emblems

By Detlef Dorrbecker

While I was doing some research for an article on *For Children: The Gates of Paradise*,¹ I examined the numerous editions of Francis Quarles' *Emblemes* (first published 1635). I also came across the last "regular" reprint of Quarles' epigrams, a book produced in 1839 and furnished with totally new emblem-icons, the woodcuts done by Charles H. Bennett and W. Harry Rogers. Blake drew massively on the original illustrations in Quarles' collection of emblems when making his designs for *GP* in the *Notebook*, and in turn the latter artists, it appears to me, must have known and used Blake's inventions when engraving their designs.² Does anybody have some information on Bennett and Rogers, or some idea where they might have seen works of Blake (especially *GP*), etc.?

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¹ This essay is shortly to be published in the *Städel Jahrbuch*, N.F. Bd. V, hrsgb. Klaus Gallwitz & Herbert Beck, München 1975.

² Cf. Alexander B. Grosart, ed., *The Complete Works in Prose and Verse of Francis Quarles*, vol. III, N.Y. 1967 (reprint of 1880/1881 ed.), pp. 103 ff. Cf. especially for *GP* 10: Bk. III, emblem viii (p. 146); for *GP* 6: Bk. III, emblem xii (p. 150) and Bk. V, emblem xiii (p. 181), and for *GP* 14: Bk. IV, emblem ii (p. 155). There are some other striking iconographic parallels with Blake's emblem-designs in the *Notebook*, *GP* and some of the illuminated books.

DISCUSSION

1974 Blake Seminar

By E. B. Murray

I am pleased the December 1974 MLA Blake Seminar ("Perspectives on *Jerusalem*") approved of the general tendency of my "Jerusalem Reversed" paper (see *Newsletter* 32, Spring 1975, p. 105), though I'd suspect it took a smug dealer in unconscionable paradox to confuse my Vala-Vahlu, Luvah-Lava syllabic reversals and consequent correspondences with the wholesale importing of extraneous readings into Blake's text that I was (gently) questioning. Another case of the saw posing as a razor's edge to hack up minute particulars--in lieu of an armed vision to see through them. The reversals are closer to their nominal sources in the text than

much Blakean word-play of these and other days (e.g., earth-owner, horizon, lethe--and "lover" [come back to me?]), perhaps even as close as that famous back-formation, Enitharmon. When this generation's Blakean establishment has been laid to waste, they'll come glimmering through as well as these. (I shall not promise so much for "nada-nada" as Udan Adan without evidence that a bit of simple Spanish had some currency to Blake.)

It was too bad I could not be at the meeting. I accept the wrist-slapping of its reporter with understanding. But sometimes things close in. Someone should suggest to those running Blake meetings in the future that they really should give an appropriate by-line to the people actually contributing papers. While my reasons for not showing were more substantial than this, I couldn't tell from any listing in the MLA program that I was really aboard--and so it came to pass. Also--the general carping tone of reported commentary, though in keeping with the spectral self-righteousness of Blakean commentary everywhere evident these days (perhaps contagious--*ecce signum*), suggests that, with only two of the paper-contributors in absentia, the group had one too many warm bodies to pick at.

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MINUTE PARTICULARS

"Fields from Islington to Marybone"

By John Adlard

Blake's conviction that "The fields from Islington to Marybone, / To Primrose Hill and Saint John's Wood" were once "builded over" with Jerusalem's pillars may have something to do with the fact that the Order of St. John of Jerusalem (whose Priory Gate still stands in Clerkenwell, adorned with a lamb) once owned much of this area. St. John's Wood itself is named after them (there was also a Little St. John's Wood in Islington) and Pieter Zwart, in his *Islington* (London 1973), p. 118, notes that "the fields to the west" belonged to them.

London

Blake's Appearance in a Textbook

on Insanity

By Raymond Lister

From the viewpoint of the unprofessional reader, one of the most fascinating books on insanity is *Mad Humanity its Forms Apparent and Obscure* by L. Forbes Winslow, which was published in London by C. A. Pearson Ltd. in 1898.

