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CONTRIBUTORS
Irene Tayler is an Associate Professor of Humanities at M.I.T. and author of a number of articles and BLAKE'S ILLUSTRATIONS TO THE POEMS OF GREY (Princeton, 1971).

Elaine M. Kauver teaches English at Baruch College of the City University of New York. Currently, she is working with Jean H. Hagstrum and Jeffry B. Spencer on a dictionary of Blake's visual symbols.


Purvis E. Boyette is the Head of English in the College of Arts and Sciences at Tulane University. He is author of a monograph "Milton and the Sacred Fire: Sex Symbolism in PARADISE LOST" and is now co-editing THE MILTON ENCYCLOPEDIA (forthcoming in eight volumes).

A frequent contributor to the NEWSLETTER, Suzanne Hoover has been unable to get a teaching job and is therefore about to embark on a wholly new career of self-enjoyment and self-employment.

Myra Glazer Schotz, Chairwoman of the English Department at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Israel, has written on the FOUR ZOAS and, with Gerda Norvig, on the SONGS. Her latest paper, a study of the figure of the hermaphrodite in Blake and Lawrence, was presented at the MLA seminar on Blake and the Moderns in December.

Gerda Norvig wrote her dissertation on Blake and Bunyan at Brandeis University. She is currently a visiting lecturer at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev where she is collaborating with Myra Schotz on a series of articles concerning variant colorings.
of several copies of the SONGS. In addition, she and Professor Schotz are preparing a do-it-yourself Blake coloring book, for children of all ages, to be published in the fall.

Stephen C. Behrendt is a visiting Assistant Professor of English at the University of Minnesota, and is the author of several articles on Blake’s illustrations.

Michael Fischer teaches courses at the University of New Mexico on literary theory and Romanticism.

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Bibliographer: Thomas Minnick, Ohio State University.

Associate Editor for Great Britain: Francis A. Carey, Assistant Curator, Department of Prints & Drawings, British Museum.

Editorial Assistant: Michael Hays, University of New Mexico.

Design Consultant: Virginia Masi

Circulation Manager: Jane Welford, University of New Mexico.

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News

Newsletter Publications

We would like to call our readers' attention to the list of items for sale by the Newsletter printed in every issue with the editorial information inside the front cover. There is our reproduction of America, of course, but also a number of special back issues, including the handlists of Blake material in the British Museum Department of Prints & Drawings (issue 20, edited by G. E. Bentley, Jr.), and in the Lessing J. Rosenwald Collection (issue 35, edited by Ruth Lehrer). Readers who did not subscribe to the Newsletter before 1970 should note that we publish a reprinting, in two parts, of the issues first published at Berkeley, 1967-70.

News Always Wanted

It has been a long time since we reminded our readers that we always welcome news, which naturally includes conferences, recent publications, and the like, but also—when readers tell us about them—lectures on Blake and related subjects, classes handled in some special way that would interest our readership, work in progress (dissertations of course, but also any other work on Blake), queries—in short, "professional" news as well as items of more casual interest.

Our Bibliographer's Request

The Newsletter Bibliographer, Thomas Minnick, asks that you keep him and his Annual Checklist of Recent Blake Scholarship In mind when you write or run across Blakean items that might escape his notice. Duty calls: all the virtues of the Checklist involve its usefulness, and it can be most useful when most timely and most complete. Certain categories of information--reviews of books on Blake, for instance--are notoriously resistant to comprehensiveness, especially up-to-date comprehensiveness, and anything you can do to help will be appreciated.

Romantic and Modern Literature:

Seminar

According to Annette Levitt of Temple University, the title of what has been the MLA seminar on Blake and the Moderns will be changed this year to The Romantics and Modern Literature. The panel will be restricted to three members speaking for no more than fifteen minutes each, to allow time for discussion. Requests to attend the seminar may be sent to Professor Robert Bertholf, Department of English, Kent State University, Kent, Ohio 44242, and to Professor Annette Levitt, Department of English, Temple University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19122.

Blake & The Moderns

Professors Robert Bertholf and Annette Levitt are editing a collection of essays on Blake and the Moderns. While most of the papers have been decided upon, there is space for one or two more. If you have an appropriate essay, write to either of the editors. For their addresses see the previous news item.

MLA Seminar: Laocoön

In the opening paragraph of Irene Tayler's article on Blake's Laocoön, interested readers will find further information on the 1976 MLA Blake seminar, announced originally in Newsletter 38.

Samuel Palmer in the Marketplace

A recent series of newspaper articles has gone very far toward documenting the suspicion, first voiced by David Gould in a letter to The Times in 1970, that many of the paintings sold in recent years as Samuel Palmers have been modern fakes. The most recent installments in the story have come from Times salesroom correspondent Geraldine Norman, who traced several of the doubtful paintings to Thomas Keating. In a letter to The Times in August Keating admitted painting many imitations of the works of Palmer as well as of other artists. In a 27 August interview on Nationwide, a BBC television news program, Keating said that he had painted his imitations with the aim of showing the greed of art dealers who make their fortune off of artists whose works are bought for as little as possible and are sold as expensively as possible, a situation in which Keating says he has found himself for a lifetime of painting. Keating also claims that his imitations appear clearly as imitations to anyone who cares enough about Palmer to find out what Palmer's paintings really look like, and Keating's point in this case seems to be carried by the numerous doubts expressed by Palmer experts over the past few years about several paintings on the market.

According to stories in The Times, about thirteen paintings attributed to Palmer are being seriously doubted. The first Palmer to be questioned was a drawing of Sepham Barn, acquired along with three other Palmers by Leger Galleries in Old Bond Street in 1970 from Jane Kelly, Keating's girlfriend. The authenticity of the Sepham Barn drawing was doubted
by Gould in his letter to The Times, but also by Sir Karl Parker, of the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford, and by Raymond Lister, of Cambridge. Gould pursued the matter in correspondence with several other experts from 1970 until this summer when Geraldine Norman finally put the story in print.

Keating claims to have imitated many artists in the past several years, including among others Rembrandt, Gainsborough and Reynolds, Constable, Turner, Degas, and Renoir, but he has also confessed to being a bad imitator--and wondered how so many could have been taken in. Keating is now collaborating with Geraldine Norman and her husband on a book about Keating's years as an imitator, and he has volunteered to assist a committee of inquiry set up by the British Antique Dealers' Association to look into the matter of the thirteen doubted Palmers. (Readers who want more details of the story should see The Times, which has printed articles on the faked Palmers almost daily since mid-July.)

**Forthcoming Publications**

Geoffrey Keynes has edited a Blake Trust volume on Blake's Laocoön with twelve monochrome reproductions and commentary, bound in half leather, that is now scheduled for publication by Trianon Press toward the end of 1976.

All the engraved and etched prints that Blake designed himself, including the works in illuminated printing, will be reproduced in a forthcoming volume edited by David Bindman and Deirdre Toomey. There will be about 600 reproductions, an introduction of about thirty pages, and brief comments on each plate. Thames & Hudson expects to publish the volume in 1977.

**A Correction**

In Frank Parisi's review of the Oothoon Dance Theatre production of "The Mental Traveller" (Blake Newsletter 36, Spring 1976, p. 128), Heidi Parisi is listed in the credits as choreographer. In fact the choreography was by Heidi Parisi and Neil Tennant.

**Scripting a City of Art: Golgonooza**

A buzz saw tears through fresh timber, raining a shower of wood shavings on the heads of workers slathering mortar onto layers of brick. The construction crew is small, the labor large: transforming a dream into a reality.

The dream is the collective vision of a group of local artists drawing inspiration from the spiritual ideals of the Romantic poet William Blake and his mythical city of art, Golgonooza.

The artists claim dedication to the rebirth of that city, to perpetuating Blake's divine humanity, his cosmos of spiritual—yet human—beings.

One way of perpetuating is to record the written word, and by building a "scriptorium"--a printing house based on the handiwork of medieval monks and ancient engravers—the Golgonooza group hopes to begin publishing the works of Blake, local poets and their own writings.

Among the artists building the two-story structure that will house the scriptorium in Millfield are Assoc. Prof. of Art Aethelred and Alexandra Eldridge, proprietors of the Church of The Blake Revival; Daren Neglia, who has just returned from a nine-month stint as an apprentice in the Center for Book Arts in New York; architectural designer David Calahan; writer and illustrator Doug Lovelace and woodworker/ironcaster/jack-of-all-trades Nick Engler.

With a shop of friends skilled in various trades from stonemasonry to building design, the group is aiming toward completion of the scriptorium by late fall.

Watching the building go up brick by brick, it is hard to visualize what the strange combination of timber, old bricks and stone will look like. But a glance at designer Calahan's intricate blueprints reveals that the building is not as haphazard as it appears.

Calahan, who claims the plans were just the fruit of a few spare hours, searched for a cubit—the Biblical measuring unit—that would reflect the spirit in which the building was designed. Most ancient cathedrals were built with cubits, measured by dimensions such as the distance to Jerusalem or the length of the church bells' wave-length, he said.

"Blake found—or constructed—twenty-seven cathedral cities in England, each representing a quality, a psychological reality. He divided the world into twenty-seven ages, represented by those cathedral cities, each with a remarkable feature," Calahan explains.

"It works out neatly," he adds. "Blake was able to master a means of making it more comprehensible, more real to study the Bible, to make it all seem less accidental.

"The number twenty-seven is also a recurring number in Blake's cosmology of the civilized world, so my cubit became twenty-seven inches, and the rest of the building was based on that." Other considerations for the scriptorium were a strong foundation, inner space for a printing press, a bookbinding workshop and individual working areas in two stories.

The finished facade will be an eclectic mix of medieval half-timber house, Gothic cathedral, gables, sheer-buttressed walls and "elaborated barn," he noted.

"It was great to have the opportunity to do an irresponsible building with no authority, no money or time limit. It was harder on my conscience, though—I got away with things I never could have working for a client."
"Nobody has faith anymore in the relationship between a building as they see it and all its integral parts," he said of the many considerations in the scriptorium design.

He compared it to systems module planning, "the interlocking of different proportions to add up to be more than just the sum total of the parts."

The integral parts in the scriptorium, the group hopes, will add up to a tangible whole: an alternative press, titled, appropriately, The Golgonooza Press.

"We can't get published by established commercial publishers, so we'll do it on our own," declares Alexandra Eldridge.

The first project for the Golgonooza Press is the publication of a limited edition of one of Blake's smaller works, such as the "Book of Los" or the "Book of Ahania," and another edition of the notes group members have taken during the years of Aethelred Eldridge's weekly Blake readings in the church.

"It's the labor of Los," explained Neglia, referring to Blake's eternal prophet, "incessantly building Golgonooza."

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An Announcement

It is not always remembered that the impression of the Laocoön belonging to Sir Geoffrey Keynes is not unique, but that another one is recorded in Separate Plates. According to Keynes it was last recorded at the George C. Smith sale in 1938 where it was bought by Sessler. In the process of preparing with Deirdre Toomey an edition of The Complete Engravings of William Blake for the publishers Thames and Hudson I set about tracking down the unique Death's Door engraving, the only one for Blair's Grave engraved by Blake not Schiavonetti, which had also not been seen since the 1930s. Thanks to a clue given me by Sir Geoffrey Keynes I eventually located it in a the collection of Mrs. Charles T. Rosenbloom. To my surprise the owner also sent me a photograph of the second Laocoön impression, which I reproduce here. I have not yet been able to see the print itself, but from the photograph there are a number of potentially interesting differences. First of all it seems not to have been seriously damaged as Keynes suggests, and it seems to be an earlier impression than the Keynes example, because there are still traces of work which has been cleaned off the latter. The decorative flourish at the right, following "What we call Antique Gems," was once balanced by a similar one on the left, and engraved lines running from the left hand upper corner and the lower left corner appear to be traces of an earlier format. Most tantalizing of all, however, are the unmistakable traces of erased lettering all down the left hand side. They are not readable in the photograph, but there is some hope that close inspection of the original will bring them out. What remains to be seen is whether these traces will yield some additional epigrams. (David Bindman)
Where any view of Money exists Art cannot be carried on. But War only by pretences to the two impossibilities Charity & Abstinence Code John Heathen. He repeated that he had made Adam of the Female. the Adamah & it grieved him at his heart.

