Blake

AN ILLUSTRATED QUARTERLY 47

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reviewed by Martha W. England

NEWSLETTER

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INFORMATION

THE SERPENT-DRIVING FEMALES IN BLAKE'S *COMUS* 4

J. KARL FRANSON

A female figure driving a serpent-team through the treetops appears in both versions of Blake's watercolor designs for Milton's *Comus*, Scene 4--the earlier series now in the Huntington Library (cited below as H) and the later series in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (B).[1] Despite striking differences between the two sets,[2] and specifically between the two female figures in this scene, between their serpent-teams, and the darkness of the night, commentators almost never consider both versions when discussing Blake's visual interpretations of the masque. As a consequence, they generally regard the two females as the same character. Irene Tayler, taking into account only the H series in her pioneering essay on the designs, refers to the "draped female overhead" as "the strange dragon or snake-lady," "that veiled tyrant of women" whom Blake might intend to suggest "the moon-goddess Cynthia" or maybe Medea.[3] Commenting on the B series only, Marcia R. Pointon calls the woman above the trees "Diana, goddess of the moon" (p. 139). More recently, Joseph A. Wittreich, Jr. labels the females Blake's personification of Jealousy,[4] and Stephen C. Behrendt follows Pointon in calling the figures Cynthia-Diana.[5]

Compounding this confusion concerning the figures is the repeated assertion that they cannot be found in the standard versions of *Comus* at all, but are Blake's invention.[6] Wittreich cites as Blake's source for these figures several lines about a dragon that were cancelled in the Trinity (College) Manuscript of the masque, but first published in 1798 and thus available to Blake. Certain details of Wittreich's argument are persuasive, but his fundamental assertion that the cancelled lines constitute Blake's primary source for the serpent-teams and the female figures is essentially unconvincing.[7] These figures, to the contrary, are identified in the standard published texts of *Comus* in circulation during Blake's day.[8] In addition, a matching of text and design reveals that Blake's females in this scene, one in each version, are not variations of the same person, but are two different persons.[9]

Blake's fourth scenes, in which the Attendant Spirit dressed as the shepherd Thyrsis shows the brothers the magic herb *haemony*, illustrate lines 617-58 in the Todd and the Hughes editions. However, Milton describes much earlier in the masque the serpent-ladies that Blake places in the treetops. During Comus's initial appearance as the forest enchanter-seducer, he calls upon his retinue, partially transformed into beasts, to join him in a libidinous ceremony:

> Come, let us our rights begin,
> 'Tis only day-light that makes sin,
> Which these dun shades will ne'er report.
> Hail, Goddess of nocturnal sport,
> Dark-veil'd Cotytto! t'whom the secret flame
> Of midnight torches burns; mysterious dame,
> That ne'er art call'd, but when the dragon woom
> Of Stygian darkness spetts her thickest gloom,
> And makes one blot of all the air;

Detail, Scene 4: "The Brothers Meet the Attendant Spirit in the Wood." Huntington at top; Boston, below.

In the following pages, the Huntington set of *Comus* designs is reproduced courtesy of the Henry E. Huntington Library & Art Gallery, San Marino, California. The Boston set (gift of Mrs. John L. Gardner & George N. Black) is reproduced courtesy of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

> Stay thy cloudy ebon chair,
> Wherein thou rid'st with Hecat', and befriend
> Us thy vow'd priests, till utmost end
> Of all thy dues be done, and none left out.
>
> (125-37)

Certainly this invocation to "Dark-veil'd Cotytto" is Blake's primary source for the darkly draped female in H 4. This Thracian goddess of licentiousness, worshipped only on the darkest (or Stygian) nights, appears in Blake's dark scene riding through a treetop gloom that obscures sky, stars, and moon.[10] Since Comus and his monsters begin their rites to the goddess five hundred lines before Scene 4, we might be surprised by her appearance here instead of in Blake's first scene, that of Comus and his revelers. But the text does not specify that she actually appears in response to the invocation, probably because the chaste Lady's approach interrupts the rites at their beginning. Comus directs his rabble to hide (147-48), enchants the spot (150 ff.), and entices the Lady who enters to proceed with him to his cottage (244 ff.), where unknown to her he obviously plans to reinitiate the rites to Cotytto. Thus Blake's choice to portray Cotytto in H 4, riding through the same forest in which she was earlier invoked, is logical even though the text does not specify her presence here. Seemingly she is enroute to the castle for the rites, which Blake suggests by her direction toward the right margin, forward to the next scene inside the castle.

Milton alludes metaphorically to a dragon in this Cotytto-Hecate passage (131) and later to a dragon guarding the Hesperian Tree in the regions whence the Attendant Spirit has come (395); but Blake's primary source for the serpent-team is probably the dragon-team traditionally associated with Hecate's car (in Ovid, for instance, and mentioned elsewhere by Milton[11]). Blake's red and blue scaled beasts in H 4 might most accurately be labeled crested snakes or serpents rather than dragons, as they have no legs or wings.[12]

Hecate, however, with whom Milton's Cotytto rides, does not appear in H 4, nor in H 1. Because Milton aligns Cotytto so closely with her, because the Attendant Spirit claims that Comus frequently performs rites to her (535), and because she does appear in Blake's B series, consideration should be given to Hecate's role in Blake's H interpretation.

Surely Blake does not intend her to be hidden in the gloom beside Cotytto in H 4. Does he interpret Milton's line ("Wherein thou rid'st with Hecat'") to mean that Cotytto sometimes rides with Hecate, but not always? Or has he in mind the Attendant Spirit's claim to the brothers during this scene that as their father's shepherd he has often heard Comus and his revelers performing rites to Hecate and hence is drawing attention to the duality of nocturnal rites performed by Comus--some to Hecate as goddess of witchcraft, and on the darkest nights, other rites (or additional rites) to Cotytto as a goddess of lechery? If this is Blake's intent, H 1 would not represent rites to Hecate only, as a reader might presume from the Attendant Spirit's assertion, but rites either to Hecate (but preliminary to Cotytto rites on this Stygian night) or rites to Cotytto, the noise of which the Spirit has interpreted as Hecate rites, and over which Hecate ultimately presides. But if H 1 and H 4 involve Hecate, where is she?

I believe her absence from the scene can be explained satisfactorily in terms of a logical presence elsewhere in the forest. Is it not reasonable to conceive of Hecate being involved, not directly in H 1, but in H 2? Although she is not invoked this particular night, she is Comus's reigning deity and ostensibly his ultimate source of enchanting power. So when he enchants the spot that Blake depicts in H 2, as well as himself, with "dazling spells" (154) and "magic dust" (165), then leads the beguiled Lady from the place through the forest to his castle, might not Blake have intended Hecate to preside over this spell that continues through the forest trek, according to the text, until the Lady is seated inside the castle in Scene 5? Though Blake does not depict Hecate visually in H 2, and though the text does not specify her appearance or direct involvement, her presence in the scene is logical. If H 2 is viewed in this manner, and if we consider carefully the chronology of the masque, Hecate would be journeying to the castle (and the rites) with Comus and the Lady at the same time Cotytto rides there in H 4.

If we consider the details of Cotytto worship, we will quickly comprehend the aptness of Milton's allusion to her in *Comus* and the aptness of Blake's inclusion of her in H 4. A Greek goddess of wantonness, Cotytto was not well known in Milton's day or in Blake's. Milton does not mention her elsewhere, and Blake never refers to her by name. Milton associates her with the better-known Hecate, goddess of the underworld and witchcraft, presumably because both were said to originate in Thrace. There is historical evidence of Cotytto worship in Corinth, perhaps in Athens, and with great license in Rome.[13]

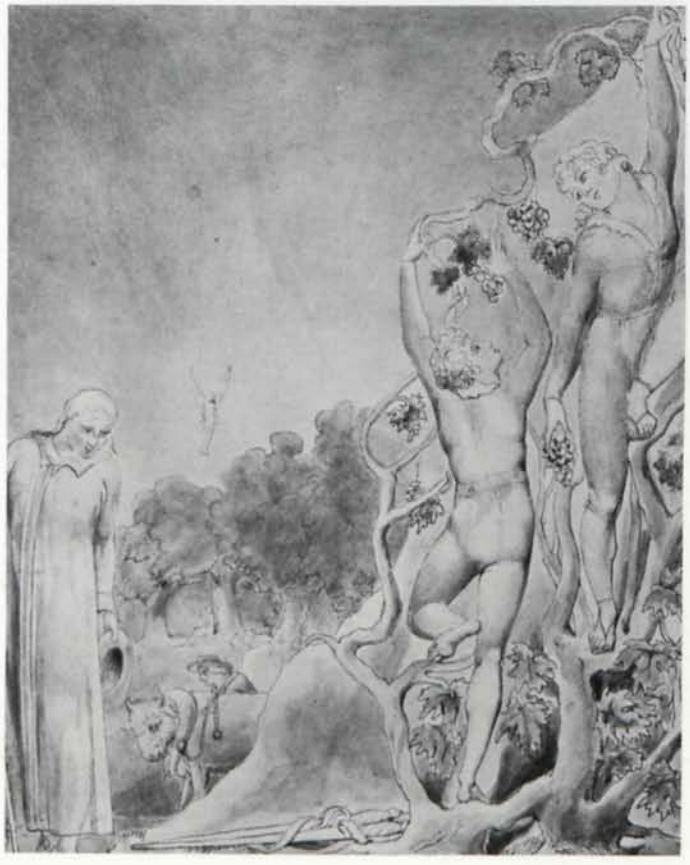
Scene 1: "Comus with his Revellers." Huntington at top left; Boston, lower left.

Scene 2: "Comus, Disguised as a Rustic, Addresses the Lady in the Wood." Huntington, top right; Boston, lower right.

The longest account of Cotytto worship appears in Juvenal's Second Satire, "Moralists without Morals," with which Milton was familiar (Osgood, pp. 24-25). Juvenal associates the goddess with orgiastic rites conducted by priests that were secret, nocturnal, torchlit, gluttonous, accompanied by dancing, and chiefly sodomistic. The orgiastic elements in *Comus* approximate these closely, with the possible exception of sodomy: Comus calls together his followers in secret, at night; they carry torches; they later feast at a banquet; and they "knit hands, and beat the ground / In a light fantastic round" (143-44). Also similar to elements in *Comus* are Juvenal's references in Cotytto worship to metamorphoses (in *Comus*, the monsters); Stygian blackness (in *Comus*, 132); a cup or glass used in the rites (in *Comus*, the crystal goblet with enchanting liquid); and the initiation rite (in *Comus*, the drink). In view of Barbara Breasted's recent discovery that Milton wrote *Comus* in the wake of a notorious sex scandal that included rape, incest, and sodomy among relatives of the *Comus* Bridgewater family--and the masque thus being an attempt to help re-establish the family's integrity--Cotytto's presence in the masque is doubly appropriate.[14] Blake probably did not know of the Castlehaven Scandal, and he may not have been familiar with all the details of Juvenal's account of her, but he surely was familiar with her role as a goddess of lechery, an identification provided in Thomas Newton's and Todd's annotations to *Comus*.[15] And he obviously detected in the masque a central theme of the conflict between chastity and perversity.

Cotytto's serpents in H 4, or more precisely Hecate's serpents, which Cotytto is driving, are typical Blake serpents: crested, mouths open, tongues out, and thus active. For Blake, serpents represent (among other things) hypocrisy, corrupt priesthood, and sexuality.[16] Indeed, one can conceive a close similarity between the attempt by Comus to force the Lady into sexual experience (particularly if one remembers the serpent above Comus's wand in B 5) and the theme of Blake's "I saw a chapel all of gold": that forced and undesired acts of sex are perversions of real love.[17] In addition, the serpent-team represents the spiritual-moral warfare that constitutes the foundation of the masque:[18] the struggle of the brothers with each other, the Lady with Comus and with herself, Comus with himself, and the brothers with Comus and his monsters. We should note that these conflicts are essentially dissolved, rather than overcome, by the magic herb *haemony* that Blake portrays in this scene.[19] Also worth noting is Blake's placing of the herb, held by the Spirit, almost directly below Cotytto's triangular, scale-shaped skirt.[20] Possibly this juxtaposition of herb beneath the scale is Blake's way of drawing attention to the importance of the herb's function in eliminating the stalemates in the masque.[21]

In the second *Comus* series, Blake makes significant changes in Scene 4. The figure driving the serpent-team in B 4 is also female, as denoted by her flowing hair, but she wears a light-colored garment, has no hood or veil, and rides under a crescent moon.[22] Clearly this female cannot be "Dark-veil'd Cotytto," who appears only on the darkest nights. Because of her light-colored cloth-