Winslow, who was born in 1844 and died in 1913, was well qualified with degrees at both Oxford and Cambridge. He had also been lecturer in insanity at Charing Cross Hospital, London, Vice-President of the Medico-Legal Congress, New York, and Chairman of the Psychological Department, and he was founder of the British Hospital for Mental Disorders. In addition to the foregoing book he wrote several others, including *Handbook for Attendants of the Insane and Lunacy Law in England*, *Mad Humanity*, which is 451 pages long, is full of details of the medical and legal aspects of insanity, although many of the author's opinions and conclusions would doubtless carry little authority in the medical climate of our own times. There are also many intriguing anecdotes of madness, and, most arresting of all, a series of photographs illustrating various aspects of insanity, such as "Delusions of Persecution in Monomania", "Hallucinations of Seeing and Hearing" and "Suicidal Dementia." These photographs vary from the pitiful to the horrific, with, among the physiognomies shown, expressions of terror, cunning, bewilderment, mistrust, and even a species of sardonic humour.

The whole of Chapter XII--a long one--is devoted to what Winslow describes as "Madness of Genius." For the author believed that genius was so abnormal as to be a species of neurosis. "Genius," he wrote, "like every other disposition of the intellectual dynamism, has necessarily its material substratum. This substratum is a semi-morbid state of the brain, a true nervous erethism. . ." (p. 337).

The main part of the chapter consists of a series of studies of varying length of the alleged madness of certain men of genius, and a very strange collection they make, ranging from such undoubted examples of madness as William Cowper, John Clare and Christopher Smart, through such borderline cases as Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Robert Southey and Percy Bysshe Shelley, to intellectual giants like Shakespeare and Samuel Johnson. In this somewhat motley assortment, William Blake makes an appearance, but when the author's account of him is read, one's confidence begins to abate, for surely, even when Blake's reputation was at its lowest ebb, there can have been no more muddled account of his visionary experiences. Indeed, one is left with the impression that if this is how the author remembered a reading of Gilchrist's *Life of Blake* (from which most of the details presumably originated) he would have been a candidate for inclusion in his own book. But it is probably no more than an example of shoddy scholarship, repetition, perhaps, of loose chatter. Nevertheless, the passage was printed in a scholarly book and it probably did Blake's reputation a certain amount of harm at a time when it was beginning to emerge from the shadows. Here it is, in full:

Hallucinations of Demonomania and Strength

(William Blake, 1757-1827).--An artist of considerable fame, he was also a poet, and his compositions were innumerable, leaving behind him one hundred MSS. for publication. He was regarded

by his many admirers as the equal of Shelley or Byron. He suffered from hallucinations, and being invited to Brighton to illustrate his edition of Cowper, he was met on the Downs, in his own imagination, by the spirits of Dante, Virgil, and Homer, whom he describes as coloured shadows and with whom he held high converse, watching the fairies and their funerals, and all the milder and gentler forms of demonolatry. For some years he had sighed for an interview with Satan, whom he had considered to be a grand and splendid spiritual existence, and whom he ultimately alleges he saw as he was going up the stairs of his house, in his mind's eye, the fiend glaring upon him through the grating of a window, when his wife, conceiving that he was suffering from one of his poetical hallucinations, induced him to execute a portrait of his infernal visitant, and in consequence of this vision he conceived the idea that he had abnormal strength, and, whilst suffering from this delusion, he attacked a soldier, and was tried for high treason. Many of the critics of the time described him as eccentric, another as visionary, a third as an enthusiast, a fourth as a superstitious ghost-seer; but that he was mad they had not the slightest doubt. (pp. 371-72)

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Postscript: Blake's Abnormal Psychology

By Morris Eaves

Lest we drop off to sleep and dream that a few decades ago the subject of Blake's lunacy passed quietly into the innocent and nostalgic half-light of primitive psychology, it might not be a bad idea to add a short postscript to Raymond Lister's note. *Abnormal Psychology: Current Perspectives* is a hefty and up-to-date textbook widely used, for instance, in upper-level undergraduate courses, the early years of medical school, and the like. It was edited by a board of "contributing consultants" so long and so peevish that it would put the editorial pages of some scholarly journals to shame. It professes the radical tolerance for mental differences of Laing and like-minded thinkers: "To see the manifest problems and illnesses of our society is to question the concept of the 'well-adjusted person.' To know the effect on language, literature, and art of the work of 'mentally disturbed' individuals is to be hesitant in pressing the claims of the homogenous 'normal' society as the greatest good." "Acceptance means understanding." "Establishing standard norms of acceptable behavior and labeling so-called inappropriate acts 'abnormal' has important consequences in terms of sanctioning a form of social control. Only by recognizing the importance of diversity and change does a society foster individual freedom and growth."