The Angel of the Divine Presence
Malachim

From Generation of Generation from the Natural Man to the Artificial Man. All that can be done between is Art & Vision.

The Laws of Good & Evil

The Eternal Body of Man is the Imagination, that is God himself. Your Jesus was the Angel of the Divine Presence in the Face of God. The Practice of Art.

The Laws of Good & Evil

The Angel of the Divine Presence
Malachim

From Generation of Generation from the Natural Man to the Artificial Man. All that can be done between is Art & Vision.

The Laws of Good & Evil

The Eternal Body of Man is the Imagination, that is God himself. Your Jesus was the Angel of the Divine Presence in the Face of God. The Practice of Art.

The Angel of the Divine Presence
Malachim
The Blake seminar will meet at this winter's MLA to discuss Blake's important plate *The Laocoön*. This work has received little critical attention by Blake scholars, though it is clearly a kind of summary index to Blake's later thought. I am here offering a few of my own ideas about the work in the hope of stirring up a scuffle or two in the wars of truth. Two or three short papers delivered at the seminar itself will raise other issues relevant to the *Laocoön*, after which the meeting will be open to general discussion. Those wishing to attend should write to me (Department of Humanities 14N423, MIT, Cambridge, MA 02139), kindly including a self-addressed return postcard. Members will be admitted on a first-come first-served basis. For details of room and time, see the MLA Program.

Blake's *Laocoön* plate addresses directly, by its own appearance, the problem of vision and the language of vision: how we see and how we think about what we see. The central image is of course an engraving of the classical statue which, recovered in 1506 among the ruins of the house of Titus in Rome, has been influential in art circles ever since. Apparently Blake first engraved it about 1815 as an illustration for the article on sculpture that Flaxman had written for *Rees's Cyclopædia* (illus. 1); probably around the same time he also did a pencil drawing of his own version of the *Laocoön* theme (illus. 2). The engraving used for Blake's major plate with its surrounding aphorisms (illus. 3) is striking in its depiction of the depth, the mass, the solidity of the figures, as if one might turn the page around and see their sides and backs. But this three-dimensionality, established so firmly in the rendering of the statue itself, is then utterly subverted and denied by the rest of the plate—a crowded clutter of two-dimensional symbols that stand, by the most arbitrary of human conventions, for words and ideas. Editors have always had problems with the phrases and aphorisms because there is no progressive order in which to arrange them, no directive as to sequence, or even grouping. Moreover, not only does the printing run up and down the sides as well as across the top and bottom of the page, but some of it actually outlines the gesturing figures, a powerful if almost parodic reminder of Blake's central contention that the creative intellect draws the outline it perceives, that to omit the outline—that which distinguishes one object from another, one idea from another—is to "leave out life itself; all is chaos again, and the line of the almighty must be drawn out upon it before man or beast can exist" (DC, E540). Some minds, of course, are so bungling and derivative that they perceive no outline at all --only blots and blurs; about them Blake has a great deal to say, all bad. But we who see his *Laocoön*, seemingly so stable in its representation of a physical object in the central image, are invited to perceive in the encircling words the visionary significance of that image, the outlines of intellect that define its meaning, that make it what it is.

"Mental Things are alone Real" (VLJ, E555), Blake tells us, but of course for a visionary, mental reality does not inhere in words any more than in statues or pictures of statues. I have spoken of an element of parody in those verbal outlines: as naive observers we are the butts of a double joke. On the one hand strings of outlining words would seem to
affirm the visual coherence of an object whose true reality is intellectual, but on the other hand there is no intellectual coherence to the piled up words themselves—or rather that coherence is not analytic or rational, but visionary. We are not to understand them in cognitive sequence, but rather to see their meaning, in all its minute particularity of idea, whole and at once, fully organized: "Knowledge is not by deduction, but Immediate by Perception or Sense at once. Christ addresses himself to the Man, not to his Reason" (Anno Berkeley, E774). Blake seems to be choosing a similar mode of address.

Let us approach his meaning--his organized idea--through some of its particulars, starting with the three phrases directly beneath the pictured statue; together they serve more or less as complementary titles for Blake's work. One names the figures depicted, in such a way as to distinguish their eternal significance from that lent them by the historical allegory of Virgil: "Jehovah & his two Sons Satan & Adam as they were copied from the Cherubim of Solomons Temple by three Rhodians & applied to Natural Fact or History of Ilium." Another defines that eternal significance in broad prophetic terms: "Art Degraded Imagination Denied War Governed the Nations." The third--written in tiny letters just under the base of the statue--connects the two by wryly addressing the opposition between Classical and Hebraic religious values as Blake had come to perceive them: "If Morality was Christianity Socrates was the Saviour." I don't think Blake's tone here is sarcastic. He is not suggesting that Socrates was a pernicious man (in J93 he notes that others thought so, but adds "So Caiphas thought Jesus"); rather Socrates was a "moralist," one whose ideas were rooted in the experience of the mortal body instead of the immortal spirit. As such he was forced to depend on systems of moral virtue to keep his world in order. Blake explains in Vision of the Last Judgment how "while we are in the world of Mortality we Must Suffer," being caught in the double bind of the fallen condition. "You cannot have Liberty in this World without <what you call> Moral Virtue & you cannot have Moral Virtue without the Slavery of that half of the Human Race who hate <what you call> Moral Virtue" (E554). Like all Classical thinkers, then, Socrates was trapped (as later the Deists were trapped) in the limitations of allegorical thinking, building mental constructs on things that are not real: "Allegories are things that Relate to Moral Virtues Moral Virtues do not Exist they are Allegories & dissimulations" (VLJ, E553). The visionary or prophetic mind avoids that trap not by avoiding allegory altogether, but by perceiving in it the eternal reality that it exemplifies. The legends of Arthur, for example, are allegoric fable; yet the visionary reader will perceive in them, Blake says, the eternal reality of what he calls the giant Albion, "Patriarch of the Atlantic": "The stories of Arthur are the acts of Albion, applied to a Prince of the fifth century" (VLJ, E534).

The Cherubim of Solomon's Temple, then, represent eternal truth as spiritually perceived by the Hebrews. In his article on sculpture for which Blake engraved the Laocoon as illustration, Flaxman noted that in ancient Hebrew culture
The engraving by Blake that accompanied Flaxman's article on sculpture in Abraham Rees, *The Cyclopaedia; or, Universal Dictionary of Arts, Sciences and Literature* (1820).

**SCULPTURE.**

*PLATE III*

*Venus de Medici.*

*Apollo Belvedere.*

*Laocoön.*

*Published on the Art Annuals (Dated) by Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme & Brown, Paternoster Row.*
the art of sculpture was not only allowed, but encouraged and employed in the service of religion, in the representation of divine attributes or the symbols of divine Providence, adding that of such work Solomon's Temple stood at the top—the most magnificent production of Hebrew art. These figures of the Rhodian copyists thus shadow forth in allegoric fable what was originally a work of divine vision, however muddled in transmission. "Let it here be noted," Blake tells us in his *Vision of the Last Judgment*, "that the Greek Fables originated in Spiritual Mystery & Real Vision," although in their stories "Reality was Forgotten & the Vanities of Time & Space only Remembered & called Reality Such is the Mighty difference between Allegoric Fable & Spiritual Mystery." (E545)

The allegorized version of that eternal truth, preserved for mankind in the Laocoon statue, tells the climax of a time-and-space story familiar from many Classical sources, but notably from Virgil's *Aenid*, Book II. The townspeople of Troy are there seen to be wavering over the question of whether to bring into their city the massive wooden horse, a Greek gift consecrated to Athene and left at the Trojan gates when the Greeks pretended to return to their homeland. Laocoon, a Trojan priest, rushes forward to warn his people against the great figure:

Do you think they have gone, the foe? Do you think that any Gifts of the Greeks lack treachery? Ulysses,—
What was his reputation? Let me tell you, Either the Greeks are hiding in this monster, Or it's some trick of war, a spy, or engine, To come down on the city. Tricky business Is hiding in it. Do not trust it, Trojans, Do not believe this horse. Whatever it may be, I fear the Greeks, even when bringing presents.  

With that Laocoon hurls his spear at the horse, piercing its wooden side and almost revealing its secret. He seems on the point of convincing his people when suddenly a Greek soldier, a pretended turncoat, allows himself to be discovered and slyly convinces the people that it is to their interest to bring the statue into their city and give it protection.

One final terrible event—the climax depicted by the Laocoön statue—decides the issue. Aeneas is telling the story:

Then something else, Much greater and more terrible, was forced Upon us, troubling our unseen spirits. Laocoön, allotted priest of Neptune, Was slaying a great bull beside the altars, When suddenly, over the tranquil deep From Tenedos,—I shudder even now, Recalling it—there came a pair of serpents With monstrous coils, breasting the sea, and aiming Together for the shore. Their heads and shoulders Rose over the waves, upright, with bloody crests, The rest of them trailing along the water, Looping in giant spirals; the foaming sea Hissed under their motion. And they reached the land, Their burning eyes suffused with blood and fire, Their darting tongues licking the hissing mouths. Pale at the sight, we fled. But they went on Straight toward Laocoön, and first each serpent Seized in its coil his two young sons, and fastened The fangs in those poor bodies. And the priest Struggled to help them, weapons in his hand. They seized him, bound him with their mighty coils, Twice round his waist, twice round his neck, they squeezed With scaly pressure, and still towered above him. Straining his hands to tear the knots apart, His chaplets stained with blood and the black poison, He uttered horrible cries, not even human. More like the bellowing of a bull, when, wounded It flies the altar, shaking from the shoulder The ill-aimed axe. And on the pair went gliding To the highest shrine, the citadel of Pallas, And vanished underneath the feet of the goddess And the circle of her shield.

I quote at length both because of the power of the story itself, and to allow the reader familiar with Blake to get a fuller sense of what a very Blakean vision it is. 

The story tells, among other things, of a degrading abuse of the art of sculpture, although because the abuse is in the service of war and dominion it is seemingly not even perceived by Virgil—sympathetic though he was to the Trojan cause—as an abuse of art. Laocoön, in his role as priest, saw the great horse with prophetic or imaginative insight as "some trick of war" and attacked it outright; but then Pallas Athene enforced the deception by sending out of the water the two serpents to punish and silence the priest and his two young sons.

The people trembled
Again; they said Laocoön deserved it,
Having, with spear, profaned the sacred image. It must be brought to its place, they cried, the goddess
Must be appeased.

And the sack of Troy ensued. "Art Degraded Imagination Denied War Governed the Nations."