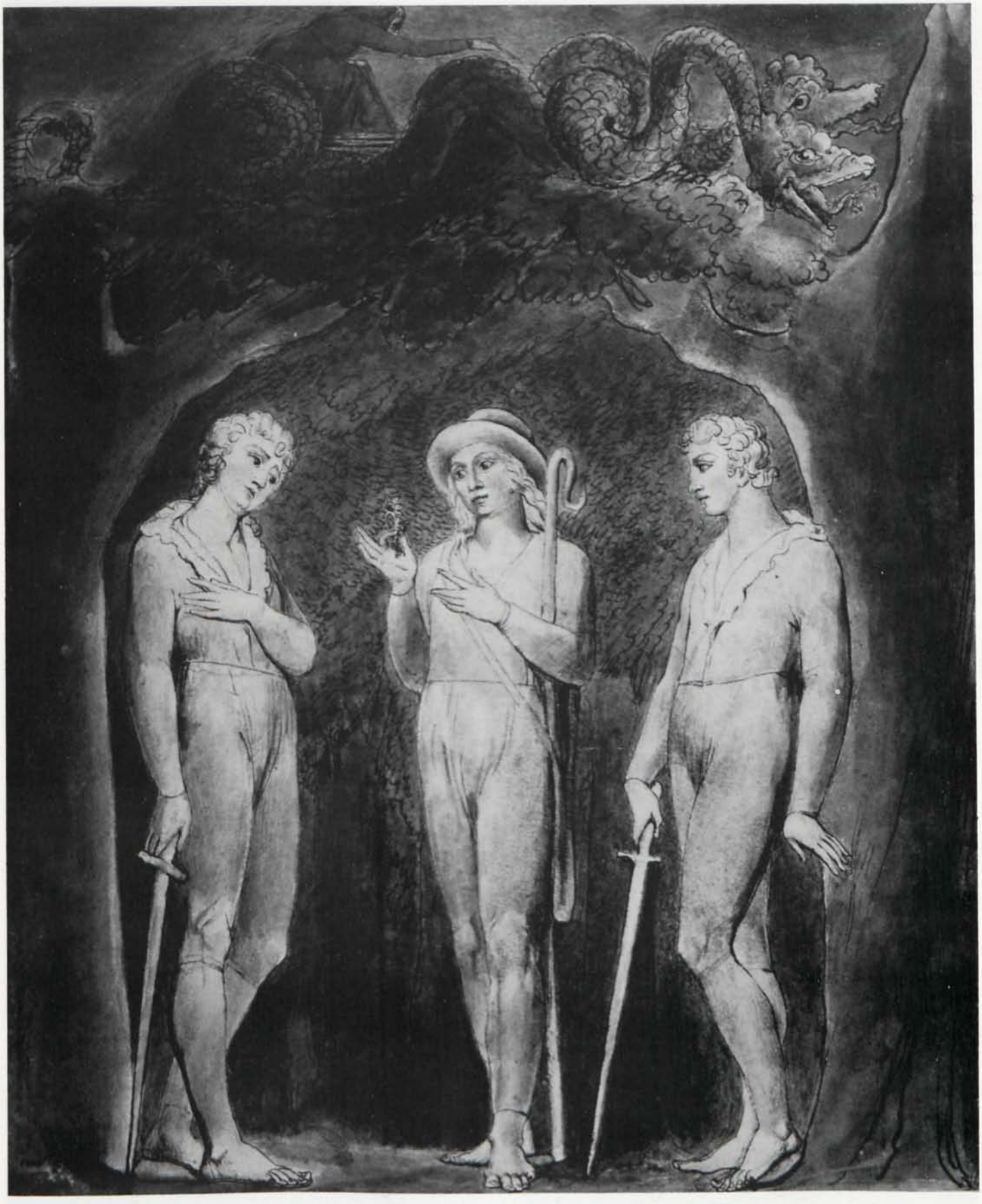
ing and the general brightness of the scene, she cannot be Night, who is personified in the masque (195-200). The most convincing identification of this figure is Hecate, Cotytto's companion in the masque. Evidence supporting this is that Blake has portrayed Hecate's companion with Hecate's serpent-team in H 4; and thus, when serpents (albeit not the same serpents) reappear with a new driver, the sensible identification would be their mistress Hecate. More evidence of the figure's identity is the Spirit's reference (cited above) to having heard Comus and his rabble performing rites to Hecate earlier in the night; consequently, her appearance in B 4 is as logical as Cotytto's presence in H 4. Third, in classical authors Hecate (but not Cotytto) is frequently associated with the moon, as she is here with the moon above her head. Originally she was a moon goddess (Osgood, p. 29); Plutarch, for example, labels the moon Hecate's province (*Cess. of Oracles*, 13). Blake refers to Hecate by name a number of times, and he did several versions of a color-printed drawing of Hecate as the triform goddess.[23]

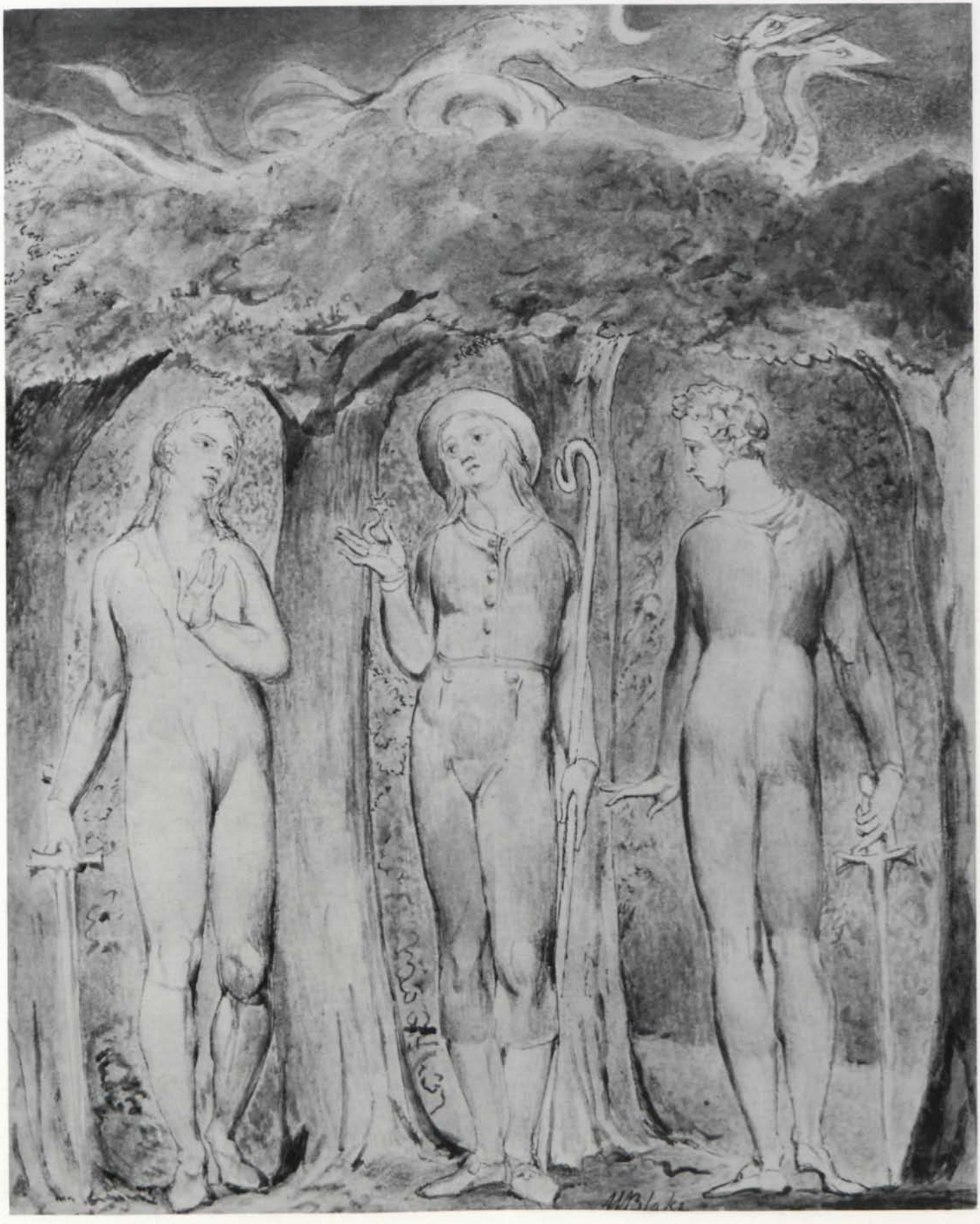
Hecate's identity proliferates in the later Classical poets, whose view Milton follows (Osgood, p. 29). She is identified as Artemis, Apollo's twin sister and daughter of Zeus and Leto, and is said to possess three identities: Selene (or Luna or Cynthia) in the sky, Artemis (or Diana) on earth, and Proserpina (or Hecate) in hell and on the earth at night.[24] She later becomes identified with malignant divinity, witchcraft (Osgood, p. 29), and terror.[25] Moreover, she represents choice and uncertainty: "She was associated with deeds of darkness, the Goddess of the Crossways, which were held to be ghostly places of evil magic. . . . In her is shown most vividly the uncertainty between good and evil which is apparent in every one of the divinities" (Hamilton, p. 32).

Blake's decision to switch Cotytto for Hecate in B must be regarded as a significantly different view of the masque--a second interpretation that does not necessarily supersede the first. If Hecate now rides to attend the Banquet of B 5, she would appear to supersede Cotytto as the reigning evil deity over this and other B scenes, leaving Cotytto's whereabouts a puzzle. If we consider the masque again chronologically, she cannot be attending Comus in B 1 during the events of B 4 because both B 1 and B 2 are past when B 4 occurs. Perhaps Blake thought of her as switching roles with Hecate and present but not visible in B 2. The text, as discussed above, emphasizes the sorcery (and by extension, Hecate) in the second scenes; yet in B 2 Blake does not include (as he does in H) the visual emblem of

Scene 3: "The Brothers Observed by Comus Plucking Grapes." Huntington, top left; Boston, top right.

Scene 4: "The Brothers Meet the Attendant Spirit in the Wood." Huntington, right.





magic, the *haemony*, and thus appears to de-emphasize the elements of enchantment.

Hecate's visual presence in the B designs draws attention away from the themes Cotytto represents as it emphasizes the importance of sorcery and the supernatural: the Attendant Spirit, Comus's wand, the cup with transmogrifying liquor, the monsters, the spells on the travelers and later on the Lady, the enchanted herb, and Sabrina's counter-spell releasing the Lady. As Goddess of the Crossroads, Hecate also reinforces the theme of choice, of the difficulty of making decisions in a deceptive world. A cross-examination of all sixteen designs in terms of these motifs reveals a general consistency: the H series usually emphasizes sensuality and the threat of sexual force, as well as a strict virginity opposing that threat, rather than the elements of witchcraft, deception, and choice. In the B series, the emphasis is generally the reverse.

In H 1 a stress on sexuality is apparent in the nudity of Comus and the wolf-headed monster; in B all the figures are clad. Comus's body is more muscular than in B, and therefore more sexual and more treatening. The Lady clasps her hands between her breasts (even more pronounced in H 5 where she folds her hands protectively over her breasts), highlighting the theme of defensive virginity; in B 1 her hands are unclasped and held away from her body. Elements of sorcery in B are suggested by the attention Blake affords to the cup with the magic potion: Comus holds it high and appears to be casting a spell over it with his powerful wand; in H, however, the cup is not nearly so conspicuous in the hand of the hog-monster. Also, the right foot of this female monster is cloven, suggesting the demonic; but in H it is not.[26]

In H 2 the sexuality-virginity emphasis continues with an aged but still muscular Comus in disguise: his neck and right arm are bullish, his frame solid; in B Comus is noticeably younger and his build slighter. The Lady in H appears distressed, fearful, anxious, and holds her upraised hands close to her body; in B she displays no such worried expression, and her upraised hands are away from her body in a less-threatened, more relaxed pose. Seemingly inconsistent with Blake's emphasis in H, as noted previously, is the appearance of *haemony* in the Spirit's hand, an emblem of the supernatural.

Neither version of Scene 3 stresses sexuality over sorcery. The H Comus now appears younger, the

Scene 4: "The Brothers Meet the Attendant Spirit in the Wood." Boston, left.

Scene 5: "The Magic Banquet with the Lady Spell-Bound." Huntington, lower left; Boston, lower right.

Scene 6: "The Brothers Driving out Comus."
Huntington, upper left; Boston, lower right.

Scene 7: "Sabrina Disenchanting the Lady."
Huntington, lower left; Boston, upper right.

B Comus older (as shown by the lines in his face and neck).

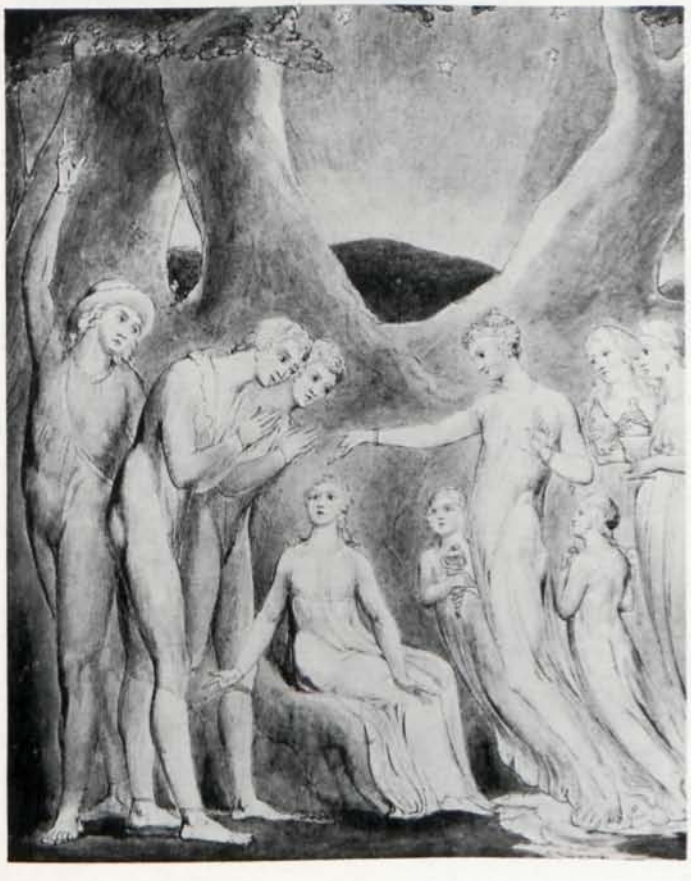
H 5 continues the muscular Comus; the B Comus is delicate, effeminate. However, both are clothed, although thinly. Yet Comus in H is barefooted, with his right foot close to the Lady's and the big toe oddly short and raised toward her. The H Lady covers her breasts in defense of her virginity, and she sits in a chair with carvings of three bare-breasted female figures entwined apparently with serpents; the carvings plainly embody the sensual temptation that Comus is offering the Lady, and they contrast well with the Lady's defensive posture. The carved figures are absent in the B chair, and the Lady's hands are relaxed on her thighs. An emphasis in B on sorcery can be seen in Blake's positioning of the magic cup. Just as in B 1, Blake in B 5 draws attention to it: Comus holds it high enough to outline it clearly against the plain column behind; in H, Comus holds it so low that its lines blend with those of Comus's arm, hand, cape, the bird-monster behind, and the covered dish below, which repeats the triangular shape of the cup's pedestal, reverses the shape of the cup itself, and therewith obscures it. Also highlighting the sorcery in B is the visionary and amazing serpent above Comus's wand; clearly designed to represent the spell Comus is casting over the Lady, the snake has no body apart from that suggested by the lines of a nearly invisible two-layered cloud over the Lady. Finally, the oddly shaped carafe held on a platter by the strange dwarf, to which Comus points his wand, seems to reinforce the element of magic. The cat-monster to the Lady's left also holds an unusual container apparently containing transforming liquid. Perhaps with the cup and these two containers Blake is amplifying the text in providing Comus with several choices for the Lady.