Back in the early 1790’s, in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Blake had described a vision strikingly similar to this, though altered in its ending. As he and his friend the angel hung over the abyss, "fiery as the smoke of a burning city" (like Troy then, Paris now), they saw a cataract of blood mixed with fire and not many stones throw from us appeared and sunk again the scaly fold of a monstrous serpent[,] at last to the east, distant about three degrees appear a fiery crest above the waves[,] slowly it reared like a ridge of golden rocks till we discovered two globes of crimson fire, from which the sea fled away in clouds of smoke, and now we saw, it was
The angel, of course, retreats at once, and in doing so reveals the monstrous serpent to have been the product of his own "metaphysics," a mere "reptile of the mind." "Mere," however, is a potentially misleading word, for such reptiles are the ultimate powers of destruction. To Blake's perception, I think, the Laocoon of Virgil's story was destroyed by just such a reptile. A prophet of the religion of war and dominion, Laocoon himself was too much a party to the abuse he warned against, and so was destroyed by the spiritual existence that expressed its fury. Despite that, he was a struggling prophet, who did after all see the degradation; his imagination, undeniably, might have saved his "unseeing" people, as Aeneas called them. Ultimately it was Athene who triumphed; and in her we see the very concept of wisdom perverted—by abstraction—from a "mental deity" who resides in the human breast into a "god" who "orders such things" (to borrow language from The Marriage, plate 11). I don't think Blake anywhere suggests such a connection, but Athene's role in this story, and her larger significance in Greek myth as the embodiment of wisdom, align her in some respects at least with Blake's Uriezen figure: the presiding deity at an occasion of deception, contention, and death of the imagination. As the woman beneath whose feet Leviathan vanishes, she is surely also a variant of that "System of Moral Virtue, named Rahab" (J35/39, E179).

In The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, Blake might be thought of as a kind of modern Laocoon whose angelic contemporaries were busy appeasing goddesses, embracing deceptive images, and hypocritically trembling for Blake himself, in view of the eternal lot they figured he deserved. But Blake knew what his angels did not, that "All that we saw was owing to your metaphysics"; that is why he could remain on that pleasant bank hearing a harper by moonlight. Unlike his ancient forebear, the unhappy Laocoon of the Rhodian statue, Blake always refused to serve the religion of War and Empire. "Let us teach Buonaparte & whomsoever else it may concern," he cries in his Public Address, "That it is not Arts that follow & attend upon Empire but Empire that attends upon & follows The Arts" (E566). Indeed "The Foundation of Empire is Art & Science Remove them or Degrade them & the Empire Is No More—Empire follows Art & Not Vice Versa as Englishmen suppose" (Anno Reynolds, E625-26). He wished to prove by his own life and work that political prophet, religious visionary, and true artist are necessarily one and the same—but never in the service of some Pantheon of abstractions.

That Blake knew Jacob Bryant's Mythology, he tells us himself and gives ample evidence in his work, perhaps even in the early "All Religions are One," certainly in the Descriptive Catalogue, where he appears by name: "The antiquities of every Nation under Heaven, is no less sacred than that of the Jews. They are the same thing as Jacob Bryant, and all antiquaries have proved" (E534).

In his Mythology Jacob Bryant had argued that all religions had indeed originally been one—"I have mentioned that the nations of the east acknowledged originally but one deity, the Sun" (I, 306)—a notion that Blake may well have found compatible with his belief in the Poetic Genius, mythologized as Los in his own work, and similarly as Apollo the god of sun and poetry in the classics. Bryant explains how a nation so warlike as Greece could have achieved such vision. Just as "The Greeks adopted all foreign history; and supposed it to have been of their own country" (I, 175) so also their religion had its source elsewhere:

The mythology of Greece is a vast assemblage of obscure traditions, which have been transmitted from the earliest times. They were described in hieroglyphics, and have been veiled in allegory: and the same history is often renewed under a different system, and arrangement. A great part of this intelligence has been derived to us from the Poets; by which means it has been rendered still more extravagant, and strange. . . . We must however make this distinction, that in the allegorical representations of Greece there was always a covert meaning, though it may have escaped our discernment. (I, xvii)

This meaning, in Blakean terms, would be the residue of earlier visionary truth. In his Descriptive Catalogue he expands Bryant's point, applying it to Greek works of art:

No man can believe that either Homer's Mythology, or Ovid's, were the production of Greece, or of Latium; neither will anyone believe, that the Greek statues, as they are called, were the invention of Greek Artists; perhaps the Torso is the only original work remaining; all the rest are evidently copies, though fine ones, from greater works of the Asiatic patriarchs (E522)

Bryant further contends that the progress from monotheistic sun-worship to polytheism resulted in the main from those confused borrowers who mistook the various attributes of the initial sun-god for separate subsidiary gods, thereby literally defying mere abstractions. 3

This work must have confirmed Blake in many of his views, not only of the history of religion in general, but of the place of Greek mythology in that history. But another work by Bryant that I think was surely of special interest to Blake in connection with his thought about the Laocoon was the later publication entitled A dissertation concerning the War of Troy and the Expedition of the Grecians, as described by Homer, shewing that no such expedition ever existed (1796). Bryant's point again is that the key material has been imported. Guessing Homer to have been of a family of Greeks who had long
Blake's engraving of the Laocoon with his own aphorisms surrounding the pictured statue.
resided in Egypt, he supposes that Homer took the outlines of Egyptian story and borrowed for the protagonists the names of local, provincial Greek deities. "Homer had certainly some ancient, and foreign history before him, which he modelled to his own mind" (Dissertation, 53).

Bryant's most interesting piece of evidence for his theory that no real Trojan War ever occurred is one for which he cites numerous older authorities, and to which Blake would surely have been attracted, namely that "the whole poem was an allegory." This was the opinion, he says, of Anaxagoras the Preceptor of Socrates (Dissertation, 86); other later scholars grew more specific, he claims, and argued "that the poems of Homer were an allegorical description of Virtue and Justice." Some even suggested "that the Deities introduced by the Poet were merely Physical qualities" and represented "the works of Nature"—Agamemnon might, for example, have stood for "air" (Dissertation, 87). Bryant refuses to take up problems of detailed interpretation, only reiterating that there was indeed no real historical war of Troy, though there were important points of consensus concerning it. "The cause of war according to all poets, was the Judgement of Paris, and his decision in favour of Venus." Moreover, the earliest commentators—whom we might well trust on the grounds of their proximity—did agree in reading "the whole as fable. They maintained that it was a mere allegory, and signified a contention between virtue and vice" (Dissertation, 88-89).

An allegory of the contention between virtue and vice: if early interpreters saw this meaning in the story of the entire Trojan War, so Blake apparently saw, in that suspended moment captured for the ages by the Laocoon statue, the eternal significance of that contention. It is a prophetic vision of fallen creation in the toils of the true Leviathan, a "spiritual existence" like that from The Marriage, self-divided into the eternally desolating false contraries of "good" and evil," as Blake labels the serpents that crush the agonized "Jehovah & his two Sons Satan & Adam." To Blake this moment is the true paradigm of the entire classical culture because that culture is rooted in contention, with all its corollaries and consequences: the Judgement of Paris arose from a contention among goddesses and resulted in a contention among men. The Trojan War, according to sources available to Blake through Bryant if not elsewhere, had itself long been considered an allegorical representation of the contention between virtue and vice, which is in turn the very epitome of the fallen human condition—as seen also in Hebrew myth, where Eve incites the fall by eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. "The Classics, it is the Classics! & not Goths nor Monks, that Desolate Europe with Wars," Blake says in his plate "On Homer's Poetry" (E267), for increasingly he saw all of classical culture as a terrible, perverse celebration of the fallen world of nature. Its virtues (chiefly the heroism of physical prowess) were the virtues of cruelty and power, and so ultimately of political empire and the repression and taxation that support

it; its gods were allegorized abstractions (mathematical diagrams), ultimately reducible to the science worshipped by the skeptics and Deists; its religion was mere morality—the contentions of virtue and vice, ultimately the condition of the Antichrist. This complex of thought Blake calls in Jerusalem "the Covenant of Priam, the Moral Virtues of the Heathen," that condition which is eternally opposed to "the Forgiveness of Sins according to the Covenant of Jehovah" (Plate 98, E258-56), and whose ascendancy signals the approach of apocalypse:

The Last Judgment when all those are Cast away who trouble Religion with Questions concerning Good & Evil or Eating of the Tree of those Knowledges or Reasonings which hinder the Vision of God turning all into a Consuming fire when Imaginative Art & Science & all Intellectual Gifts all the Gifts of the Holy Ghost are despised lookd upon as of no use & only Contention remains to Man then the Last Judgment begins & its Vision is seen by the Imaginative Eye of Every one according to the situation he holds (VLJ, E544)

The classical and the Hebrew-Christian are thus deeply opposed ways of thinking and seeing for Blake. In matters of intellect it is the opposition between experimental science and inspired art; in artistic method, the opposition between Allegory (the Daughters of Memory) and Vision (the Daughters of Inspiration).

The Whole Bible is filld with Imagination & Visions from End to End & not with Moral Virtues that is the business of Plato & the Greeks & all Warriors. The Moral Virtues are continual Accusers of Sin & promote Eternal Wars & Dominency over others (Anno Berkeley, E653)

The Preface to Milton had already enunciated the matter pretty clearly in 1804, suggesting at the same time some of the extent of Blake's debt to Bryant:

The Stolen and Perverted Writings of Homer & Ovid: of Plato & Cicero. which all Men ought to contemn: are set up by artifice against the Sublime of the Bible. but when the New Age is at leisure to Pronounce: all will be set right: & those Grand Works of the more ancient & consciously & professedly Inspired Men, will hold their proper rank, & the Daughters of Memory shall become the Daughters of Inspiration. Shakspeare & Milton were both curbd by the general malady & infection from the silly Greek & Latin slaves of the Sword.

And the issue is still central to his small commentary "On Virgil," conjecturally dated 1820 by Erdman (E734):

Sacred Truth has pronounced that Greece & Rome as Babylon & Egypt: so far from being parents of Arts & Sciences as they pretend: were destroyers of all Art. Homer

4 Blake's pencil drawing of "The Spiritual Form of Nelson Guiding Leviathan." British Museum.
Virgil & Ovid confirm this opinion & make up the reverence The Word of God, the only light of antiquity that remains unperverted by War. Virgil in the Eneid Book VI. line 848 says let others study Art: Rome has somewhat better to do, namely War & Domination. Rome & Greece swept Art into their maw & destroyed it. A Warlike State never can produce Art. It will Rob & Plunder & accumulate into one place, a Translate & Copy & Buy & Sell & Criticise, but not Make. Grecian is Mathematic Form Gothic is Living Form Mathematic Form is Eternal in the Reasoning Memory. Living Form is Eternal Existence. (E267)

But there was, in Blake's experience, another "light of antiquity" remaining "unperverted by War," namely the access of each artist, by his own vision, to eternal truth and to the original art that displayed it. The three Rhodians were perhaps literal copyists at work in the historical Solomon's Temple; but they may just as well have been "original" artists copying visions "with their imaginative and immortal organs" (DC, E532). In Blake's view these may be little more than two ways of talking about the same experience, for his position in the matter seems like a sort of visionary re-understanding of Pope's famous dictum that to copy Homer was to copy Nature. For Blake there is a sense in which to copy Homer—or indeed any other great artist working in any medium—was to learn "the language of art" (Anno Reynolds, E626). As he remarks with some flippancy, "The difference between a bad Artist & a Good One is the Bad Artist Seems to Copy a Great Deal: The Good one Really Does Copy a Great Deal" (Anno Reynolds, E634).