In H 6 Comus is again more muscular than in B, and naked (as in H 1); the B Comus is still clothed. Again the Lady in H tightly covers her breasts as she sits in the carved chair; in B her hands still rest on her thighs. Suggestions of sorcery are present in both versions: in B the four vanishing faces below Comus's wand are evil and demonic, especially the lowest one; in H the faces, from bottom up, are a point-eared human face that seems to be breathing red flames toward the brothers (Milton's stage directions after line 813 specify that the monsters give a show of resistance); a bird-monster like that in B 5 (nearest the Lady); another human face, this one with stubby horns; and above the wand, a long-eared horse head (from lines 553-54?).

Neither seventh scene emphasizes sensuality. B suggests Sabrina's magic power more than H: she is covered by a bright rainbow at the end of which sits the Lady; and Sabrina's magic drops to purify the Lady are emphasized visually by the shell in which she carries the liquid.[27] In H she merely holds her hand over the Lady's head.

Neither eighth scene emphasizes sensuality. But the magical is clearly the highlight of B, wherein the departing Attendant Spirit is executed with a delicacy and a translucence complementing the brightness of the scene and giving the sensation that one can almost see through him, that he is dissolving into the air.

Blake's two series for *Comus*, then, are considerations of the masque from different viewpoints. The masque itself is particularly rich in connotations of both the sexuality-virginity theme and the theme of witchcraft, magic, and the supernatural. The visual representatives of these themes--the reigning powers of this particular night during which the chaste Lady is in serious danger of seduction--are Cotytto in H and Hecate in B. Blake's use of these two pagan goddesses to represent themes he accentuates fairly consistently throughout the two series not only illuminates the masque by focusing attention on Milton's themes, but also highlights Blake's own perception that Cotytto and Hecate as powers of evil are at the very center of Milton's drama in which good and evil clash openly and forcibly, and in which both Milton and Blake ultimately assert the necessity of making a proper choice between the two.



[1] The two series, although of the same scenes or combination of scenes in *Comus*, are considerably different (see n. 2 below). The date of the Huntington set of eight is probably about 1801-1802, as Blake refers to the unfinished designs in a letter to John Flaxman dated 19 October 1801 (Blake, *Complete Writings*, ed. Geoffrey Keynes [London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1966], p. 810). The date of the Boston series of eight is less certain. Marcia R. Pointon suggests that they were done "probably a little later" than the first set (*Milton & English Art* [Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1970], p. 139); Angus Fletcher dates them between 1805 and 1810 (*The Transcendental Masque: An Essay on Milton's "Comus"* [Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 1971], p. 253); Joseph A. Wittreich, Jr. proposes 1809 (*Angel of Apocalypse: Blake's Idea of Milton* [Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1975], p. 80); and more recently David Bindman asserts that they were done "probably about 1815," although he offers no evidence for so late a date (*Blake As an Artist* [Oxford: Phaidon, 1977], p. 186). The important question of whether the B series was completed before or after Blake's *Milton*, the date of which is also open to question, thus remains unresolved. Both sets are reproduced in color by A. Fletcher, but the H series in the copies of Fletcher I have seen is badly printed and potentially misleading. Having examined the originals of both sets, I am impressed that a quality reproduction of them in color is sorely needed. For kind permission to reproduce these two sets of designs, I wish to thank the Huntington Library and Art Gallery, San Marino, Calif., and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

[2] A few of the differences are discussed by A. Fletcher, who credits Diane Christian for much of the analysis (pp. 253-56); by Wittreich, *Angel of Apocalypse* (pp. 81-86); and by Bindman (p. 186).

[3] Irene Tayler, "Blake's *Comus* Designs," *Blake Studies*, 4 (Spring 1972), 45-80; citations above come from pp. 48, 51, 76, 48 (to which cf. p. 75n). The reference to Medea is on p. 237 in her expanded version, "Say First! What Mov'd Blake? Blake's *Comus* Designs and *Milton*," in *Blake's Sublime Allegory: Essays on "The Four Zoas," "Milton," and "Jerusalem,"* ed. Stuart Curran and Joseph Anthony Wittreich, Jr. (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1973), pp. 233-58.

[4] *Angel of Apocalypse*, p. 83.

[5] "The Mental Contest: Blake's *Comus* Designs," forthcoming in *Blake Studies*. I am much obliged to Professor Behrendt for allowing me to read those portions of his manuscript that relate to this study, and for offering perceptive suggestions regarding my anaylsis.

[6] Tayler, "This strange figure is not in Milton's masque" ("Blake's *Comus* Designs," p. 48; see also, "Say First!" p. 237); Pointon, "Above the trees rides the moon-goddess . . . a figure which does not feature in Milton's poem" (p. 139), even though Blake is "precise in following details of the text" (p. 138); Behrendt, "The figure in the dragon-car above the trees is unmentioned in Milton's [standard] text."

[7] The heart of Wittreich's argument is as follows: "Charles Lamb reminds us that the following lines, 'not printed in the common editions of Milton' and not 'generally known to belong to that divine "Masque",' were printed in both the 1801 and 1809 editions by Henry John Todd, having first been published in Todd's 1798 edition of *Comus*. The Attendant Spirit, descending and entering, explains that his mansion is '*Amidst th' Hesperian gardens . . . / . . . on whose faire tree / The scalie-harnest dragon ever keeps / His unenchanted eye.*' A few lines later we read of the 'jealous ocean' winding his 'farre extended armes, till with steepe fall / Halfe his wast flood the wild Atlantique fills.' The scaly dragon derives from these lines, and so does the figure of jealousy, which is transformed by Blake into the 'female' riding the dragon. The arching trees, creating a den-like place, may also be explained by turning to the cancelled lines that speak of 'this *arched* wood' and its '*yawning dens*'" (*Angel of Apocalypse*, pp. 82-83). That the single dragon in the cancelled lines is "scalie," "harnest," and that the trees of the forest are "arched" and form "yawning dens" coincide with elements in Blake's illustrations--the H serpents (but not the B) are scaled, in both series they are harnessed, and the trees are noticeably arched, particularly in H. But Blake's dragons are a team, they are not keeping watch over precious fruit, and they are driven by female figures (not male, like Milton's Jealous Ocean) who ostensibly have no direct connection with the Attendant Spirit or with the Hesperian Gardens from whence he comes. The cancelled lines are discussed by John. S. Diekhoff, who points out that the central images in this cancelled passage (the Hesperian tree, the dragon guarding the fruit with "uninchanted eye") are inserted by Milton further on in the masque and thus appear in all standard versions, including those Blake most likely used ("The Text of *Comus*, 1634 to 1645" [1937; rpt. as an appendix to *A Maske at Ludlow: Essays on Milton's "Comus,"* ed. Diekhoff, Cleveland: The Press of Case Western Reserve Univ., 1968, pp. 251-75; the discussion of these cancelled lines appears on pp. 265-66]). For a discussion of the versions of *Comus*, see n. 8 below.

[8] Of the five important versions of the masque, Blake probably was familiar with a reproduction of the 1645 or the 1673 version. Thomas Warton's ed., which is a mixture of both these versions, appeared in 1785 and 1791 ("A Maske Presented at Ludlow Castle, 1634" in *Poems upon Several Occasions* [London: J. Dodsley]). Henry John Todd's ed. of *Comus* in 1798 follows the 1645 version, although like Warton's it updates the spelling, punctuation, and capitalization (*A Mask . . . With Notes Critical and Explanatory . . .* [Canterbury: W. Bristow, *et al.*]; rpt. as part of Todd's edn. of Milton's *Poetical Works* in 1801, 1809, 1826, etc. The passages I cite, which do not vary significantly from version to version, come from Todd's 1798 ed. Because Todd reproduces the 1645 version, his line numbers are the same as those in the more accessible modern ed. by Merritt Y. Hughes, who also reprints the 1645 edn. (*Complete Poems and Major Prose* [Indianapolis, Ind.: Odyssey, 1957]).

The five versions of the masque are: (1) the Trinity Manuscript, a transcript in Milton's hand made sometime after the original and reproduced in part in 1861, in full in 1899; (2) the "expurgated" and shortened Bridgewater Manuscript, apparently a stage copy, transcribed and printed by Todd in 1798; (3) the first published version (anonymous), 1637, based on the Trinity Manuscript early in its correction stage; (4) the 1645 ed., authorized by Milton; and (5) the 1673 ed., set from the 1645 ed. Facsimiles and discussions of all five versions appear in Harris F. Fletcher's ed., *John Milton's Complete Poetical Works, Reproduced in Photographic Facsimile* (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1943), vol. I.

Corrupted stage adaptations of *Comus* were performed frequently during 1738-1850, but Blake's designs show no evidence that he followed an adaptation over the standard texts. The first major adaptation, that of John Dalton in 1738, adds scenes, shortens speeches, and inserts additional characters: a second attendant spirit, Philidel, is to watch over the Lady in the forest; Euphrosyne adds to Comus's argument at the castle; and a spirit assists Sabrina late in the masque (*Comus, a Mask . . . As Alter'd from Milton's Mask . . .*[London: R. Dodsley, 1738]. Blake does not include these figures: H 2 portrays Milton's Attendant Spirit (so identified because he holds the magic herb, as he later tells the brothers, 638-47). H 5 and B 5 do not include a female persuader. Dalton's adaptation, incidentally, does include the Cotytto-Hecate passage cited previously; but its successor, that by George Colman in 1772, shortens the passage and omits all reference to Cotytto, rendering the lines nonsensical (*Comus: A Masque, Altered from Milton . . .* [London: T. Lowndes, *et al.*]). For further analysis of the stage adaptations, see Alwin Thaler, "Milton in the Theatre," *SP*, 18 (July 1920), 269-308.

[9] After completing this study, I came upon an apparent but very brief corroboration of the identifications I present below in John E. Grant and Robert E. Brown's "Blake's Vision of Spenser's *Faerie Queene*: A Report and an Anatomy," *Blake Newsletter 31*, 8 (Winter 1974-75), 64, n. 5, wherein the authors refer to the dragons "that pull the cars of Cotytto-Hecate in *Comus* 4." This identification, so far as I have been able to determine, is not expanded elsewhere.

[10] The sky is not visible partly because the woman rides through rather than above the foliage. In the B series, the female rides atop the trees, the night is clear, and the sky and moon are plainly visible. The gloom Blake portrays in H is consistent with numerous allusions by the masque characters to the absolute darkness of the night, caused by heavy clouds (e.g., 193-96; 203; 330-38; and so forth). The only light to appear during these early forest scenes, according to the text, is a momentary glimmer in the clouds detected by the Lady (220-24).

[11] In Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, a dragon-drawn chariot descends in answer to Medea's prayer to Hecate (VII. 218-19). Milton alludes to the dragon-team in his Latin elegy "*In Obitum Praesulis Elienis*" ("On the Death of the Bishop of Ely"), ll. 56-58, which antedates *Comus* by six years.

[12] David V. Erdman, for instance, maintains the distinction in *The Illuminated Blake* (Garden City, N. Y.: Anchor / Doubleday, 1974). "Serpents" or "snakes" elsewhere in Blake that bear close resemblance to these harnessed creatures are the similarly harnessed serpents in *Thel* 6^{1} (Erdman, p. 40) and *America* 11^{N} (Erdman, p. 149). In contrast, a Blake "dragon" (to use his own term) with forelegs and wings is pictured in *America* 4^{N} (Erdman, p. 142) and a variation in *America* b (Erdman, p. 393).

[13] Charles Grosvenor Osgood, *The Classical Mythology of Milton's English Poems* (1900; rpt. New York: Gordian, 1964), pp. 24-25.

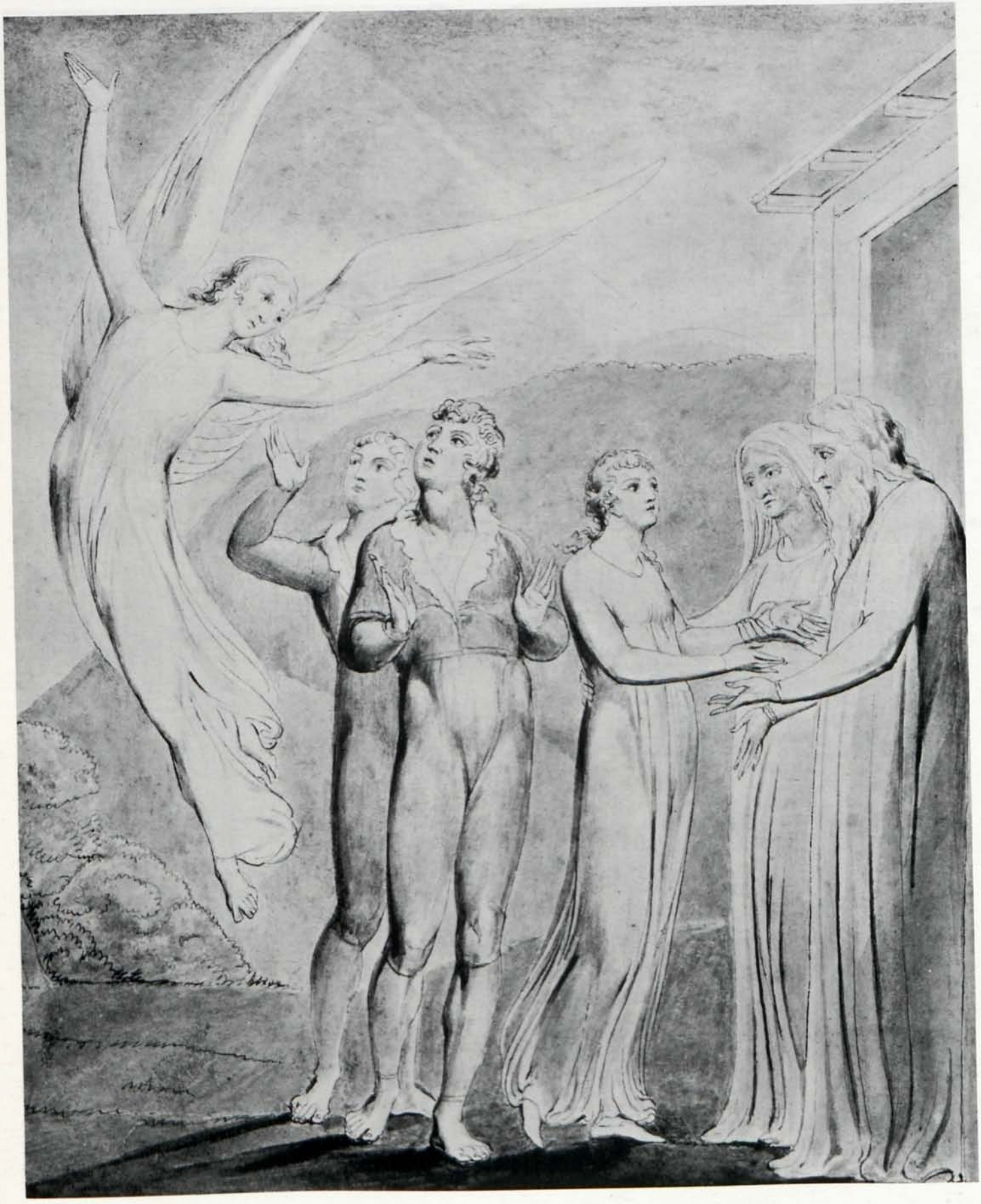
[14] Barbara Breasted, "*Comus* and the Castlehaven Scandal," *Milton Studies*, 3 (1971), 201-24.

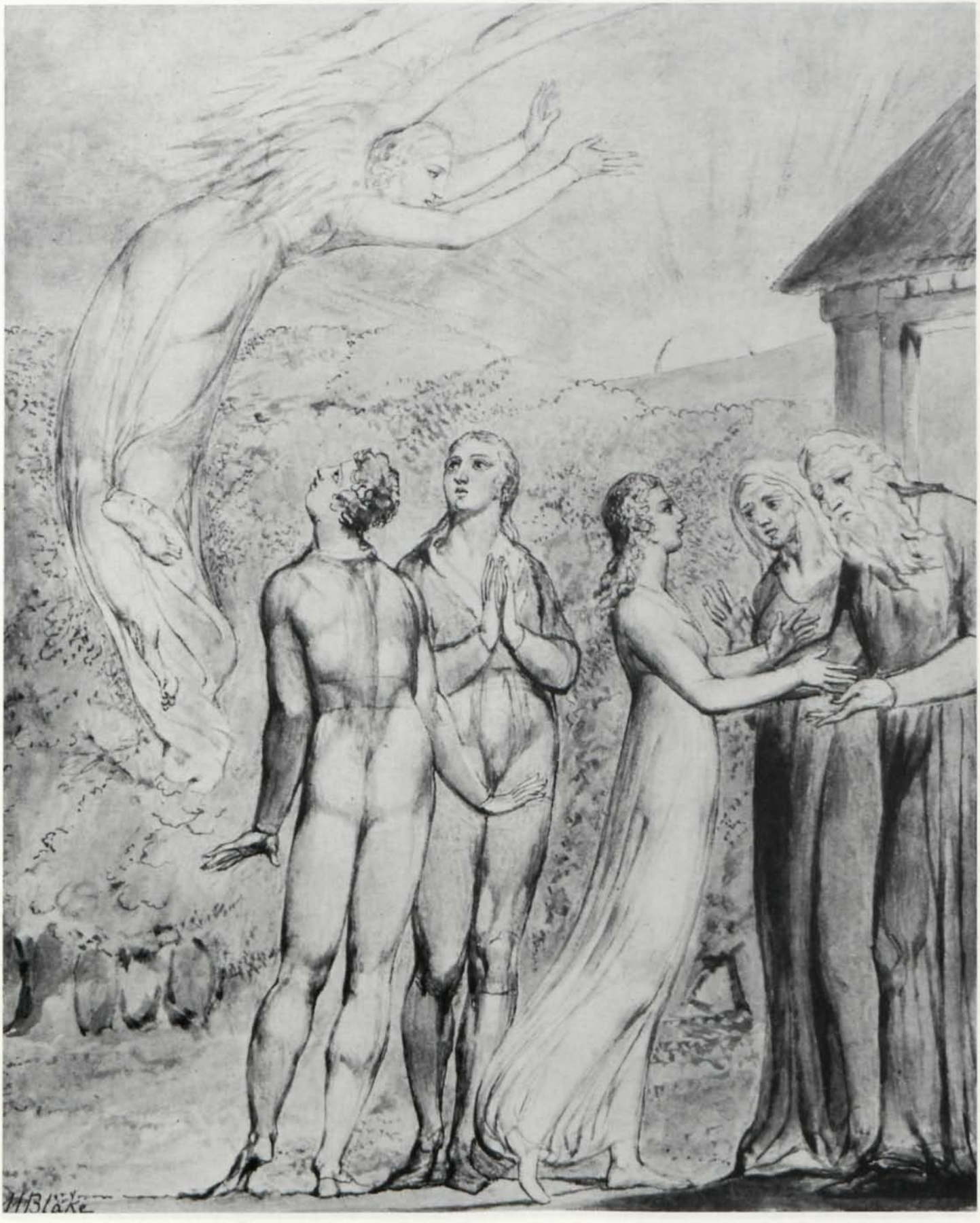
[15] Todd's annotation to "Dark-veil'd Cotytto" (129) includes material from Newton's earlier note: "*The Goddess of wantonness. . . .* Dr. Newton observes, that 'she was originally a "strumpet, and had midnight sacrifices at Athens, and is there-"fore [sic] very properly said to be *dark-veiled*.' Her orgies were celebrated also by the Thracians, Chians, Corinthians, and others. Her rites were termed *Cotyttia*, and her priests *Baptae*. See Juvenal Sat. ii. v. 91. Milton makes her the companion of Hecate, the patroness of enchantments, to whom Comus and his crew v. 535 'do abhorred rites: 'her mysteries requiring *the veil of that darkness*, over which Hecate presided" (p. 23n). Thomas Newton, ed., *Paradise Regain'd . . . To Which Is Added . . . Poems upon Several Occasions . . .* (London: J. & R. Tonson, & S. Draper, 1752).

[16] See S. Foster Damon, *A Blake Dictionary: The Ideas and Symbols of William Blake* (Providence, R. I.: Brown Univ. Press, 1965), pp. 365-66.

[17] Blake's "I saw a chapel" comes from his Note-Book and was written about 1793. Below are the first two stanzas:

> I saw a chapel all of gold
> That none did dare to enter in,
> And many weeping stood without,
> Weeping, mourning, worshipping.
>
> I saw a serpent rise between
> The white pillars of the door,




W Blake

And he forc'd & forc'd & forc'd,
[Till he broke the pearly door *del.*]
Down the golden hinges tore. (*Complete Writings*, p.163)

[18] See Damon under "Dragon," p. 107.

[19] Milton's *haemony* as an emblem representing legitimate vs. illegitimate sexual experience is a thesis I present in "An Anglo-Saxon Etymology for Milton's *Haemony*," *American Notes & Queries*, 14 (October 1975), 18-19.

[20] In the original one can plainly see that the triangular design is created by folds in Cotytto's dress. But in reproductions, especially A. Fletcher's, the configuration might be taken as a car or chariot. Vertical lines directly beneath the triangular skirt, however, do imply a platform on which Cotytto is riding.

[21] In *Paradise Lost* the scale constitutes a key symbol, where Libra's position in the Zodiac between Virgo (Eve) and Scorpio (Satan) is a striking and profound image (III. 558; cf. IV. 997). Blake may also be including the scale image in his fifth *Comus* scenes, the Banquet: in both versions, he includes hanging lamps, triangular and scale-shaped, one almost directly over the seated Lady. And in H 6, a lamp is visible below the second brother's sword, where it looks more like a hanging scale (in connection with the sword) than a lamp. It seems significant that the notorious cup, wrenched from the sorceror's hand by the nearest brother, is directly below the lamp-scale.

[22] A similarity worth observing exists between this female figure and one in the watercolor version (done for Thomas Butts) of Plate 14, "The Morning Stars Sang Together," of Blake's *Illustrations of the Book of Job*; the similarity is pointed out by Pointon, who claims erroneously that the figures are the same person (p. 171, n. 102). The female in *Job* also leads a red, blue, and scaled serpent-team much like Blake's H serpent-team, and also rides under a crescent moon. However, the female figure has wings. For a color reproduction, see Kathleen Raine, *William Blake* (New York: Praeger, 1971), p. 165.

[23] Blake's references to Hecate are on the following pages in the *Complete Writings*: 41, 840, 849, 855 (three references). Versions of Blake's *Hecate* are in the Huntington Art Gallery, the Tate Gallery, and the National Gallery of Scotland. Raine provides a black and white reproduction of the Tate version (p. 86); the Huntington version is reproduced in black and white as "The Triple Hecate" in the Library's *Catalogue of William Blake's Drawings and Paintings in the Huntington Library*, C. H. Collins Baker, enl. and rev. R. R. Wark (San Marino, Calif.: The Huntington Library, 1969), pl. XXXV; it is also reproduced in *The Huntington Library Quarterly*, 18 (May 1955). Blake refers to a Hecate "drawing" or "cartoon" (*Complete Writings*, p. 855) by George Romney in his possession in 1804 (p. 849) and which he claims was both well executed and well known (p. 855). This Romney *Hecate* may have influenced his own portrayals of the goddess; certainly it must bear a relationship to the *Comus* Hecate, for Blake describes it as "the figure with the torch and snake" (p. 840). I have been unable to locate Romney's drawing, despite the able assistance of Shirley Martin of the Univ. of Maine library at Farmington, who has made inquiries for me at Yale and Princeton, which hold major Romney collections, and at Huntington, Frick, Courtland, and Tate. Jean H. Hagstrum kindly referred my inquiry to his former student Warren Jones, who is currently working on the Blake color-printed drawings of 1795; Jones made inquiries of Martin Butlin and of Ann Crookshank, a leading Romney authority. Jones thinks Blake may have owned it, Butlin believes that it probably belonged to Hayley, and Miss Crookshank surmises that it is probably lost among the numerous Romney drawings scattered throughout the world.

[24] Edith Hamilton, *Mythology* (1940; rpt. New York: New American Library, 1969), p. 31; see also Alastair Fowler's note, *The Poems of Milton*, ed. John Carey and Fowler (London: Longman, 1968), p. 26.

[25] Charles M. Gayley, *The Classical Myths in English Literature*, 3rd ed. (Boston: Ginn, 1894), p. 84.

[26] This detail, apparent in the original, is not so visible in reproductions: my copy of A. Fletcher's color reprints fails to show the clearly differentiated toes of the H female's left foot, making *it* appear cloven, and his reprint of B is not sufficiently clear to show the figure's seemingly cloven left foot. The reproduction of H in the Huntington catalog cited above is much clearer.

[27] Sabrina's purification rite (910-21) does not mention a shell, but much earlier the Lady alludes to one in her lovely song, song, "Sweet Echo":

"*Sweet Echo, sweetest Nymph that liv'st unseen / Within thy airy shell / By slow Meander's margent green . . .* " (230-32).

Blake's shell in B 7 thus stresses visually Sabrina's identity as a water nymph; but more important, it ties Sabrina to the Lady's early plea to the Nymph Echo for assistance in finding her brothers, consequently involving Sabrina from the very beginning of the Lady's confrontation with evil.

THE ECHOING GREENHORN: BLAKE AS HEBRAIST

ARNOLD CHESKIN

As students of Blake know, "the most formative literary and spiritual influence" on him was the Bible.[1] There is considerable uncertainty, however, about the extent of Blake's familiarity with the original language of the Old Testament, Hebrew. Although at least eight of his illuminations contain Hebrew inscriptions, "we do not know how much Hebrew Blake had . . . ."[2] In the thirteen years since Harold Bloom's acknowledgment, that small island in the sea of Blake scholarship has not, apparently, been covered. I will attempt, then, on the basis of the inscriptions to assess Blake's knowledge of and facility with Hebrew. Because the irregularities in the inscriptions are so telling, we can focus our attention exclusively on them. If they had been accurate and in a good hand, their evidence would be equivocal. We could not know, in that case, if Blake merely possessed a good eye for copying.

An obvious reason for the uncertainty about Blake's grasp is that most critics themselves have no Hebrew. One such figure, Mr. A. G. B. Russell, concluded that the subject of Blake's only lithograph, a bearded "ancient" holding a book inscribed with his name, was "Job in Prosperity."[3]

Only after the ascription had gained general acceptance did someone notice that the name in Hebrew characters identifies the subject of the lithograph not as Job, but as Enoch. "And he was no more because God took him" (Genesis 5:24), the Biblical description of Enoch's signal death, is being scrutinized by two naked figures on the right side of the composition. A further irony lies in the very name that was missed--for "Enoch" ("Hanokh" in Hebrew) can mean "education."