Blake himself had access to a wide choice of educational material, for, as he tells us in his Descriptive Catalogue, he has been taken in vision into the ancient republics, monarchies, and patriarchates of Asia, has seen those wonderful originals called in the Sacred Scriptures the Cherubim, which were sculptured and painted on walls of Temples, Towers, Cities, Palaces, and erected in the highly cultivated states of Egypt, Moab, Edom, Aram, among the Rivers of Paradise, being originals from which the Greeks and Hetrurians copied Hercules Farnese, Venus of Medicis, Apollo Belvidere, and all the grand works of ancient art. (E521-22)

Thus he has available to his imagination both the Apollo Belvidere itself (for example) and those grand originals from which it was copied. How must he see his own art in relation to all that material? He had been advised, he recounts in the Descriptive Catalogue, to "take the Apollo for the model" of one of his pictures; at such a moment of advice, he says, the Artist "comes to his trial":

He knows that what he does is not inferior to the grandest Antiques. Superior they cannot be, for human power cannot go beyond either what he does, or what they have done, it is the gift of God, it is inspiration and vision (E534-35).

Shall he then "copy" ancient art, and yet maintain his own vision? Having posed the question, Blake reshapes it by changing the verb "copy" to "emulate," suggesting that the copyist's need to learn the language of art is not at rivalry with the original artist's new line drawn out from his own inspired vision, but rather inseparable from it. For the inspired artist, to create is to emulate the prophetic insight of his forebears, finding his vision at least partly through his perception of theirs. Of course the forms he studies must necessarily live in the forms he creates, which is why—as Blake always insisted—one must choose one's models in art so carefully, and avoid (say) the seductive softness of a Correggio. The artist's "trial," then, is not whether to copy, but whom to emulate, and how.

Blake's account of his own trial concludes:

He had resolved to emulate those precious remains of antiquity, he has done so and the result you behold; his ideas of strength and beauty have not been greatly different. Poetry as it exists now on earth, in the various remains of ancient authors. Music as it exists in old tunes or melodies, Painting and Sculpture as it exists in the remains of Antiquity and in the works of more modern genius, is Inspiration, and cannot be surpassed; it is perfect and eternal. Milton, Shakspeare, Michael Angelo, Rafael, the finest specimens of Ancient Sculpture and Painting, and Architecture, Gothic, Grecian, Hindoo and Egyptian, are the extent of the human mind. The human mind cannot go beyond the gift of God, the Holy Ghost. To suppose that Art can go beyond the finest specimens of Art that are now in the world, is not knowing what Art is; it is being blind to the gifts of the spirit. (E535)

Grecian and Egyptian architecture are included among the gifts of the spirit because they are the crystallizations of those forms that it is the duty of prophecy to expose that they may be cast out. Similarly the Laocoon, though the Rhodian sculptors doubtless intended only historical allegory, in truth embodies a vision of creation in the toils of error, the Covenant of Priam in the agony of self-fulfillment: the world as it will be annihilated at Apocalypse.

And this is the sense, too, in which we are to understand such Blakean visions as the spiritual forms of Pitt and Nelson, and the related Bard from Gray, all exhibited together and explained in Blake's Descriptive Catalogue in 1809. The Catalogue opens with the pair of Nelson and Pitt, considering them as companion pieces and connecting them directly to ancient art both as preserved physical objects seen by the natural eye and as visionary forms seen by the eye of prophecy:

The two pictures of Nelson and Pitt are compositions of a mythological cast, similar to those Apotheoses of Persian, Hindoo, and Egyptian Antiquity, which are still preserved on rude monuments, being copies from some stupendous originals now
Just as "those wonderful originals seen in my visions" all contained "mythological and recondite meaning, where more is meant than meets the eye" (E522), so too in these pictures—obviously historical and allegorical—we are invited to penetrate beyond the moment to its visionary truth. Blake's full titles give us pretty elaborate directives: the spiritual allegorical—we are invited to penetrate beyond the too in these pictures—obviously historical and historical and recondite meaning.

But just as the Blake of The Marriage had been left on the banks of a river listening to a harper by moonlight, so while we stand at Blake's exhibition and watch the forms of Leviathan and Behemoth we may see another Harper, Gray's Bard "weaving the winding sheet of tyranny" by means of sounds of spiritual music and its accompanying expressions of articulate speech"—a "bold, and daring, and most masterly conception that the public have embraced and approved with avidity" (DC, E532). Refusing entrapment in the system he seeks to expose, Blake like his Bard can weave the winding sheet of tyranny. He can delineate the Pitts and Nelsons of fallen history as they are surrounded by the beasts of their own metaphysics while as artist he sees through and beyong them: "Bacon calls Intellectual Arts Unmanly. Poetry Painting Music are in his opinion Useless," he noted drily, "& so they are for Kings & Wars & shall in the End Annihilate them" (E619). Pitt and Nelson, like the priest Laocoon, are creatures of time and space, of allegoric fable.

Like the three-dimensional statue at the center of the Laocoon plate they appear solid and permanent, but are not: "for tho on Earth things seem Permanent they are less permanent than a Shadow as we all know too well" (VLJ, E544). But the artist—that is any true Christian in Blake's sense, anyone who perceives and accepts the Covenant of Jehovah, the forgiveness of sins—knows that in Eternity art is not degraded, nor imagination denied; and that the wars of Eternity are the Wars of Truth. That, I think, is the complex of idea presented to our view by Blake's Laocoon plate with its parodic outlines of intellect, those encircling words that help us to distinguish one idea from another, and out of seeming chaos to find "life itself."

Accordingly the spiritual form of Pitt, who "guides" Behemoth, is titled "that Angel who, pleased to perform the Almighty's orders, rides on the whirlwind, directing the storms of war: He is ordering the Reaper to reap the Vine of the Earth, and the Plowman to plow up the Cities and Towers" (E521). Pitt and Nelson, those "modern Heroes" whom Blake with rather sardonic modesty offers us "on a smaller scale" are modern emblems of the Covenant of Priam, of "War & its horrors & its Heroic Villains" (Anno Bacon, E612). Blake has indeed emulated the artists of the Laocoon—envisioning historical allegory through which the visionary eye will see eternal truth—and these companion pictures of Pitt and Nelson are the result. "The Greek & Roman Classics is the Antichrist," wrote Blake in the year of his own death (Anno Thornton, E656); Nelson and Pitt, plowing and reaping in preparation for Apocalypse, are cognate visionary forms.

1 All Blake quotations are from The Poetry and Prose of William Blake, 4th ed. rev., ed. David V. Erdman (N.Y.: Double- day, 1970). The abbreviations used in the text are the usual ones.

2 Verse translation by Rolfe Humphries.

3 Blake had Dryden's Virgil in his library: in his Note­book dated August 1807 he records opening to a page at random as a kind of fortune-telling experiment (E674). It is not, however, Dryden's translation that he uses when he quotes Virgil, as he does in "On Virgil" and again on the Laocoon plate. The wording in these instances is really paraphrase, and sounds like Blake himself to me, though I have not had time in preparing this paper to go into the question fully. Perhaps someone at the seminar will have fuller information?

4 A New System; or, An Analyseis of Ancient Mythology. 3 vols., 1774-76.

5 Bryant is fascinated by the way in which place names shadow forth earlier religious practice, as he postulates in the section entitled "Of Ancient Worship, and of Etymological Truths thence deducible, Exemplified in the Names of Cities, Lakes, and Rivers" (I, 189). I wonder if this section is a possible source for some of the ideas in The Marriage, especially plates 11-13?
Los's Messenger to Eden: Blake's Wild Thyme

Elaine Kauvar

In Milton the poet's consciousness and the inward struggles it involves command our attention. Book II of the poem focuses on the poet's and Oolon's decision to undergo the purgation of their self-hoods, demonstrates that their actions result in the recovery of Innocence, and ends with presages of the Apocalypse. Oolon's descent to Beulah incorporates Blake's fullest description of Beulah, a description which exhibits the opulent natural growth of Organized Innocence. In the catalogue of the individual flowers in Beulah, the Wild Thyme is prominent, and it remains prominent throughout the remainder of the poem.

The Wild Thyme is mentioned three times in Book II of Milton, and twice Blake designates it as "first." Its initial appearance is in the flower passage; the second time Blake writes about it is in conjunction with the renovating moments of each day where it becomes "Los's Messenger to Eden," and it reappears at the end of the poem after Blake falls in his own garden only to witness the imminent signs of the Apocalypse. The occurrence of the flower three times in Book II compels us to recognize the importance Blake attaches to it in Milton; in fact, discovery of its symbolic meaning reveals why Blake stresses its role in the poem. The significations of the Wild Thyme accrue with each new presence of it, first as the foremost flower in Beulah, then as the messenger of Los, and finally as Blake's vision of it helps us to see that it signals the approaching Apocalypse—not attained but at least forecast in Milton. It becomes associated with Oolon when she descends to Beulah, with Los when it becomes his Messenger to Eden, and with Blake when he sees it mounting with the Lark before the "Great Harvest & Vintage of the Nations." Knowledge of the sources Blake might have drawn upon demonstrates why the Wild Thyme is an apt emblem in a poem so concerned with the necessary negation of selfhood, and in Oolon's case, with the institutional virginity that stands in the way of her union with Milton.

We should not be surprised that Blake attaches such a heavy freight of meaning to a flower in Milton, for it is now widely acknowledged that he assigned great importance to his flowers. Critics have explored the symbolism of his roses and his lilies; and most recently, in an edition of Blake's illuminated works, David V. Erdman calls attention to the purposeful occurrence of flowers, vines, tendrils, and all manner of flora which appear everywhere in the texts and the designs. However, while commentators have recognized and discussed the presence of Blake's Wild Thyme, no one has yet attempted to discover its possible sources. Blake's use of his background to enrich the symbolism of the Wild Thyme not only provides a means to understand the poet's method elsewhere, it illuminates Book II of Milton. The various traits attributed to this flowering herb emphasize that its strategic appearance three times in Milton is symbolic in itself, and suggest that Blake may have explored several sources in order to endow this plant with various significances in the poem.

Blake could have found information about the Wild Thyme in two places, so his awareness of it seems undeniable. In his famous rejection of Swedenborg in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, Blake cites Paracelsus or Jacob Behmen as superior. And his familiarity with the writings of Erasmus Darwin would have led him to Robert John Thornton's full plate illustrations of the plant species and to his Herbal where he describes the properties and the lore of herbs. Paracelsus calls the Wild Thyme the "Mother of Thyme" and lists it under "Those things which come forth from the earth and have a warm nature." Thornton places it under the name Hypericum Perforatum, or Perforated St. John's Wort, in his collection of plates, and it is included as Mother of Thyme in his Herbal. The variety of names ascribed to this plant indicates that it was well-known and that it was thought to possess more than one characteristic.

Paracelsus calls the herb "Mother of Thyme" because he claimed it as a uterine herb—"Mother" in the sense of the womb. But its other name, St. John's Wort or Hypericum Perforatum, makes it one of John the Baptist's herbs. Associated with St. John, the plant assumes magical qualities, for the herb was burned on St. John's Eve as a strengthening and purifying plant. Blake's designation of this herb as "a mighty Demon" suggests that he may have known of the English legends and ballads that mention it. In these the herb possesses the ability to rid a woman of her demon lover and to keep her house free of evil spirits. Some have called it "Christ's Ladder," a name which reflects its manner of growing along the ground and climbing towards heaven on mountains.
Blake first mentions the Wild Thyme after Ololon's descent to Beulah:

Thou perceivest the flowers put forth their precious Odours! And none can tell how from so small a center comes such sweets
Forgetting that within that Center Eternity expands
Its ever during doors, that Og & Anak fiercely guard[.]
First ear the morning breaks joy opens in the flowery bosoms
Joy even to tears, which the Sun rising dries;
first the Wild Thyme
And Meadow-sweet downy & soft waving among the reeds.
Light springing on the air lead the sweet Dance

(E 130, 11. 46-53)

The passage extols the beauty and the sensuousness of Beulah, and it names the Wild Thyme as the leader makes the connection between the opening flowers of "the sweet Dance." The passage also suggests the relationship between time and eternity as Blake makes the connection between the opening flowers and eternity: the opening flowers' response to the sun or the light of heaven implies their link to eternity. The passage also places the Wild Thyme within an erotic context, for "joy opens in the flowery bosoms." The lines emphasize the fusion of flowers, sexuality, and joy. Northrop Frye and Harold Bloom's observation that the passage is a Song of Spring that resembles the Song of Solomon intensifies the already explicit connection Blake makes between flowers and sensuality.