Unable to assess Blake's grasp of Hebrew from internal evidence, Frederick Tatham, an early biographer, relied on circumstantial evidence from Blake's book collection. Finding Hebrew books "well thumbed and dirtied by his graving hands," Tatham concluded that Blake had "a most consummate knowledge" of the great Hebrew writers.[4] This highly questionable deduction can be put in its proper perspective with the help of G. E. Bentley, Jr.: "As a source of biographical facts [Tatham's] *Life* is of dubious value."[5]

Unfamiliarity with the language seems to be responsible for another disturbing problem in Hebrew-related Blake scholarship. Blake's lone reference to his Hebrew studies, found in an 1803 letter to his brother James, contains Hebrew characters. They have, however, been printed at least six different ways. In 1921, Geoffrey Keynes printed the series as אבכ (ABK--*'alef, bēth,*[6] *kaf*) i.e., "am now learning my Hebrew ABK."[7] (Hebrew is written from right to left. For ease of comprehension, however, I have written the English equivalents which follow directly, and then the names of the Hebrew letters, from left to right. An alphabet table is printed with my essay for the reader's reference.) This meaningless series was replaced by an equally meaningless one in 1927: אידב (AYDB--*'alef, yōd, daleth, bēth*), four characters instead of three.[8] Finally, in 1968 Keynes proposed אבג (ABC--*'alef, bēth, gīmel*)--a rendering which would put Blake at the beginning of his Hebrew language studies.[9]

Enoch (detail). Private collection.

Blake's letter to his brother James, 30 January, 1803. Library of Congress, Rosenwald Collection.

will embrace them whenever they see them My only Dif-
-ficulty is to produce fast enough.
I go on Merrily both my Greek & Latin: am very
sorry that I did not begin to learn Languages early in life
as I find it very Easy. am now learning my Hebrew. IIN
I read Greek as fluently as an Oxford Scholar & the Testament
is my chief master astonishing indeed is the English Translation
it is almost word for word as if the Hebrew Bible is as well
translated which I do not doubt it is We need not doubt of
its having been translated as well as written by the Holy Ghost
any ways joins me in Love to you both I am Eagerly yours
Wm Blake

Milton, pl. 15 (detail). Library of Congress, Rosenwald collection.

Tables of the Law. From the Collection of the Jewish Museum, New York.

Mona Wilson, generally regarded as the best twentieth-century biographer of Blake, remains consistent in printing the series as a four-letter group. However, her 1949 rendering, אירוב (AYON--*'alef, yōd, wāw, nūn*), becomes אירוב (IYOV--*'alef, yōd, wāw, vēth*) in the 1969 revision.[10] This latter version, in striking contrast to Keynes's latest version (ABC), makes Blake a good Hebraist since *IYOV*, the original name for Job, is one of the most difficult books in the Bible. Who, then, is correct?

By examining a photographic reproduction of the relevant portion of the letter containing Blake's lone reference to his Hebrew studies, I have found that Keynes's last variation, אבג (ABC), is accurate. No explanation for Keynes's forty-seven year delay or for other divergent readings is provided by the difficulty "of mak[ing] out what Blake [actually] wrote before he deleted the manuscript or erased the engraving . . . ."[11] It is unmistakably legible, as the reproduction below shows. Elsewhere in Blake's Hebrew inscriptions, however, there are relatively many obscurities and irregularities. Their special character, in contrast to that of the English ones, suggests that Blake never did master all of the Hebrew ABC's.

Plate 18A of *Milton*, which contains "letters so erroneous that it seems impossible to identify or translate them,"[12] serves as a good starting point. This evaluation by S. Foster Damon was actually make of a 1797 inscription in *Night Thoughts*. That it applies equally well to this one of 1804 throws into question Damon's own implication that Blake improved significantly in the years after *Night Thoughts*. To facilitate an evaluation here, I have included alongside it a typical pair of tablets (a familiar motif in Jewish ceremonial art).[13] Although several letters scrawled on the tablets in Urizen's hands are identifiable, they do not form, without interpolation, Commandments or abbreviations for Commandments that sometimes run to several sentences. If this plate existed in isolation, one could argue for the appropriateness of the illegibility in that Urizen and the tablets he holds are, to borrow a word from Blake's caption, in the process of annihilation.

Another set of stone tablets of the Law, in "Job's Evil Dream" from the Butts watercolors of Blake's *Job*,[14] begins to make such a sympathetic view untenable. The last three letters from right to left in the line indicated by Job's persecutor compose "gave," incorrectly spelled as נתנ (NTN--*nūn, tāw, nūn*). The *nūn* (circled in reproduction), like several other Hebrew letters, requires a different form at the end of a word. It is easily seen that Blake merely repeats the regular *nūn* (נ). This loose parallel in English may clarify

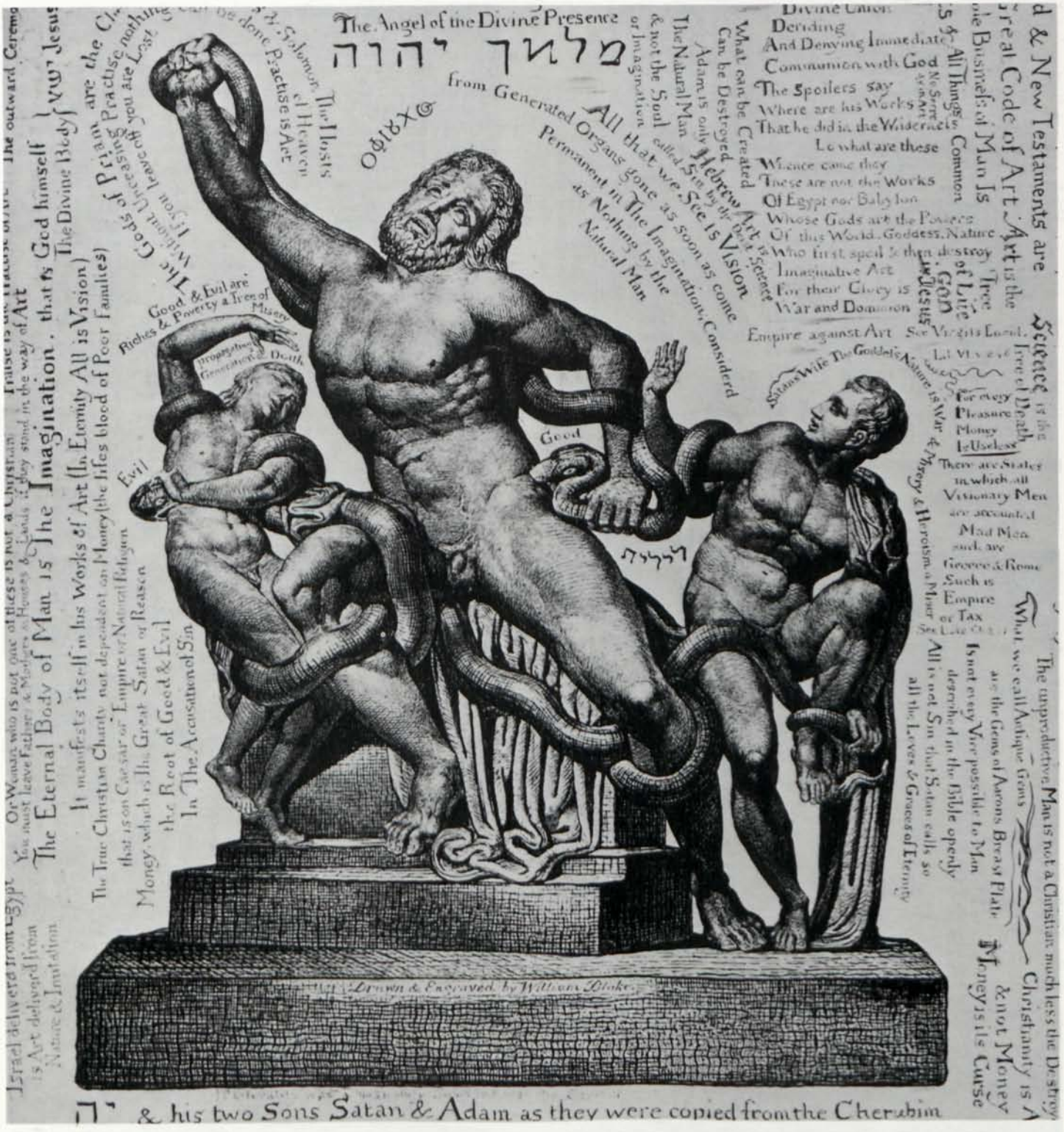
the fundamental nature of the error: spelling "jeopardy" with an "i"--"jeopardi"--instead of a "y" because the verb form uses the "ize" suffix ("jeopardize"). Just as the "i" cannot end "jeopardy," so a regular *nūn* cannot end נתן. This is not, apparently, the only such error.

One way of explaining this inscription is by positing Blake's use of a transliteration. Since both regular letters and their final counterparts sound identical, the English (Roman) character would not distinguish them. I have not found evidence of printed transliterations of the Hebrew Bible extant in Blake's time, but it is possible that his instructor transliterated the Ten Commandments for Blake.

This hypothesis might also explain another "letter interchange" committed in the Milton tablets. On the one in Urizen's right hand, Blake substitutes a ס (S--*samkh*) for what should be a ת (S [according to the Ashkenazic pronunciation]--*tāw*). These Commandments, however, are listed out of order (10, probably 9, 3), forcing us to posit more specifically a faulty transliteration or a faulty reading of a correct transliteration.

Another way of explaining some of Blake's irregularities arises from the tablets in "Job's Evil Dream." There the sixth, seventh, and eighth Commandments, according to the Hebrew reckoning, are listed in correct sequence, although they appear in the seventh, eighth, and ninth positions. In the sixth position is the phrase נתנ א-להך ("Your God has given"); (the dash is to be disregarded. Jewish law prohibits writing God's name in this kind of context.) which we have discussed earlier from a formal standpoint. Although neither a Commandment nor an abbreviation for one, the phrase actually does originate in the sections of the Bible containing the Ten Commandments (Exodus, ch. 20 and Deuteronomy, ch. 5). In fact, these words are among the last in the fifth Commandment: "Honor your father and mother so that your days may be many upon the land which the Lord *your God has given* you." One may be inclined to posit that Blake mistook the end of the fifth Commandment for the beginning of the sixth. This would not explain, though, how Blake managed to miscopy the final *nūn* (correctly written as ן, not נ), if he had a text in front of him.

Job's Evil Dreams (detail). Pierpont Morgan Library.



Laocoön (detail). Collection of Mrs. Charles T. Rosenbloom.

However well they explain individual phenomena, neither of the hypotheses suggested so far--nor others like faulty memory, which give Blake the benefit of the doubt--explains everything. The unmethodical character of the irregularities leaves us with two possible explanations: willful subversion or ignorance. But the case for willful subversion--that Blake knew better but deliberately made errors to disparage the tradition he saw as "One [tyrannical] Law for the Lion and the Ox"; or that he chose to keep himself a greenhorn to Hebrew on principle--is simultaneously unsupportable and irrefutable. We do not know his mind. Nevertheless, we seem justified in one conclusion. Given their elementary nature, it makes most sense to see the

irregularities as arising from ignorance. To see intention here is to argue that "jeopardi" spelled by an immigrant or elementary-school student is deliberate.

That mere carelessness is not Blake's bane in the inscriptions can best be seen through his rendering of the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet, א (*'alef*). The letter requires a diagonal bar slanting up from right to left. In "The Laocoön" he slants the bar in the opposite direction, down from right to left. In the frontispiece to *Job* (1825), he slants it correctly. And in "Job's Evil Dream" (also 1825), he does both. Since only an inch separates letters in the latter illumination, it is practically impossible to believe that he did not notice the discrepancy. In all probability, he thought that either form was acceptable--as in the Arabic numeral "four," written "٤" and "4."

We can, at this point, formulate a judgment more specific than Harold Fisch's when he says: Blake "knew little or no Hebrew."[15] We have seen that he was not entirely without Hebrew. Even a brief note like the following found among the many proverb-like sayings in "The Laocoön" suggests some familiarity: "He repented that he had made Adam (of the Female, the Adamah)." A complete foreigner to Hebrew would not know that the "ah" (ה‍ָ) ending is feminine. We have seen, nonetheless, that the first of Fisch's possibilities--that Blake knew little Hebrew--best fits the evidence.[16]

One of the interesting unsolved problems connected with Blake's Hebrew is his means of acquiring it. Unfortunately, even in an area like this, where no Hebrew writing is involved, the scholarship is problematic. Damon indicates the problem of Blake's acquisition this way: "We do not know who Blake's teachers were . . . [In] London . . . he continued his [Hebrew] studies, probably with some local rabbi . . . ."[17] G. E. Bentley, Jr. seems to have found the solution. Basing his claim on the January 1803 letter to James, Bentley identifies William Hayley as Blake's tutor.[18] The letter, however, contains no reference to Hayley in this capacity. And a perusal of the *Dictionary of National Biography* and Hayley's own *Memoirs* reveals no evidence that Hayley knew enough Hebrew to serve as tutor.[19] Even with some energetic digging and good fortune, it is possible, to use Blake's words, that "this mystery never shall cease."[20]

[1] Jean Hagstrum, *William Blake: Poet and Painter* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), p. 48.

[2] Harold Bloom, "Commentary," in *The Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, ed. David Erdman (New York: Doubleday, 1965), p. 838.

[3] Geoffrey Keynes, introductory monograph to *Illustrations of the Book of Job*, ed. Geoffrey Keynes (New York: Pierpont Morgan Library, 1935), p. 8.

[4] G. E. Bentley, Jr., *Blake Records* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 41.

[5] Bentley, p. 507.

[6] This character would technically require a dot (*dageš*) within it in order to be considered a *bēth*. But in unvocalized Hebrew the dot is not used. I have read other such letters in the same fashion when clearly appropriate.

[7] Geoffrey Keynes, *A Bibliography of William Blake* (New York: Grollier Club of New York, 1921), p. 451.

[8] William Blake, *Pencil Drawings*, ed. Geoffrey Keynes (Great Britain: Nonesuch Press, 1927), sketch 27.

[9] William Blake, *The Letters of William Blake*, ed. Geoffrey Keynes, (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1968 [revised edition]), p. 65.

[10] Wilson actually seems to be returning here to a second reading offered by Keynes in 1927--and abandoned as early as 1956.

[11] F. W. Bateson, review of *The Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, ed. David Erdman, *New York Review of Books*, 28 October 1965, p. 24.

[12] S. Foster Damon, *A Blake Dictionary: The Ideas and Symbols of William Blake* (Providence, R. I.: Brown University Press, 1965), p. 215.

[13] Tablets of unknown origin and date from the collection of The Jewish Museum, New York.

[14] *Job*, pl. 11.

[15] Harold Fisch, "William Blake," *The Encyclopedia Judaica* (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 1971), IV, 1071-72.

[16] An assessment of Blake's Hebrew does not require treatment of his every use of Hebrew. When taken as a whole, the instances not discussed in this paper (listed below) corroborate my findings. See "Figure Studies" in *The Paintings of William Blake*, ed. Darrell Figgis (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1925), p. 82; the title page and pl. 2 of *Job*, the last page of the third of the *Night Thoughts*, and pl. 35 of *Milton*, copy D.

[17] Damon, p. 215.

[18] Bentley, p. 526, n. 3.

[19] William Hayley, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of William Hayley, Esq.*, ed. John Johnson (London: Henry Colburn & Co., 1823).

[20] William Blake, *The Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, ed. Geoffrey Keynes (London: Nonesuch Press, 1927), p. 94.

		Name	Transliteration	Phonetic value	Numeral value
א		'Alef	' or omit	originally a glottal stop; now silent	1
ב		Bēth	*b*, *v*	*b*, *v*	2
ג		Gīmel	*g*	*g* in go	3
ד		Daleth	*d*	*d*	4
ה		Hē	*h*	*h*; silent at end of word	5
ו		Wāw	*w*	originally *w*; now *v*	6
ז		Zayin	*z*	*z*	7
ח		Ḥēth	*ḥ*	a strong *h*	8
ט		Ṭēth	*ṭ*	originally emphatic *t*; now *t*	9
י		Yōd	*y*	*y* in yes	10
כ	ך	Kaf	*k*, *kh*	*k*, *kh* as German *ch*	20
ל		Lamed	*l*	*l*	30
מ	ם	Mēm	*m*	*m*	40
נ	ן	Nūn	*n*	*n*	50
ס		Samekh	*s*	*s* in so	60
ע		'Ayin	'	originally a laryngal voiced spirant; now silent	70
פ	ף	Pē	*p*, *f*	*p*, *f*	80
צ	ץ	Ṣadē	*ṣ*	originally emphatic *s*; now *ts* in pets	90
ק		Qōf	*q*	originally velar *k*; now *k*	100
ר		Rēsh	*r*	*r*, as in French uvular or Italian trilled	200
ש		Śin, Shin	*ś*, *sh*	*ś*; originally palatal; now *s* in so; *sh* as in shoe	300
ת		Tāw	*t*	*t*; originally also like *th* in thin	400

"THE MENTAL TRAVELLER": MAN'S ETERNAL JOURNEY

The spiritual States of the Soul are all Eternal
Distinguish between the man, & his present State
(Jerusalem 52, E198, K681)[1]

IZAK BOUWER & PAUL McNALLY

The Mental Traveller" describes a cycle in which two figures, one male and one female, grow from infancy to old age and back to infancy again. Each grows younger as the other grows older, so that each is oldest when the other is at the point of birth. This curious round of change becomes understandable when we realize that the figures personify two complementary principles. However, the interpretation of these principles and of their cycle of change has proved to be puzzling and controversial. Of two main critical traditions, the earlier represents the cycle as essentially prototypical of cyclic process, and in particular of historical cycles.[2] Such a generalizing approach is out of character for Blake, and the cyclic processes of history are certainly within the grasp of "cold Earth wanderers," while this cycle is explicitly said to go beyond their knowledge. However, this tradition incorporates, in a simple and natural way, the fact that each principle develops to its fullest manifestation and then diminishes in the face of the growing opposing principle. The later tradition involves interpretations in terms of the so-called "Orc cycle": the Male Babe personifies revolt (Orc) and ages into a personification of oppression (Urizen).[3] Such a cycle is complete half way through the poem, and in spite of various attempts to interpret the Female Babe, the second half of Blake's cycle remains logically impertinent.[4] In both traditions, the cycle is seen as repeating.

The reading we give in this paper follows the earlier tradition to the extent that each principle is seen as aging into a mature form of itself. However, our reading differs from that of the earlier tradition in that the cycle is specifically seen as the theological cycle of Man's fall from and return to Eden. It is our aim to show that "The Mental Traveller" portrays the successive states through which Man passes on his eternal journey, as determined by the complementary interplay of two principles in him: the Spiritual, expressed through his imaginative faculty, and the Natural, expressed through his earthly nature.[5] This theme of Man's eternal journey was of profound importance to Blake, and inspires his entire mythology, so that the poem emerges as a compact counterpart to his major work, and a summary of his spiritual vision.

It was Blake's conviction that "Mental Things are alone Real" (*VLJ*, E555, K617), and he considered it his great task to "open the Eternal Worlds, to open the immortal Eyes / Of Man inwards into the Worlds of Thought: into Eternity . . . " (*Jerusalem* 5:18-19, E146, K623). Whether we see the traveler as the poet in his exploration of eternal reality, or as Man on his eternal journey, the title of the poem indicates that the business of the poem is with eternal things: "What are the Treasures of Heaven which we are to lay up for ourselves, are they any other than Mental Studies & Performances? What are all the Gifts of the Gospel, are they not all Mental Gifts?" (*Jerusalem* 77, E229, K717). It was also Blake's conviction that Man's eternal states are determined by a simple two-fold process in which truth is discovered as error is destroyed: "All Life consists of these Two Throwing off Error <& Knaves from our company> continually & recieving Truth <or Wise Men into our Company> Continually" (*VLJ*, E551, K612-13).[6] This two-fold process extends logically to encompass the entire myth of Man's fall and redemption: in the period when error, or the Natural principle, is dominant, the states of Man are those associated with the fall and Man's subsequent history in the dimensions of time and space; in the period when truth, or the Spiritual principle,

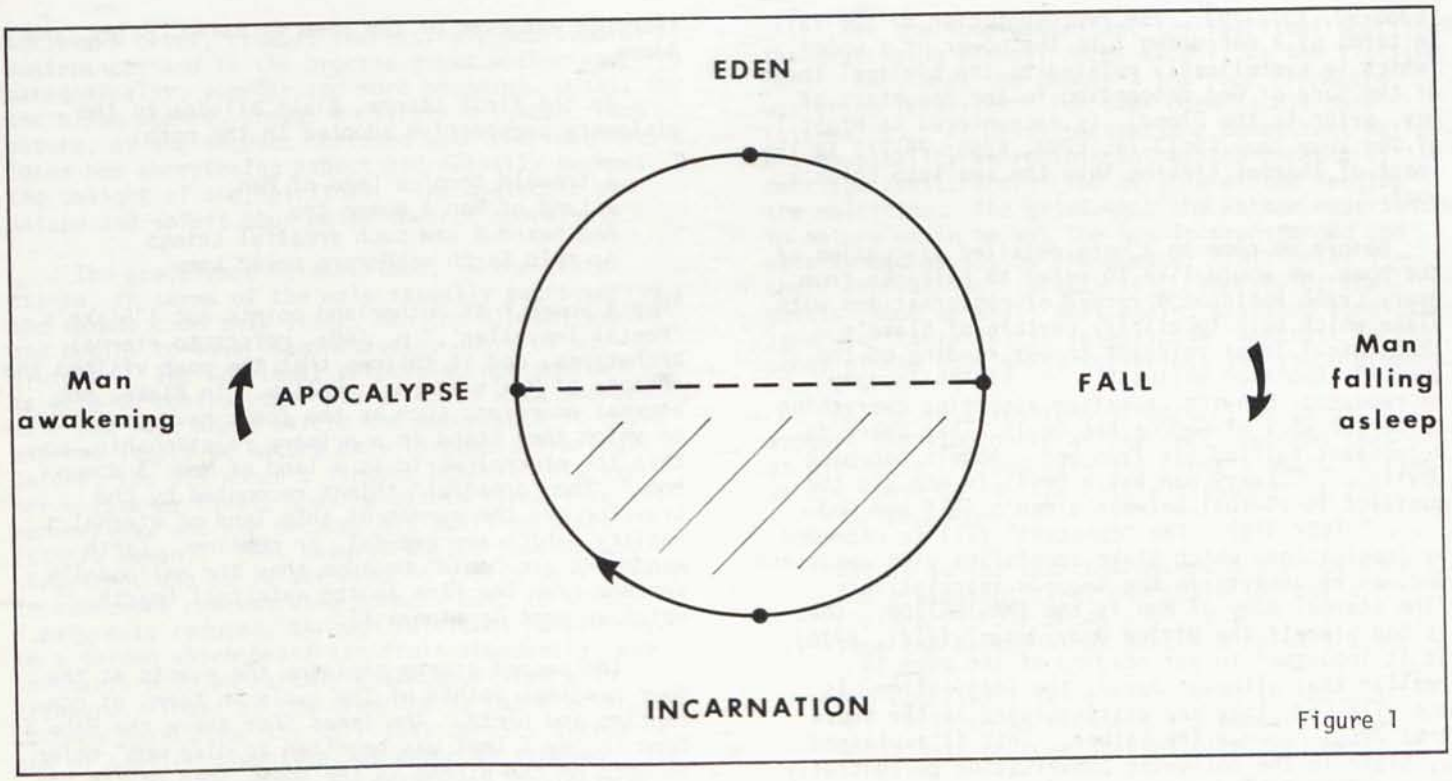


Figure 1

is dominant, the states of Man are those associated with the apocalypse and Man's sojourn in paradise.[7] There is one state where there is no error, and in this state Man is wholly divine and coincident with God.[8] This state, the state of Eden, closes the biblical narrative into a circle.[9]

We contend that "The Mental Traveller" describes this same circle. Because Blake shows the continuity of states, the circle appears to be a repetitive cycle, but is in fact merely complete. The poem is anti-Aristotelian and, like eternity, has no beginning, middle, or end. In Blake's vision in the poem, Man, composed of contrary but complementary principles, is seen as a continuous progression of states which in themselves form a unity, the perfect form of the circle. The two principles in Man, the Spiritual and the Natural, are personified, respectively, by the principal male and female figures of the poem, the age of each representing the extent to which the corresponding principle manifests in the being of Man. The cycle of the poem may be graphically represented as in Figure 1.

The poem begins at the point, shown at the bottom of the circle in Figure 1, where the Natural principle is in its fullest manifestation, and the incarnation of the Divine into the world of the Natural takes place. This incarnation is represented by the birth of the Male Babe, who is most naturally associated with Jesus. As the Spiritual gains in strength, the Natural principle becomes correspondingly less dominant until, at the left-most point of the circle, it is overpowered by the Spiritual principle. In the life-cycle of Man, this overpowering of the Natural by the Divine corresponds to the spiritual awakening of Man at the apocalypse. In the continuing process of the Last Judgment, the errors of the natural world are progressively destroyed as eternal truths are recognized. This process reaches its completion only when the natural delusion has decreased to vanishing point and all creation is consumed. Here, at the topmost point of the circle, Man finds himself in the state of Eden, where he is coincident with God, the "Heavenly Father."[10] When the Natural principle reappears as the Female Babe, it is in a growing phase, and increases in strength until, at the right-most point of the circle, the Spiritual is drawn into its power. This overpowering of the Divine by the Natural corresponds to the fall, where Man sinks into a spiritual sleep.[11] The Natural principle continues to gain in strength, while the Spiritual principle grows correspondingly weaker, until Humanity identifies itself with purely natural Man, who lives in the state of the earthly paradise, or lower garden. Thus we arrive again at the point where the incarnation of the Spiritual principle is to take place.

The images that Blake uses in the poem to express the varying relationships of the two principles, especially at the cardinal points of the cycle, have their parallels in the biblical narrative and are used in similar contexts elsewhere in Blake's work.[12] The torture of the Male Babe is fairly closely paralleled in *Jerusalem* (66:17-33, E216, K702; 68:57-58, E220, K706-07). The sexual act as metaphoric portrayal of the apocalypse (implicit in the biblical image of the Bride and Bridegroom) is found as part of a prophetic vision in the "Preludium" to *America*(2:3-4, E50-51, K196). The banquet encountered towards the end of the quarter cycle leading to the state of Eden (corresponding to the "supper of the great God" at the Last Harvest and Vintage, in Rev. 19:17) is the golden feast of the Eternals described in Night 9 of *The Four Zoas*

(E385-90, K372-78). The representation of the fall in terms of a man drawn into the power of a woman (which is symbolically related to the biblical theme of the Sons of God descending to the daughters of men, prior to the Flood), is encountered in Night 1 of *The Four Zoas* (5:13-14, E298, K266: 76-77) in the image of Tharmas sinking into the sea into Enion's woof.

Before we come to a more detailed discussion of the poem, we would like to refer to passages from Henry Crabb Robinson's record of conversations with Blake which help to clarify certain of Blake's theological ideas relevant to our reading of the poem.[14] Robinson writes:" . . . his philosophy he repeated--Denying Causation asserting everything to be the work of God or the Devil, That there is a constant falling off from God-- Angels becoming Devils . . . Every man has a Devil in him and the conflict is eternal between a man's Self and God . . . " (BBR 318). The "constant" fall is redeemed by Imagination, which Blake identifies with Jesus and God, as he asserts in the *Laocoön* inscription: "The Eternal Body of Man is the IMAGINATION. that is God himself The Divine Body Jesus" (E271, K776). It is important to our reading of the poem to realize that although Jesus, the Imagination, is one with God, they are distinguished in the sense that Jesus *becomes* the Father. This is explained by Blake in the following conversation delightfully recorded by Robinson:

> . . . I had suggested . . . the *impossibility* of supposing an immortal being created--An eternity a parte post--without an eternity a parte ante . . . His eye brightened on my saying this And he eagerly concurred--'To be sure it is impossible--We are all coexistent with God--Members of the Divine body--We are all partakers of the divine nature' . . . on my asking in what light he viewed the great question concerning the Divinity of Jesus Christ He said--'*He is the only God.*'--But then he added--'And so am I and so are you'--Now he had just before . . . been speaking of the errors of Jesus Christ: 'he was wrong in suffering himself to be crucified. He should not have attacked the government; he had no business with such matters.' On my enquiring how he reconciled this with the Sanctity & divine qualities of Jesus--he said 'He was not then become the father.' (BBR 310-11)

Jesus, therefore, personifies to Blake the Spiritual principle in its early stages, when it is still weak and at the mercy of the Natural. The Father is the Spiritual principle when it is dominant and nature is subjugated.