The passage is a striking description of the fecundity of Beulah—a place surrounding Eden and offering repose from it. The soft and moony Beulah is maternal in nature. That the Wild Thyme leads the other flowers lends vigor and concrete power to its role in Beulah as well as in the poem. But the Wild Thyme's other name, Mother of Thyme, and the belief that it was a uterine herb serve to vitalize and reinforce its importance in Beulah, a maternal and married land. More significantly, Blake's later naming of it as Los's Messenger marks its appearance here as well as there with a sign that the efforts of creativity will be called into being.

Therefore, the connection made between Ololon and the Wild Thyme in Beulah is a crucial one, for Ololon descends to Beulah, and it is there that she sees the Wild Thyme, and it is from there that she opens up a "wide road" to eternity (E 134, 1.38). The virgin Ololon must cast off the Not Human—her holy chastity—in order to complete the purgation of her selfishness that will enable her to unite with Milton. To accomplish this, she must reject Natural Religion and the Female Will, therebyidding herself of "dark secret love" and embracing instead open human love. Later in the poem, she confesses to Milton in horror that her selfish chastity and holiness have separated her from him. When she does this, Rahab Babylon is exposed and Ololon descends to Felpham as "a Moony Ark" who heralds the appearance of the redemptive Christ.

It is in the context of Ololon's selfish chastity that the Wild Thyme must be considered, for Blake proclaims that the fourfold city of Golgonooza cannot be seen without passing the Polypus, "Or till you become Mortal & Vegetable in Sexuality" (E 134, 1.24). Like Oothoon, Ololon must rejoice in "lovely Copulation." Because the Wild Thyme is called Mother of Thyme, is known as a procreative uterine herb with "a warm nature," and is believed to be a purifying and strengthening herb, it is a singularly appropriate flower for Ololon to encounter in Beulah. Its presence in Beulah, where Ololon first descends, proclaims its status as an emblem of the human sexuality Ololon must learn to accept. Its association with strengthening and purifying rites symbolizes what Ololon undertakes as she descends to the world of generation to cast off the Not Human. The union of flowers, sexuality, and eternity is symbolized here by the Wild Thyme and is suggested as the means of attaining paradise.

This suggestion becomes an actuality when the Wild Thyme next appears in the passage associating it with the renovating moments of each day and hailing it as Los's Messenger. Blake's later naming of it as Los's Messenger makes the Wild Thyme "Los's Messenger to Eden" (E 135, 1.54). In that role it is a mighty Demon Terrible deadly & poisonous his presence in Ulro dark Therefore he appears only a small Root creeping in grass Covering over the Rock of Odours his bright purple mantle Beside the Fount above the Larks nest in Golgonooza Luvah slept here in death & here is Luvahs empty tomb Ololon sat beside this Fountain on the Rock of Odours.

(E 135, 11.54-60)

Because the Wild Thyme is Los's Messenger to Eden and because it is also the first of the morning odors which arise in the renovating moments of each day, it joins the renovating moments to the poet's creation. In Ulro, however, the thyme, "only a small Root creeping in grass," appears deadly and poisonous. Blake implies that only those who dwell in Ulro, the land of limited
vision, see the thyme as a poisonous, destructive demon; for Luvah's empty tomb, filled with the fragrance of the thyme, presages eternity in Christ's ascension.

The connection the Wild Thyme has with the empty tomb and Christ affirms it as an emblem of eternity. That association along with those from the purifying and strengthening rites of St. John's Eve enhance its value as a symbol of poetic inspiration. By grouping the thyme, Beulah, and Ololon together and then by using the plant in conjunction with Los, poetic inspiration, and eternity, Blake emphasizes the inescapable fusion of healthy sexual desire, poetic inspiration, and the fourfold vision offered by Eden.

The final occurrence of the Wild Thyme gathers these meanings together. After Ololon's descent as a Moony Ark to Felpham's Vale and the sound of the four trumpets, Blake shifts the subject of the poem to himself. He falls "outstretched upon the path" in his garden where his soul returns to its mortal state, "To Resurrection & Judgment in the Vegetable Body," and where "Immediately the Lark mounted with a loud trill from Felpham's Vale / And the Wild Thyme from Wimbletons green & impurpled Hills" appears (E 142, 11.27, 29-30). After that appear the human harvest, the open winepresses and barns; and then the Apocalypse is imminent.

As Los's Messenger to Eden, the Wild Thyme heralds the Apocalypse. The reference to Wimbleton's "impurpled Hills" undoubtedly is another sign of its approach, for the Wild Thyme, a plant with purple blossoms that grows close to the ground and on mountains, is called "Christ's Ladder." The name adds naturalistic force to the plant's symbolic meanings. The reference to it as impurlping Wimbleton's hills, together with the specific alliance with Christ's ascension, and the designation as Los's Messenger to Eden make it a symbolic Christ's ladder, which joins heaven and earth, or Beulah and Eden.

Blake's choice of Wild Thyme as a symbol in Milton is surely not accidental, for in the poem Milton struggles to purge everything within himself that is not fully human. Book II declares that love which exists apart from the imagination—what Blake maintains is human existence itself—is a state, and states change and cease, unlike individual identities. Blake must have selected the Wild Thyme for its natural trait of growing along the ground in addition to its potential for symbolism; for as a creeping vine, it is firmly rooted in the earth—the human—which it must also cover. Unlike Blake's sunflower, it does not merely aspire to heaven. Instead, it impurples the hills of Wimbleton, exhibiting its closeness to earth as well as its ability to climb towards heaven. Blake's use of it as Los's Messenger to Eden symbolizes Milton's decision to cast away whatever is not human and to become entirely a man. At the end of Milton, Blake consolidates all of the Wild Thyme's associations when he identifies the plant with sexuality and poetic inspiration, adding yet another dimension to them—eternity. This yields an emblem which by relating human being, imagination, and eternity embodies the entire struggle in Book II of Milton. The Wild Thyme, an emblem of sex, creation, and eternity, underscores Blake's insistence that human sexuality must triumph over the hypocrisy of holy chastity for man to reside in paradise.


2 The Illuminated Blake, annotated by David V. Erdman (New York: Doubleday, 1974).


6 For this interpretation of Beulah, I am indebted to Bloom and Frye.
A Possible Source for a Blake Sketch and Drawing

Philip B. Grant

In "Some Blake Puzzles--Old and New" (Blake Studies, 3 [Spring 1971], pp. 107-28), Michael J. Tolley told how his efforts resulted in the finding of some hidden Blake sketches in the British Museum. Among them was a pencil sketch of a nude figure with a dog-like head catalogued in the British Museum as 1874-12-12-119 verso. (See illus. 2, which is a reworking of the sketch for a cover of Blake Studies.) In the article Tolley terms the sketch "singularly unpurposive" and states that "this figure may be confidently identified as Anubis, in view of its probable relation to the Fuseli design engraved by

Blake for Darwin's Botanic Garden (pp. 107-08). (See illus. 4.) Tolley then goes on to attempt to fix the date of the sketch based on his identification of the figure as Anubis.

In a follow-up article in the same issue of Blake Studies, "Addenda and Some Solutions to Tolley's Blake Puzzles" (pp. 129-35), John E. Grant called attention to a pencil drawing, "Female Figure with the Head of a Horse," in Harvard's Fogg Art Museum (Acc. No. 1967.45 verso, size 4 13/16" x 3 13/16"). (See illus. 1) He tentatively suggested that it
might be related to the "Anubis" sketch that Tolley had caused to be uncovered at the British Museum.

I would like to suggest that the two sketches may indeed be related, not in that they might belong to "the conjectured series of animal-headed figures" to which John Grant refers, but rather that both may have a common source, plate XIII of Jacob Bryant's *A New System, or, an Analysis of Ancient Mythology*, 3 vols. (London, 1774-76).

Plate XIII (illus. 3) depicts four figures: Juno, Hermes, Hippa Triceps, and Hippa Phigalensium. What I would like to suggest is that the Hermes of this plate may be the source for the sketch of the dog-headed figure whom Tolley has identified as Anubis. Comparing both Blake's engraving for the *Botanic Garden* and the engraving of Hermes for *Bryant's A New System* with Blake's sketch of the figure with a dog's head, we see that perhaps the most important consideration is the fact that the engraving of Anubis for Darwin's *Botanic Garden* shows only the back of the head, while the engraving of Hermes for *A New System* is a facial profile just as in the British Museum sketch. (Granted, in the Hermes engraving the head is a right profile and in the British Museum sketch it is a left one; nevertheless, the dog-like tapered snout and overall shape of the head in both profiles are remarkably similar.)

Directly beneath the Hermes on plate XIII is a female with a horse's head, Hippa Phigalensium, the Horse of Poseidon, whom Bryant identifies as having sprung from Neptune after a dispute with Minerva. This engraved figure, Hippa Phigalensium, may have been the source for Blake's pencil drawing now in the Fogg Art Museum, "Female Figure with a Horse's Head" (illus. 1).

As with all of his sources, both verbal and pictorial, Blake transformed his material. If Blake's pencil sketch of the nude man with a dog's head is meant to be Hermes, then Blake's sketch becomes a singularly wry version of a fertility god whose symbol was often a phallus. In Blake's sketch of Hermes, the lines of the body and the figure's posture convey lassitude and perhaps even immobility; the figure appears exhausted with its dangling arm and resting feet. Its potential as a fertilizer of the land has been spent long ago. If this figure is Hermes (as appears likely), it is a fertility god metamorphosed by Blake's graphic irony.
Blake may have intended a similar critique of Hippa Phigalensium in his pencil drawing, "Female Figure with a Horse's Head." In the engraving for *A New System*, Hippa holds a dove, a symbol of peace, and a dolphin, a symbol of hope; yet Blake would have associated peace and hope with the Elect, not the truly regenerated. In Blake's pencil drawing, the horse has been sensualized by the use of line in general and the emphasis on the breast and buttocks. The figure's expression seems to be one of agitated fear; certainly it is in some kind of excited state. Blake's presentation of Hippa in his pencil drawing is a far cry from the stoical-looking figure portrayed in plate XIII of *A New System*, whose solidity is emphasized by the stone portal which forms its background in the engraving. In drawing Hippa as he did in "Female Figure with a Horse's Head," Blake executes an ironic deflation similar to the one he subjected Hermes to in his pencil sketch of him now in the British Museum (illus. 2). In both this sketch and in the drawing of Hippa, Blake has created wry yet pointed criticism aimed at these pagan deities, and, by implication, at the classical culture from which they sprang.

It is possible that Blake could have engraved part of plate XIII, since he was apprenticed to James Basire, the engraver whose signature appears on the plate. There were 31 plates in the three volumes of the first edition of Jacob Bryant's *A New System*; all but three have the signature of Basire. Bentley and Nurmi in *A Blake Bibliography* (Minneapolis, 1964) state that 'with such a number of plates [in *A New System*] by Basire, it is virtually certain that Blake engraved at least part of a few' (p. 103). Blake certainly could have seen plate XIII. (He was apprenticed to Basire from 1770 to 1783.) If Blake did engrave part of this plate (and this is only a conjecture), in the sketch of Hermes and the drawing of Hippa we may have embryonic examples of Blake's protest against the staid, traditional art of his time.