II

No short reading of "The Mental Traveller" (E475-77, K424-27) can do justice to its rich and varied allusions. We wish primarily to associate the narrative in the poem with the biblical narrative, indicating parallels in Blake's other works where these appear helpful, in order to show that the cycle of the poem is that of Man's eternal journey. Where we pass over details, we may be understood to accept the excellent and generally thorough exegeses of the poem by Raine, Paley, and Adams.

In the first stanza, Blake alludes to the visionary perspective adopted in the poem:

> I traveld thro' a Land of Men
> A Land of Men & Women too
> And heard & saw such dreadful things
> As cold Earth wanderers never knew.

"Men & Women," as Sutherland points out ("Blake's 'Mental Traveller'," p. 140), refers to eternal archetypes, and it follows that the poet visited the regions of Man's eternal reality. In Blake, the eternal energies, such as the Zoas, have emanations, to which they stand in a primary relationship, so that the eternal world is a land of Men "& Women too." The "dreadful" things recounted by the traveler are the events of this land of eternal reality, which are awe-ful, or sublime. Earth wanderers are "cold" because they are antipodally removed from the fire in the spiritual hearth, which we meet in stanza 11.

The second stanza explains the events at the four cardinal points of the cycle in terms of conception and birth. The lines "For there the Babe is born in joy / That was begotten in dire woe" refer to both of the births in the poem, that of the Boy, and that of the Female Babe. The "joy" is experienced by the principle that is born anew, for it is in a growing and assertive phase, and will triumph over the opposing principle a quarter-cycle later. At the sexual encounter a quarter-cycle earlier, the diminishing principle entered the "womb" of the other, which to it is a "dire woe." The Boy is conceived at the fall, and the implication is simply that Jesus is born of the flesh. Hence, in "To Tirzah" Blake's narrator can ask, "Thou Mother of my Mortal part / . . . what have I to do with thee?" (E30, K220), and in *The Everlasting Gospel* Blake writes of the "Serpent Bulk of Natures dross" (E515, K749) which is to be nailed to the cross. In the case of the Female Babe, the sexual encounter is the "dire woe" of the apocalypse, when nature is subjugated to the Eternal Imagination.

The first line of the third stanza, "And if the Babe is born a Boy," identifies the point at which Blake chooses to begin his description of the traversal of the cycle, that of the incarnation of the spirit into the natural world. Evidently, Blake is interested in charting the "dreadful" events of the spirit, following it in its cycle of evolution, from its birth, through subsequent growth, to its decline. The diverse images of torture that follow evoke associations with Prometheus, Orc, and as Raine suggests, with Dionysus (who was lacerated, and who like Christ had a heavenly father and an earthly mother). However, the most sustained reference is to the suffering of Christ (as is the case in the parallel description in *Jerusalem* 66). Incarnated in the natural world, the spirit has to undergo the excruciating tensions of the contraries operating in this world: The Old Woman cuts the Boy's heart out "To make it feel both cold & heat." As the Boy grows older, thus stronger, his sufferings become less intense. Since she lives "upon his

shrieks & cries," she is increasingly deprived of sustenance, and in the process grows weaker and, paradoxically, younger and more becoming, until, in the sixth stanza, she is a "Virgin bright." Thus nature, as she becomes suffused with the imaginative, loses her threatening aspect and actually becomes the delight of the Spiritual. The dialectic of nature and spirit thus moves towards apocalypse.

The apocalypse is described, in the sixth stanza, in terms of the male sexually overpowering the female. In this state, Man (or Albion) awakes and begins to live imaginatively, aware of his divinity. The Spiritual principle, now dominant, is able to control the natural world with increasing ease and joy, where before the apocalypse it could express itself in nature only through suffering. Before, the Old Woman's fingers numbered his every nerve (stanza five); now, he plants himself in all her nerves, and she becomes his dwelling place (stanza seven). This natural world, however, is shrinking, and as it shrinks, it yields up a harvest in ever more concentrated form. Thus, in stanza 7 nature is reduced, through spiritual husbandry, to a garden which bears its fruit abundantly, and in stanza 8 to an earthly cottage, filled with treasure. Thus, as the treasure is gathered in, it becomes purer, for its spiritual density increases, and of smaller dimension, as error is removed. The nature of this treasure is explained in stanza 9. It is the "gems of the Human Soul," described in images of suffering, drawn from courtly-love poetry: "a lovesick eye," "the lovers sigh," "the akeing heart" and "The martyrs groan." The treasure which nature delivers up is therefore that of the spiritual loves and sufferings of Man on this earth. These have been preserved, and are now brought forth, in ever purer form, to serve as food for the Spiritual: " . . . the gems of the Human Soul / . . . / . . . are his meat . . . are his drink" (ninth and tenth stanzas).

The meaning of the first two lines of stanza eight is crucial, for divergent interpretations of the poem hinge on it: "An aged Shadow soon he fades / Wandring round an Earthly Cot." In the tradition of Rossetti--Ellis & Yeats--Raine, the "aged Shadow," fading, is seen as effete, and in the Orc cycle tradition, as restrictive. We suggest that "aged" merely indicates that the Spiritual principle is nearing full manifestation and greatest potency, just as the Female was most powerful when most old. To the natural eye, however, the Spiritual when most manifest is paradoxically least visible, thus becoming a "Shadow" that fades, as it wanders around the last vestiges of the natural in a world that has become nearly completely spiritual. Although eternal substance appears shadowy to mortal man, the poet, the visionary traveler, knows that the world of the Father is the "Imagination the real & eternal World . . . in which we shall live in our Eternal or Imaginative Bodies, when these Vegetable Mortal Bodies are no more" (*Jerusalem* 77, E229, K717). In this world, the "Land of Men," the " . . . Inhabitants [are] walking up & down in Conversations concerning Mental Delights . . . Here they are . . . Conversing with Eternal Realities as they Exist in the Human Imagination . . . " (*VLJ*, E552, K613). Paradise is therefore populated with eternal forms.

Like the Good Samaritan, the Spiritual nourishes the developing eternal forms as well as the visiting poet: "He feeds the Beggar & the Poor / And the wayfaring Traveller / For ever open is his door" (stanza 10). As Jesus becomes the beneficent Father, his hospitality is reminiscent of the parable of the marriage feast, and of the miracle of the feeding of the multitude. The grief that the Father experienced in nature while he was the Son is transformed and experienced as joy by the guests: "His grief is their eternal joy" (stanza 11). The joy of the guests (whom we shall meet again "scatterd thro' the land" in stanza 16) is in antipodal contrast to the agony of the Boy, whose sufferings fed the Old Woman.

As the last vestiges of nature, or error, disappear, the atmosphere at the feast becomes that of an ale-house: "They make the roofs & walls to ring." We are reminded of "The Little Vagabond" in *The Songs of Experience*:

> But if at the Church they would give us some Ale.
> And a pleasant fire, our souls to regale;
> . . . . . .
> Then the Parson might preach & drink & sing.
> . . . . . .
> And God like a father rejoicing to see,
> His children as pleasant and happy as he:
> Would have no more quarrel with the Devil . . .
>
> (E26, K216)

In the description of the golden feast, in *The Four Zoas*, Night 9, we find a similar allusion to intoxication:

> Attempting to be more than Man We become less
> said Luvah
> As he arose from the bright feast drunk with
> the wine of ages
> His crown of thorns fell from his head . . .
>
> (135:21-23, E388, K376:709-11)

This recurring emphasis on drunken revels in sacred context is explained by Blake's remark to Henry Crabb Robinson that "What are called the vices in the natural world, are the highest sublimities in the spiritual world" (BBR 316).

Stanzas 10 and 11, then, describe the state of Eden. Here, there are no more traces of the natural (thus, "no more quarrel with the Devil"). The treasure has shrunk to its vanishing point, and the eternal forms appear fully assembled as the "Family Divine." This family is the "Council of God" which, omnipresent, watches over the "Body / Of Man" (*The Four Zoas*, Night 4, 55:10-11, E330, K304: 247-48). The divine family is not visible to mortal eyes. Here, in the state of Eden, the dominant Zoa in Man is Urthona. S. Foster Damon (*A Blake Dictionary*, 1965; rpt. New York: Dutton, 1971, p. 426) mentions that Urthona never manifests in his own person, and is frequently called "dark."

In the process of the Last Judgment, "Error or Creation" is "Burned Up" (*VLJ*, E555, K617). In stanza 11 we find fire in the hearth, the center of the divine dwelling. Nature's last vestiges have

disappeared into this fire, from which nature is reborn, phoenix-like, as "A little Female Babe." In stanza 12, she is said to be "all of solid fire/ And gems & gold." Solidity, alien to fire, and characteristic of the natural, already indicates the beginning of the fall. The "gems & gold" which filled the cottage in stanza 8 were associated there with the last transfigured residue of the Natural. Now we encounter the same image once again. It is one that Blake uses elsewhere in his work to describe the adornment of the serpent form (for instance, *VDA* 8:7, E49, K195), and here it gives a fleeting glimpse of the serpent's presence in Eden.[15]

The Natural principle, in its growing phase, is not susceptible to control: " . . . none his hand / Dares stretch to touch her Baby form / Or wrap her in his swaddling-band" (stanza 12). By contrast, Jesus submitted to swaddling clothes. In the previous quarter-cycle, approaching Eden, nature was pleased to serve the Divine, as in *Jerusalem*:

> The Female searches sea & land for gratifications to the
> Male Genius: who in return clothes her in gems & gold
> And feeds her with the food of Eden . . .
>
> (69:16-18, E221, K707)

But now the situation corresponds to that described in *The Four Zoas*, Night 9:

> And Many Eternal Men sat at the golden feast to see
> The female form now separate They shudderd at the horrible thing
> Not born for the sport and amusement of Man but born to drink up all his powers
> They wept to see their shadows they said to one another this is Sin
> This is the Generative world they rememberd the Days of old.
>
> (133:5-9, E386, K373:621-25)

In Robinson's diary we read: "On my inquiring whether the Devil would not be destroyed by God as being of less power--he denied that God has any power--Asserted that the Devil is eternally created not by God--but by God's permission" (BBR 318). In view of this lack of power on the part of the Divine principle, the birth of the Female Babe is thematically associated with the creation of Adam and Eve, who will disobey the Father. Adam and Eve are to be seen as united in forming the natural component. This tallies with Blake's *Laocoön* inscription: "Adam is only The Natural Man & not the Soul or Imagination" (E271, K776), and with the Chapter titles of his Genesis manuscript: "Chapter 1 The Creation of the Natural Man / Chapter 11 The Natural Man divided into Male & Female . . . " (E667, K933).

The growing Natural principle organizes whatever mental forms prove susceptible to her influence: "But She comes to the Man she loves / If young or old or rich or poor" (stanza 13). In this process the "aged Host" is driven out, and he is now a beggar "at another's door," rather than the earlier benevolent host. He develops a need for companionship and turns to the maiden. Coming at the stage just before the fall, this action is reminiscent of the Genesis account of the Lord walking in the Garden in the cool of the evening and calling out to Adam and Eve. The Divine--"freezing," since it has wandered far from the spiritual hearth--now succumbs to the attraction of the Natural, and the fall takes place: "The Cottage fades before his sight / The Garden & its lovely Charms" (stanza 15). With the fall, Man's perceptions undergo a radical change. His senses conglobe and perceive everything in distorted fashion, round and bounded: "For the Eye altering alters all / The Senses roll themselves in fear / And the flat Earth becomes a Ball" (stanza 16). Blake states elsewhere that "Reality was Forgot & the Vanities of Time & Space only Rememberd & calld Reality" (*VLJ*, E545, K605). Thus it is that Man begins to live in the fallen world of time and space: Albion has fallen asleep.

The living forms of the "Stars Sun Moon" now shrink away (stanza 17), leaving an imaginative desert in which the heavenly bodies are experienced only through Man's fallen senses. There is no more sustenance for the former guests (eternal forms), and they are "scatterd thro' the land" (stanza 16). There is, however, mention of another banquet in stanza 18:

> The honey of her Infant lips
> The bread & wine of her sweet smile
> The wild game of her roving Eye
> Does him to Infancy beguile.

This banquet is the antipodal counterpart to the divine banquet and corresponds to the feast of Los and Enitharmon, described in *The Four Zoas*, Night 1:

> The Earth spread forth her table wide. the Night a silver cup
> Fill'd with the wine of anguish . . .
> They eat the fleshly bread, they drank the nervous wine.
>
> (12:36-37, 44, E303, K273:347-48, 274:355)

In stanzas 20-22 the word "Love," or a derivative, occurs four times: the food of the banquet is that of natural love.

Nature continues to be alluring and is pursued by the spirit:

> Like the wild Stag she flees away
> Her fear plants many a thicket wild
> While he pursues her night & day
> By various arts of Love beguild. (stanza 20)

Both principles are in a state of dislocation: they wander "in terror & dismay" (stanza 19). Her flight from him is not to entice; she actually fears him. Her resistance causes thickets to grow in the desert. The thickets and "Labyrinths" (stanza 21) describe the state that is created when the Spiritual principle is led into the pursuit of the riddle of matter. We thus arrive at the stage where, of his four faces, Man presents that of reason, the Zoa

Urizen.[16] In this labyrinthine state roam the enemies of the spirit: the "Lion Wolf & Boar" (stanza 21), those animals that will flee howling at the incarnation, in stanza 25. In the Book of Enoch, in a dream-vision of Enoch, in which the history of the world is related with animal characters, these animals, among others, appear in the role of enemies of Israel: the boars are the Edomites, the lions the Babylonians, and the wolves the Egyptians.[17]

As the Natural principle increases to full maturity, we move towards the construction of the earthly paradise (stanzas 22,23):

> Then many a Lover wanders here
> The Sun & Stars are nearer rolld
> The trees bring forth sweet Extacy.