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1 Roger R. Easson and Robert N. Essick in *William Blake Book Illustrator*, Vol. I (Normal, Ill.: American Blake Foundation, 1972) include in their volume "only those prints signed by Blake as designer and engraver or ascribed to him in the book in which his work appears" (p. x). Because of their cautious approach in attributing work to Blake, they exclude plates from Bryant's *A New System* from the first volume of their projected three-volume set. They do mention that the "Vignette of the Deluge" at the end of Vol. III of *A New System* has been attributed to Blake, but they remain unconvinced of the attribution because of the lack of solid evidence.

**Reviewed by Purvis E. Boyette**

Wittreich has written a wonderfully old-fashioned book, although students who have gone to school with Bloom and Bush may think they are reading a book more revolutionary than it is. Blake’s idea of Milton, according to Wittreich, is that the great poet was an apocalyptic visionary whose deepest insight was depicted in the spiritual illumination of the Jesus of *Paradise Regained*. This transcendental experience of redemption allowed Milton to burst through the patterns of tradition, art, and constricting personal moralities to achieve the divine vision of revolutionary and transforming prophecy—and thus become, in a figure less metaphorical than one might suppose, an angel of apocalypse. Blake’s original perception of this initiatory and liberating experience revealed Milton’s revolutionary attitudes toward “all” artistic and intellectual traditions, and as an inspired, lifting purity of imagination, Blake’s perception of Milton “freed Blake from tyrannies of art and of history” (p. 231) and made Milton far otherwise than the Great Inhibitor. With that thesis, Wittreich’s book, somewhat unexpectedly, explores Blake’s achievement within the context of tradition, seeking to show not “how a recalcitrant poet withdrew from his cultural heritage but how a revolutionary artist [Blake] learned to use his heritage both creatively and subversively” (p. 69).

The most provocative chapter in the book, to my mind, is on “Milton as a Revolutionary,” following two chapters of exemplary analysis and criticism of “Blake’s Portrait and Portrayals of Milton” and “Blake’s Milton Illustrations.” Blake’s idea of Milton merits our attention, Wittreich says, because the comprehension of an entire age is summarized therein and because Blake embodies “truths about Milton repressed during the eighteenth century and still lost in the orthodoxies of modern criticism” (p. 148). Most generally, the proponents of these orthodoxies appear to be Eliot and Leavis, though closer to home, Wittreich cites the Victorian villainy of one of Robert West’s essays in which Milton is proclaimed “a superbly gifted confirmr of what his audience already believed and user of ways of thinking already established.” Opposed to that is a sentence by Marcuse arguing that an “artist’s invocation of orthodoxies” may well allow a poet to assume subversive attitudes toward them, followed by a telling point that on “virtually every occasion when he speaks of tradition and custom, [Milton] associates both with tyranny and error” (p. 149). Thus, the battle is joined, and what follows is a carefully argued and thoroughly researched discussion of how the “forms of poetry . . . may be used against the very systems that have disfigured them” (p. 155).

Wittreich’s apparent intellectual and emotional identification with Blake’s perception of Milton is a remarkable feat of imaginative criticism, stimulated by the admirable care of a serious scholar. But I, for one, would have preferred to read Plato on the *Paradise* of things instead of Marcuse, who learned his metaphysics from Plato too. There is something trendy, not quite gratuitous, in such citations of our contemporary philosophers, but one finds support where one can, and Wittreich knows too much—much of it displayed—to be chastized for lack of classical reading. Marcuse, however, leads Wittreich into an oddity of thought that ought to be remarked: theology keeps turning into ideology (pp. 85, 190, 213, 241), a metamorphosis slippery at best, misleading at worst, and in any case a suspicious bit of rhetoric, leading Wittreich to say that Spenser, Milton’s celebrated teacher, "was locked into the orthodoxies from which Milton wished to liberate poetry" (p. 157); that the audience to whom the epic was addressed shifted from a social to a spiritual elite; and that Blake/Milton’s preference for the daughters of inspiration over the daughters of memory shifted epic theory from a theory of imitation to a theory of inspiration; and finally, that “in terms of ideology, *Paradise Lost* expresses the poet’s radicalism . . . in its rejection of epic structure” (p. 170). Now, all of this is effectively argued, often persuasive, but the old boys who still like their Plato (especially the *Timeaue*, *Iom*, and *Symposium*), the orphic theories of Chapman and Reynolds, the mystical theology of William Alabaster, and even Dryden have not yet been done to death. That Wittreich/Blake has made an important difference in the way we must think about Milton from now on is, however, certain.

Milton is of the devil’s party because he is "both a political radical and a religious dissenter" (p. 214) and because the *Marriage* embraces the double perspective of the prophetic poem, which means that what the Devil says "may be true from the perspective of history, but . . . not true from the perspective of eternity that the poet enjoys" (p. 215). This artistic strategy engages an ironic play between speakers and shifting perspectives, whereby "the Devil is to Blake what Milton’s Beelzebub is to Satan and what Satan sometimes is to Milton—a spokesman who never exhibits the same largeness of mind as the figure with whom he is identified" (p. 215). Milton, in short, knew what he was doing when he invested his Satan with those qualities of sublimity, majesty, and energy which Blake and Milton could admire in a moral character, like the Jesus of *Paradise Regained* but not the Satan of *Paradise Lost*. If Wittreich/Blake’s reading of Milton is true to Milton’s poems, then Blake is indeed Milton’s first "fit" reader, unlike Dryden and those others who have thought the Devil was Milton’s hero instead of Adam.

Wittreich’s book, as I have tried to indicate, is closely argued, making a lot of sense out of
the foam and rolling weed of Blake’s sea of words, as well as casting light on the pictorial language and meaning of Blake’s illustrations, forty-five of them reproduced in black and white on glossy paper. There is much in the book that I have not mentioned, the final chapter being richly suggestive, as well as casting light on the pictorial language of Blake’s Milton and to relate “that moment of redemption to the renewal of the entire human race” (p. 243), and more, that “prophecy is a sublime allegory, . . . its reference points [being] . . . not history but the inner life of man” (p. 245). In fact, the final chapter is not so much epilogue as prologue to yet another book, that one being a promised full-scale commentary on Milton; and one may look forward to it as work that will be characterized, like Angel of Apotheosis, by rigor, strong points of view, dense documentation, and significance.


Reviewed by Suzanne R. Hoover

Though the Mortal & Perishing part of the present book is inelegant, expensive, and small, the Real Book, a documentary survey of the reaction to Blake and his works before the publication of Gilchrist’s biography in 1863, will hold a large interest for readers who may wonder what it was like in the old days to encounter Blake without a trot. The details of this survey may at times baffle us, suggesting a playing-out of tidal under-rhythms of attraction and repulsion that have little to do with sophisticated appreciation, but the overall curve seems explicable enough. The brief “high” of Blake’s reputation in the early 1800’s turned to a long, largely ebbing phase as a consequence of the fact that the character of the man was increasingly out of harmony with the character of the times: as Samuel Palmer wrote to Gilchrist in 1856 (part of a long reminiscence about Blake for Gilchrist’s book), “materialism was his abhorrence.” The importance of the profound dyspathy between Blake and the culture of the first half of the nineteenth century cannot be overstressed, for there is no artist of whom it is truer to say that his character is his art—and therefore, his destiny. Some of the pain of looking closely at that destiny is mitigated for us by the enjoyments of Regency and Victorian genius; reactions to Blake during the pre-Gilchrist period come most copiously from persons who hold considerable, in some cases great, interest for us in their own right—as poets, essayists, critics, artists, mountebanks, etc.—a circumstance which compounds the interest of what we are reading and helps to put the whole question of early responses to Blake in a suitably spacious setting.

Further to help us to that end Professor Bentley begins his book with a useful twenty-six-page introduction that sets forth the history of Blake criticism and Blake studies. The present compilation resembles earlier ones in the Critical Heritage Series in its mixture of general essays on Blake with commentary on specific works. It differs from the other volumes in being about a writer who was also a professional artist, and in that it is necessarily composed more of private statements than of published reviews. A selection of comment on Blake and his work during his lifetime has been made from the fuller materials in Blake Records.¹ This includes some long pieces, such as the essays by Malkin and Crabb Robinson, and the now famous reviews in the Examiner (1808) and Anti-Jacobin (1808), as well as numerous brief, even fragmentary, references, in many cases excerpted from longer items in Blake Records. The biographical essays of 1827-31 by Smith, Cunningham, and Tatham are given in full, along with early post-obit articles on Blake in Fraser’s and the London University Magazine (all in Blake Records). A spare, running commentary like that in Blake Records introduces and connects the items.

The new feature of this book is its chronologically ordered final section on the years 1831-63, which cites every commentary on Blake in that period, and even every comment that is now known, some for the first time: 300 items in all. This is a valuable drawing in of the nets, notwithstanding that, with netting so very fine, whitebait are brought up with tuna. The question one might raise about this chapter concerns its title, “The Forgotten Years.” It is my belief, stated already in these pages and elsewhere, that “forgotten” is a misnomer in that it places an emphasis on the number of comments rather than on a consideration of their significance. Many of the (comparatively few) notices of Blake’s work that were then given in full, along with many of the important, coming as they did from Emerson, Ruskin, Palgrave, Henry James, Sr., the Pre-Raphaelites, and others of interest to us now. An edition of Blake’s Songs was published for Wilkinson in 1839; pictures by Blake were exhibited with works of other English artists to a mass audience in 1857 and 1862, and commented on in the press. “Forgotten” really does not describe this state of affairs. Nor is it quite accurate to place the turn of the Blake tide at 1863, as Professor Bentley does in a paragraph introductory to this chapter. From the late ‘forties through the early ‘sixties there was a definite increase in interest in Blake, which was marked by (among other indices) the acquisition of many of his works by the British Museum. The immediate burst of attention to Blake supposedly aroused from nil by Gilchrist in fact occurred in at atmosphere in which Blake was somewhat known. Of course, it is proper to emphasize the huge limitations of the mid-Victorians’ knowledge of Blake, with regard both to the number of works available and the number of persons familiar with them, but that should not entitle us to write off as inconsequential the knowledge that did exist. I am conscious of the fineness of this point, and yet, if there is a purpose in retrieving and citing the small documents along with the large, it can only be to refine our picture of the way things actually happened.
There is a small misunderstanding in the final section that I am happily able to set right. On page 263 Professor Bentley notes that he has been unable to find "Palgrave's Official Catalogue" of the 1862 Exhibition, which he states was cited by me in my essay on Blake's reputation in the Festschrift for Sir Geoffrey Keynes. The form of my citation makes it clear that I was referring to an article by Palgrave which constitutes a part of the one and only Official Catalogue: it is a three-page essay introducing the watercolor listings entitled, "The British School of Water Colour Painting." What is remarkable about this short piece by Palgrave is that nearly one page of it is taken up with a comparison of Stothard and Blake. Along with other notices of the Exhibition, it was described in detail and quoted from in my earlier essay, "Pictures at the Exhibitions."  

With the Blake Bibliography (produced jointly with Martin K. Nurmi) in 1964, Blake Records in 1969, the present book on the critical heritage, and the forthcoming revised bibliography to be entitled Blake Books, Professor Bentley has made a most solid and impressive contribution to our knowledge of Blake's fortunes during his life and after. When distant, these separate books appear as One Book; and even if we look more closely, we may note a certain amount of overlapping, or duplication. Roughly three-quarters of the materials of William Blake: The Critical Heritage have already been published by Bentley in Blake Records; in addition, three-fifths of the Introduction to the present volume are, in its author's words, "largely adapted from the essay on Blake's Reputation and Interpreters' in Blake Books (forthcoming); and finally, all—or almost all—of the items in the present book will be cited in Blake Books. To be sure, each of these source books is different and has its own special purpose, that of the volume in hand being to provide an overview for the general student, of early reactions to Blake. But in the light of the considerable duplications mentioned above, one wonders whether this interesting volume on the critical heritage might not have been more indispensible, and at the same time more broadly and accurately reflective of its subject, had its final section on the years 1831-63 been followed by selections from the post-Gilchrist criticism, taking us, perhaps, to the end of the century? It is rather too bad that a book of Blake criticism should end just when things are about to get really lively. It was, after all, in response to the critical challenge posed by Gilchrist's Life that informed public discussion of Blake's thought and work suddenly picked up speed and took off.


Reviewed by Gerda Norvig and Myra Glazer Schotz

The blurb on the back cover of William Blake Selected Engravings suggests we are in for a treat. In addition to a sampling "from almost all the artist's major projects"—from most of the poems and prophecies and from the illustrations for Stedman, Hayley, Blair, Thornton's Virgil and the Book of Job—this volume, we are told, contains "a small number of engravings by contemporary craftsmen after original designs by Blake." What a letdown when you open the book! Practically every selection from the illuminated canon has been retouched, redrawn, or re-engraved in so crude and careless a manner one needn't wonder at the anonymity of the "craftsmen." Furthermore, the renderings, as it turns out, are contemporary neither to Blake nor to us, for the bulk of them to have been photographed from a stash of awkward, nineteenth-century facsimiles now in the Victoria and Albert Museum. Robert Essick, our informant on sources, claims the most shockingly altered designs are from an 1876 lithographic adaptation, the authorship of which has never been acknowledged or determined. Occasionally a composition from that collection is a successful cartoon in its own right, as is the case with some of the radical simplifications of plates from Urizen. But to omit proper identification of both the medium and the source, which is Keay's wont, and to pass such work off as Blake's, is at best a gross disservice to the newcomer seeking acquaintance with Blake's authentic vision. Only Schiavonetti's 1808 engravings for The Grave are duly captioned as "after original designs by Blake"—an admission which might well have the adverse effect of convincing a beginner everything else is unadulterated.

Unconscionable editorial flaws of this kind are matched by others of a technical and scholarly nature. An abridged group of the Job engravings, haphazardly arranged, appear in murky reproductions that convey little of the special characteristics of line for which they are justly famous. And why, in a book called "Selected Engravings," do renditions of watercolor drawings so frequently show up? Blake's Gray is here, along with a color illustration—not an engraving—for Young's Night Thoughts. More puzzling still is the substitution of watercolor studies for three of Blake's finest engravings in the closing section of the book where a run of Dante drawings is featured. This total neglect of Blake's last and possibly greatest achievement in the very medium with which Keay is supposedly concerned, epitomizes the problems of the entire collection.

Even with four color plates, the book is outrageously priced at $16.95 in hardcover, $9.95 paper.

Reviewed by Stephen C. Behrendt

This is an interesting and insightful book that ought to prove useful to more than the Blakeans among us. Faithful to its subtitle, the book offers a view of visionary imagination as a potentially curative or redemptive response to the crisis of self in society. The study is, as Ms. Wilner notes in her introduction, "the preliminary examination of a vast and inexhaustible subject" (p. 3). Drawing primarily upon anthropology, psychology, and literary criticism, the author presents us with a study of creative response to crisis as it emerges in the works of four principal figures: Blake, Beddoes, Yeats, and Marx.

Ms. Wilner defines her terms in the first chapter, demonstrating the common existence among diverse preliterate societies of the shaman figure, the strongly imaginative healer and diviner whose powers enable him to divine and act out the unconscious conflicts of the afflicted and to act as the intermediary in returning them to health. When the hidden conflicts with which he deals are not those only of isolated individuals but are common to his entire society, his role expands to that of prophet. In either case, his function customarily involves the creation of an apocalyptic-millenial vision which is the response to the crisis situation, a vision that reveals and then resolves seemingly irreconcilable conflicts in a new and integrated view of man and society. That this sort of visionary activity occurs not only in highly sophisticated societies but also in primitive, preliterate cultures suggests to the author that man possesses an innate integrative function which is cultivated by the shaman-prophet and which is potentially curative of deep crises of order: the apocalyptic or prophetic imagination. In a basically harmonious society the vision is generally conservative, while in a society antagonistic to harmony and personal integrity the vision is characteristically radical and subversive. If the vision articulated by the shaman is unique to himself, his actions and responses are often judged deviant or insane. But if that vision somehow verbalizes the disorientation and oppression of his society, then his responses are judged prophetic by the assimting and empathetic collective society. Ms. Wilner's observations on this point carry us, of course, toward a fuller understanding of the nature of Blake's "madness" as perceived by his nineteenth-century critics.

Importantly, though, the author notes that the prophetic or curative vision is not created ex nihilo, but is a new manifestation of process within tradition. The vision reintegrates traditional symbols and values in a new manner, suggesting a different set of priorities, values, and social obligations. We are already familiar with this process in Blake; it is the revolutionary process by which the artist appropriates from tradition whatever is useful to his purposes, reordering and reanimating it, and discards the rest. Hence, as Blake demonstrates, the "new" order is actually implicit in the "old," which is but a perversion of the original harmonious condition. The visionary process, which, according to Ms. Wilner, often occurs in a "wilderness" representing the estrangement and disorientation of society's members, generates several results: (1) it expresses the psychic upheaval of the visionary, representing the breakup of the old self and the annihilation of the tyrannical old order, (2) it offers a symbolic means of revenge on the oppressors, (3) it arms the visionary with a weapon of fear to use against his enemies, (4) it satisfies the desire for purification, and (5) it serves as a substitute for--or as a motive and paradigm for--active revolt in the real world. Also, if the vision is millennial, it presents an expectation of a new world which is an inversion of the old. The author contends that the constant in all cases of radical mental realignment is "the return to origins, the awakening of primal and powerful emotions freed of the inhibitors of past social prohibition, and the resultant reempowering of a renewed self" (p. 41).

The second chapter (of three) applies the preliminary observations to the specific cases of Blake, Beddoes, and Yeats, and, in delineating the nature of each poet's vision, sets the stage for the introduction of the Marxian vision, which is the visionary resolution championed here as the most practical--the most effective "curative"--response to social crisis and which provides the matter for the third chapter. Of the first three visions, Blake's is clearly the author's favorite; in fact, Blake is nearly as visible in this book as Marx. It is not just the dynamic and apocalyptic nature of Blake's vision, we learn, that makes it so attractive, but also its fundamental correctness. We are told that Blake's art (i.e., his verbal art; his visual art is essentially ignored) constitutes perhaps the fullest statement in the modern Western world of "the drama of apocalyptic or visionary imagination." Blake understood both his psychic crisis and his imaginative capabilities so well that he was able accurately to interpret the social and psychological ills of the society that surrounded him. The vision that resulted is, of course, grounded in the familiar doctrine of contraries, contraries which are "married" through the process of intellectual warfare that ideally reconciles all human activity in an informed and visionary human culture. If we tend occasionally to take Blake's idea of the marriage of contraries for granted, then it is instructive for us to be reminded just how appropriate the metaphor is in defining man's experience, and how the concept Blake articulates helps to shed light on the propositions of so seemingly different a figure as Marx.

Ms. Wilner identifies as the most revolutionary aspect of Blake's system the explicit identification of God with the human imagination, noting that Blake's Jesus is "energized order in human
form" (p. 51). There is a certain oversimplification involved here, as is perhaps unavoidable in a study of this scope. On this particular point, the author seems to overlook the ambiguous nature of her term "God," failing properly to distinguish between Father and Son, a distinction Blake so obviously draws. A related sort of oversimplification also crops up early in the discussion of Blake when the author invokes social, psychological, and artistic trends and ideas which Blake "anticipated": from Freud and Jung to existentialists and feminists. Even the works of Hieronymus Bosch and M. C. Escher are called up as visual counterparts to Blake's verbal art, while Blake's visual art is left unexplored. Even though these various systems and ideologies are imposed externally upon Blake's only in passing, by way of demonstrating Blake's continuing relevance, to engage in this sort of operation is to risk finding what is absent and missing what is present.

Still, what Ms. Wilner has to say regarding Blake's vision is essentially right. The real heart of the matter is her definition of the Blakean apocalypse: "the breaking through of the powers of imagination, and the heightening of the forces of error until their negative nature is fully revealed" (p. 52). In this sense, we are told, man may make or unmake his world by destroying what is "oppressive" and creating a new entity in conformity with the dictates of human need. Thus the apocalypse proceeds by "the upsurge of the destructive and formative energies of the imagination," clarifying the outlines of humanity's enemies so that they may be destroyed and man may live in consonance with his imagination, "his full sight restored" (p. 53). The author seems to move toward the idea of the destruction of the Selfhood as described, for instance, in Milton, as the ultimate goal of the Blakean apocalypse. Perhaps it is the concept of the apocalypse's basis in human need that leads Ms. Wilner to identify Tharmas, whom we customarily associate with the senses and the physical body, as the unifying urge in man which, when frustrated, produces despair and then reawakens out of it. Tharmas is identified for us here, then, as "instinctual energy that has as its drive both personal integrity and social integration, which empowers both sexual (Luvah) and intellectual (Urizen) powers toward the joining" in a unified being (p. 55). Tharmas, then, through his agent and son Los, is regarded as the reigning power behind apocalypse, the possessor of a "radical innocence."

The figure of Tharmas, though, is eclipsed in the discussion by that of Los. Ms. Wilner judges The Book of Los a central document in the development of Blake's visionary imagination, the record of the poet's discovery that he had mistakenly championed a revolution of society which had frozen into a new tyranny, and his consequent turn to a "rebirth" of imagination. While Los is not the most satisfactory poem upon which to base a definition of Blake's vision, it does present both the paradigm of the binding of Urizen and a good indication of the imaginative process involved in reaction to crises. Thus, while the example is perhaps unsatisfactory in terms of the entirety of Blake's vision, it is, in the long run, appropriate in terms of the author's discussion. The Book of Los mythologizes the process by which the imagination generates life out of its own higher consciousness, falls into the vegetative world of error and Experience, and moves through and beyond that state to a resurrection of its dismembered parts in the primal unity of its original state. But for some reason Ms. Wilner minimizes the creation of Adam with which Los concludes. Yet that creation is implicit in the pattern of Genesis 1 upon which Blake bases the poem. In stopping short of treating the "Human Illusion" (BL 5.56) as archetypal man or Adam, the author misses the opportunity to apply Los's struggle to the mind of man and identifies the form simply as the abortion in Europe of Blake's optimistic view of the revolutionary process. Thus we are left short of a full understanding of the manner in which man internalizes the Orc-Urizen struggle with which Los has grappled.

Ms. Wilner's final point, and perhaps the most important, involves Blake's vision as a response to the developing social crisis of his times. She points out forcefully the degree to which Blake's vision is a strenuous defense of the inner life, of imagination, of a restorative and transformational vision that unites the poetic and the prophetic, offering a vision of healthy exuberance attainable by all imaginative men. For the internal world is man's true home, and in coming to terms with that world—in opening his eyes inward—man can transform the antagonistic external world into a harmonious structure that springs from within the individual. This is, of course, the proper conclusion, and identifies the appropriate resolution of the internal conflict of which the external disorder is merely a manifestation. The author views Beddoes and Yeats as visionaries as well, but visionaries of a much less satisfactory nature than Blake. Beddoes is likened to the malign sorcerer, the shaman "cousin" who kills where he cannot cure. Beddoes' nihilistic attitude results, we are told, from his conviction that the forces of creation have been perverted and replaced by those of destruction. Hence the central aspect of his vision is the conviction that "human shape" has been lost, that the "natural" has been sacrificed to the "rational" which is itself irrational and monstrous. Blake, we assume, would see this oppression as reversible by an act of the imagination—a "Last Judgment" consisting of the repudiation of the error—while Beddoes seems to feel that the apocalyptic insight will only reassert the ultimate monstrosity. In short, Beddoes posits the death of the human spirit, in which case the dead are resurrected as dead men. In terms of imaginative visions of reintegration, Beddoes may be considered a poet restorative or monstrosity destroy the idealism (the mistaken dream that integration is possible) which he feels cannot be revivified. Yeats, on the other hand, does attempt to reanimate the old order, we are told. His poetic vision involves an apocalypse which does not culminate history but repeats it. Through his cyclic system, Yeats posits the return of a past aristocratic order which will combat the natural tendency
toward disintegration. Yeats's entire system reflects his continual conscious attempt to rebuild and reintegrate an order which is continually crumbling. Hence Yeats's vision is itself ironic; it involves not the release of energies to forge a new system but the retreat into an older order. It is a search for a "promised land," "a flight into the imagined past posing as a prophecy of an assured future" (p. 119).

The author's conclusions regarding the nature of these three visions leads directly to the Marxian perspective. Blake's vision of a totally new social order (a curative vision which is apocalyptic-millenial, based upon a humanistic faith) is superior to Yeats's vision of the reconstructed old, idealistic but essentially aristocratic order (a defensive vision which is ironic-tragic, based upon a heroic fatalism and skepticism), and is clearly preferable to Beddoes's vision of total destruction of all order (a suicidal vision which is grotesque, based upon nihilism). Since in their own times these visionary responses to crisis were regarded as irrelevant, unrealistic, and demented, respectively, they were ineffective in healing the growing sense of societal disintegration. This being the case, the author tells us, we can see how Marx's vision provides the practical and redemptive prophecy, articulating as it does the discontent of an age and empowering a new vision of man and society. Ms. Wilner takes great care in detailing the manner in which Marx's vision may be regarded as a reworking of the concept of contraries in terms of actual material reality, a vision that verbalizes the physical needs of his time while promising the present oppressive situation must necessarily be overcome and the desired ends produced. Capitalism represents a dehumanizing and elitist form of estrangement which pits man against man and imposes upon most of society a natural and moral inferiority complex. Where the Marxian theory comes closest to the Blakean is in its conviction that the transformation of the inner man proceeds that of the total society, arising from within man as he begins correctly to perceive his real situation. Hence the transformation foreseen in the Marxist's apocalypse is not escapist; rather, it reveals an awareness of the contradictions of life experience and constitutes an attempt to work out the contradictions in the physical, material world.

Perhaps the most significant point made in Gathering the Winds involves the author's assertion that "crisis imagination" customarily identifies the ills of the visionary's social order and seeks to work its cure by creating new images of fertility, beauty, and health "on the far side of a necessary destruction" (p. 181). To see this tendency, so visible in Blake's work, as part of an archetypal pattern of visionary experience is better to define the nature of that particular variety of experience. For, as the author reminds us, the recurrence of such apocalyptic visions reasserts continually the validity of such visions, underlining their power to inspire confidence, renew dignity, and reorder reality. When Ms. Wilner tells us that the study of apocalyptic vision also "asserts the possibility of the recurrence of this kind of revelation, or transformation, in souls and societies whose need produces them" (p. 181), we can only be the more reminded of Blake's quotation of Moses in the preface to Milton: "Would to God that all the Lords people were Prophets." In spite of its occasional shortcomings, then, not the least of which is the tendency to employ a complex prose style that sometimes obscures what it would illuminate, this is a provocative book, one that provides some valuable insights not just on its four principal figures, but also on the imaginative process itself.


Reviewed by Michael Fischer

According to Thomas Weiskel, the sublime describes an experience in which man claims to "transcend the human." Whether man encounters the sublime in a literary work or in a natural scene, the distinguishing feature of sublimity is its capacity to transport man beyond the limits of his humanity and the empirical world in which he lives. Such an experience, Weiskel notes, was peculiarly important to the Romantic writers, who sought to preserve the intellectual validity and moral value of sublimity in an age which increasingly confined man to spiritless notions of reality. In The Romantic Sublime: Studies in the Structure and Psychology of Transcendence Weiskel studies the sublime as it appears in the poetry of the major English Romantic writers and in the theoretical accounts of Longinus, Burke, and Kant. The result is a deeply intelligent, yet sharply limited, analysis.

As indicated by the subtitle of his book, Weiskel's method of analysis borrows extensively, but not uncritically, from the vocabulary and presuppositions of both structuralist and psychological thought. The structuralist orientation of his analysis appears in his initial attempt to describe the sublime and to differentiate what he terms its two major forms, the negative or metaphorical sublime and the positive or metonymical sublime. In Weiskel's view any sublime experience breaks down into three phases. In the first phase, the mind's relation to its object, be it a text or a natural scene, is determinate and familiar: the object (or signifier) offers no unusual obstacles to our comprehension of what it signifies. In the second phase, however, this determinate relation between signifier and signified collapses and the mind faces a radical disconnection between the object and its possible meanings. This second moment in the experience of the sublime is thus one of negation, absence, and alienation, and its emotional accompaniment is astonishment, surprise, and even terror. The painful confrontation with the absence or negation of meaning was, of course, central to the experience of the Romantic writers, and it is the predication of the sublime on the loss of meaning which makes it so important to our understanding of Romantic thought.
This loss of meaning, however, is only temporary in the experience of the sublime, and the third phase of one's encounter with sublimity rectifies the disequilibrium between object and meaning painfully felt in phase two. This resolution takes two forms, depending on the causes which previously disrupted the meaningfulness of the subject's world. If the loss of meaning occurs because of "an excess on the plane of the signifiers" (i.e., in the natural, empirical world), then the resolution posits some kind of access to a spiritual realm beyond what we can grasp with our senses. This form of the sublime is what Weiskel variously terms the negative or metaphorical sublime; he locates its major expression in Kant's Critique of Aesthetic Judgement. In Weiskel's reading of Kant, the empirical imagination in phase two of the sublime faces a natural scene whose signification or meaning eludes its grasp. The very failure of the imagination to comprehend the scene, however, signifies reason's relation to a transcendent, supersensible realm. The imagination's painful inability to understand the scene before it yields to the pleasure and awe we feel when we contemplate reason's capacity to think ideas which lie beyond the natural world. The terrifying indeterminacy of the vast ocean, for example, initially frustrates the empirical imagination's efforts at comprehension or signification but then occasions reason's pleasurable recognition of its capacity to think an idea of totality which even the ocean cannot represent.

A second resolution of the sublime occurs if what Weiskel calls "an excess on the signified" disrupts the mind's sense of meaning. Weiskel variously terms this mode of the sublime egotistical, positive, or metonymical, and he finds its major expression in Wordsworth's poetry. The goal of the egotistical sublime is to prise the Kantian one of reason's exaltation at the expense of nature but instead the Wordsworthian one of harmony between mind and nature and past and present. Drawing on Geoffrey Hartman's studies of Wordsworth's poetry and on Harold Bloom's theories of poetic influence, Weiskel attempts to show that the second phase of the Wordsworthian sublime involves the mind's painful encounter with what Wordsworth termed the "abyss of idealism," or the state in which the mind's power of constructing meanings seems to find no sanction or support outside itself. Rather than affirm the mind's autonomy and nature's inadequacy as generators of meaning, Wordsworth sought to recover a state of harmony or balance between the two which obviated the need to assert priority to either term. In the final phase of the Wordsworthian sublime the mind is no longer painfully burdened with an unintelligible world or frighteningly identified as the sole source of meaning. Instead the mind works joyfully with nature itself, its ennobling partner and constant ally in the discovery of truth.

The conclusion of Weiskel's structuralist analysis of the sublime suggests that encounters with sublimity illustrate how the Romantic mind reconstructed meaning in the face of the momentary absence of meaning from experience. In structuralist terms, the three phases of the sublime represent a process of signification, or a movement in which the mind confronts and masters its temporary, but painful, alienation from an intelligible world. After discussing Blake's criticisms of both the Kantian and Wordsworthian sublime, Weiskel goes on to recast his structuralist analysis of the sublime into psychological, largely Freudian terms. The reason for this recourse to psychology apparently lies in his view that the structuralist method describes adequately the individual phases of the sublime but fails to account for the movement between the different moments. To describe the diachronic development of the sublime, Weiskel turns to the vocabulary and premises of Freudian and Lacanian psychology, particularly to the central notion of sublimation. The connection between the sublime and sublimation lies for Weiskel in the anxiety felt in the sublime's second phase. Returning to his earlier discussion of the positive and negative sublime, he proceeds to analyze this anxiety in psychological terms and to define its resolution as a mode of sublimation, or a transfer of psychic energy from one aim or object to another. A reading of two of William Collins' odes and Wordsworth's Prelude tries to particularize this discussion of the psychology of the sublime.

Like his structuralist account of the sublime, Weiskel's psychological description is thorough and thoughtful and resistant to simple summary. He admirably attempts to "wear loosely" his semiological and psychological methodology and he allows the structuralist and the Freudian viewpoints to complement each other in fruitful ways. Although at times the terminology of his discussion seems unnecessary and unhelpful, his book is nevertheless a refreshingly flexible application of structuralist and psychological insights into the Romantic sublime.

What distinguishes Weiskel's study, then, is the critical way in which he uses the terms of his discussion. What limits his analysis, however, is precisely his decision to choose these terms to ground his approach. Weiskel's book radiates intellectual and moral seriousness and he is rightly concerned to think through his relation to his subject. In his view contemporary culture in significant ways marks the end rather than the continuation of Romantic thought and "the ideology of the sublime" occurs to us today as "a moribund aesthetic." "The infinite spaces are no longer astonishing," he notes. "Still less do they terrify. They pique our curiosity, but we have lost the obsession, so fundamental to the Romantic sublime, with natural infinitude ... the ethos of expansion is over."

Despite Weiskel's evident sympathy with the Romantic writers, the chosen terms of his analysis clearly participate in this current consignment of Romanticism to a project "now pretty much dead." For the structuralist and psychological premises of his investigation have in common a tendency to dismiss as beyond belief or discussion the objective truth of the meanings which the Romantic writers attached to the sublime. The tacit assumption which dominates Weiskel's outlook is that the meanings discovered by the Romantics in their experience of the sublime must be seen as subjective...
projections or fictive inventions which accordingly solicit analysis in psychological or structuralist terms. Such an outlook, he would concede, is exactly what renders its proponents immune to the sublime: the infinite spaces no longer terrify those who do not expect to find meaning genuinely and really there. The Romantic writers did expect knowable meaning from life; this is why they experienced meaninglessness as a terrifying problem to be resolved through the sublime revelation of genuine truth. For those readers who regard this expectation with skepticism and sympathy, Weiskel's book represents a deeply intelligent discussion of Romanticism in suitably contemporary terms. But for those readers for whom the sublime may yet offer valid insight into "the life of things," Weiskel's study unnecessarily participates in the attenuation of the Romantic faith.