This state is called, in *Thel*, "the vales of Har" (4:10, E5, K129), and, in *Tiriel*, "the pleasant gardens of Har" (2:10, E274, K100) and "the lower garden" (8:1, E281, K109). In this state, Man is infatuated with physical forms, well expressed in the senile preoccupations of Har and Heva in *Tiriel* (2, E274-75, K100-02).[18] Like the Romans at the time of the birth of Christ, Man wants to create "the good life," independent of his eternal destiny. Thus, in the desert "many a City . . . is Built / And many a pleasant Shepherds home" (stanza 23). Man tries to establish "a joy without pain, / . . . a solid without fluctuation" (*BU* 4:10-11, E70, K224).

The references to "Stars . . . nearer rolld" and "Shepherds" serve to remind us of the circumstances preceding Christ's birth. When the birth of the Babe is discovered, it strikes terror "thro the region wide" (stanza 25). The Spiritual principle is now emerging from its sojourn in the "womb" of nature, where an integument has been woven for it, enabling it to exist in this world and declare its own nature. The spirit is no longer available to serve in the pursuit of earthly love and happiness. It will of course be tortured in this world. Thel, brooding over the self-contained processes of the womb of nature, innocently anticipates that she will once again "gentle hear the voice / Of him that walketh in the garden in the evening time" (*Thel* 1:13-14, E3, K127), the state of the spirit before the fall. However, allowed to view the incarnated state, she witnesses instead the suffering of the Boy, and flees back in horror to the safety of the vales of Har.

With the birth and torture of the Male Babe, we arrive at the same event described at the start of the ballad. The last two lines, "She nails him down upon the Rock / And all is done as I have told" (stanza 26), suggest that the process continues in the way described in the poem. However, as we argued above, the cycle is merely a representation of the various states in which Man may find himself, and the apparent sequentiality is part of the metaphor used to represent contiguous states.

The history of Man as a cycle from eternity to eternity is also recounted in Blake's epic, *The Four Zoas*.[19] We conjecture that there is a basic correspondence between "The Mental Traveller" narrative and *The Four Zoas* narrative. A sketch of the alternation of the Zoas, as we understand them to reach prominence as we traverse the Mental Traveller's cycle, might serve to suggest an alignment between the two narratives, as indicated in Figure 2.

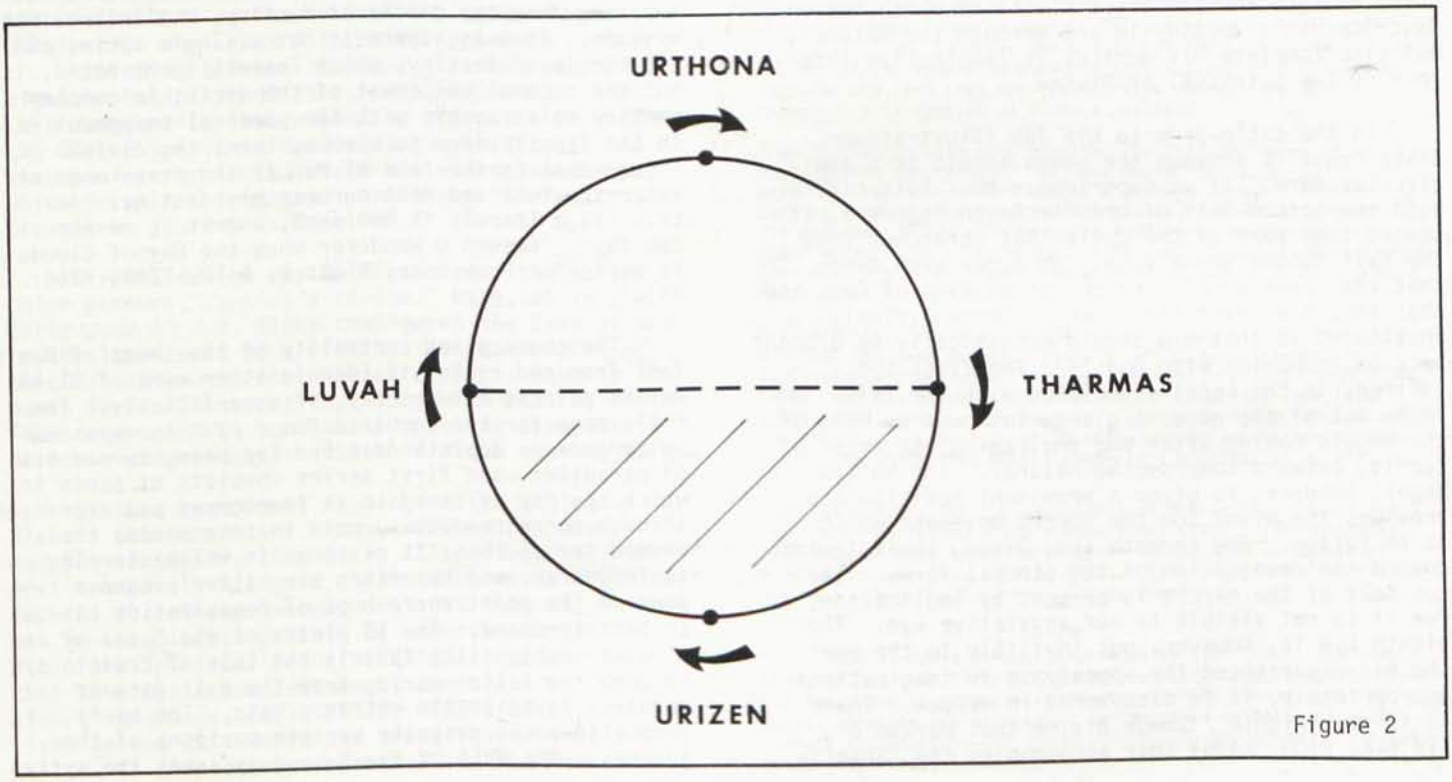


Figure 2

It seems natural to assume, with Roe, that all four Zoas, together with their Emanations, are present at every stage of Blake's cycle, and that the predominance of any one depends upon the state of the cycle in which the Divine Humanity finds itself.[20] In eternity, the Emanations are absorbed in their respective Zoas, but at the fall they separate and progressively reject eternity until the limit of opacity is reached and the incarnation takes place.

It will be useful to visualize the Zoas, the "Four Faces" of Man (*Jerusalem* 98:26, E255, K745), round the four sides of a head, as in Blake's drawing *Ezekiel's Vision* (*William Blake: water-color drawings*, Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1957, n. pag.). When one face is fronting us, the two faces on either side are seen in profile, and the one at the back is not visible. Luvah is the Zoa who presides over the apocalypse. However, his face already begins to show (as Orc) with the birth of the Spiritual at the incarnation. Similarly, the face of Urthona starts to take shape at the apocalypse, but will only be fully exposed as the heavenly Father when the eternal company is gathered for the divine feast in Eden. In Eden, the face of Tharmas, the Zoa in terms of whom the fall is described, is already appearing. And at the fall, the face of Urizen comes into view, but will only manifest frontally when reason is dominant and trying to establish the earthly paradise.[21]

III

We turn now to possible equivalents of the cycle of "The Mental Traveller" in Blake's pictorial art. Like many of Blake's works, the designs discussed below demonstrate Blake's belief in the co-presence of the Natural and Spiritual principles in Man. Also, like "The Mental Traveller," these designs are apocalyptic visions which not only describe Man's destiny in and through the Natural, but also complete his destiny by imaginative inference of the Spiritual or Divine.

In the title-page to his Job illustrations, Blake chose to arrange the seven angels in a semi-circular form. If we superimpose this half-circle onto the bottom half of the circle in Figure 1, it covers that part of the cycle that stretches from the fall to the apocalypse. We agree with Damon that the seven angels are the seven Eyes of God, and that they are seven states which "were divinely instituted so that man should mechanically be brought back to communion with God."[22] The first Eye, Lucifer, is the angel associated with the fall. He looks out of the page, a glance followed by most of the angels coming after and indicating the error of turning outward towards the natural. The bottom angel, Shaddai, is given a prominent position and provides the pivot for the upward movement which is to follow. The seventh Eye, Jesus, looks inward toward the recognition of the eternal forms. The top half of the circle is present by implication, for it is not visible to our vegetative eye. The eighth Eye is, however, not invisible to the poet who has experienced the apocalypse in imagination: appropriately, it is discovered in *Milton*. There it is the "Eighth / Image Divine tho' darken'd" (15:5-6, E108, K496) that accompanies the "Spirits of the Seven Angels of the Presence," and the "Shadowy Eighth" (20:47, E114, K502). It is called "Shadowy" and "darken'd" since it is entering the region wrapped in darkness from the understanding of natural Man.

Plate 15, *Behold now Behemoth*, of the Job series may be an attempt to depict the same cycle as "The Mental Traveller." Behemoth ("the chief of the ways of God") is positioned where the Spiritual principle is dominant, its head at the point of the apocalypse, its tail at the fall. Leviathan ("King over all the Children of Pride") rears its head at the fall and tails off towards the apocalypse. Significantly, water fills the lower half of the disk. Both in this design and in the frontispiece to *Europe, The Ancient of Days*, an apparently divine figure is situated above and extends his arm towards the actual or implied circle. In the frontispiece to *Europe*, this figure, shown with compasses, is frequently identified with Urizen, in the act of creation. It may, however, also be seen as the figure of Tharmas, at the moment prior to his fall:

> Tharmas groand among his Clouds
> Weeping, then bending from his Clouds he stoopd
> his innocent head
> And stretching out his holy hand in the vast
> Deep sublime
> Turnd round the circle of Destiny . . .

(*The Four Zoas*, Night 1, 5:8-11, E298, K266: 71-74)

Some critics incline to view the circle of destiny as a purely natural cycle, one which Man can traverse repeatedly until escape is possible through a process of rebirth.[23] The implication is that the circle of destiny is attached to a separate supernal cycle. It is our contention that the supernal cycle is not separate from the circle of destiny, but intertwined with it. That is, there is but a single cycle, and the circle of destiny, which Tharmas turns round, is but the natural component of the cycle, in complementary relationship with the supernal component.[24] In the frontispiece to *Europe*, then, the divine figure depicts the face of Man at the stage when we enter the fall and meet our earthly destiny. At this stage Tharmas is dominant, and it is he who can say: "Return O Wanderer when the Day of Clouds is oer" (*The Four Zoas*, Night 1, 5:12, E298, K266: 75).

The cogency and centrality of the theme of Man's fall from and return to Eden in other work of Blake may be pointed out briefly, if superficially. The title-page for the combined *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* depicts Adam and Eve being turned out of paradise: the first series consists of songs in which the joy of paradise is remembered and expressed through correspondent symbols in this world; the second series consists of songs in which eternity is forgotten, and Man makes his bitter progress towards the point where hope of regeneration has to be introduced. The 16 plates of *The Gates of Paradise* emblematically tell the tale of travel through the fallen world, from the exit gate of paradise round to the entrance gate. The early prophetic books describe various portions of the journey. The myth of *The Four Zoas* spans the entire

cycle; this myth is condensed and re-worked in *Jerusalem*. *Milton* focuses on the apocalyptic event within the poet. Even in his incidental illustrations, Blake frequently chose material related to the cycle, for instance, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, and *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*. Judith Rhodes has shown that the 12 illustrations to *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* may be arranged in a circular form with striking correspondences to the cycle we argue for "The Mental Traveller."[25]

Blake's various versions of his picture *A Vision of the Last Judgment* make a radical connection between the eternal journey as a cycle of fall and return, and the eternal journey as the form of Divine Humanity.[26] At the top of the picture Jesus is shown seated on his throne in paradise. The fall takes place on the right, in the form of figures falling downward. At the bottom, beneath the "dragon's cavern," lies Albion, who is awakened by his wife. The resurrection into paradise is shown on the left, in the form of figures moving upwards towards the throne of Jesus. We are fortunate to have Blake's description of a version of the picture (E542-55, K442-44, 604-17), in which he emphasizes the mental nature of his vision. For instance, the falling and rising figures, with biblical names, are meant to represent "the States Signified by those Names the Individuals being representatives or Visions of those States as they were reveald to Mortal Man in the Series of Divine Revelations. as they are written in the Bible these various States I have seen in my Imagination when distant they appear as One Man but as you approach they appear Multitudes of Nations" (*VLJ*, E546, K607). In the version of the picture which is in the Rosenwald collection, the details of the picture do dissolve into the outline of this "One Man."[27] Blake writes: "All Things are comprehended in their Eternal Forms in the Divine body of the Saviour . . . The Human Imagination who appeard to Me as Coming to Judgment . . . throwing off the Temporal that the Eternal might be Established" (*VLJ*, E545, K605-06). The Last Judgment is thus viewed as a process in which the divine spirit in Man leads him to discard the states of error and to reach his eternal state, which forms his true home, the place "Where the travellers journey is done."[28]

A final design may be mentioned: the water-color picture, *Ezekiel's Vision*. Here, as in the title-page to *Job*, Blake configures the Eyes of God in the lower part of a circle. As in *A Vision of the Last Judgment*, the eternal cycle is equally the human form. These motifs, along with that of the four faces of Man, combine to make the Ezekiel design a comprehensive vision of Man's eternal form.

It is a symbolical reading of the Bible, as Blake's own commentary on *A Vision of the Last Judgment* suggests, that makes it possible to interpret cohesively his most challenging works. Robinson reports that Blake "warmly declared that all he knew was in the Bible; but then he understands by the Bible the Spiritual Sense" (BBR 322). Blake held that "The Old & New Testaments are the Great Code of Art" (*Laocoön*, E271, K777). The biblical narrative, seized as a whole and transfigured into a ballad, is complete and cohesive in "The Mental Traveller." Any more restricted reading entails internal contradictions or indicates interpretations contrary to Blake's distinct theological ideas. Because "The Mental Traveller" is a radically compressed version of Blake's most important theme, that of Man's fall from and return to Eden, and an audacious announcement of reality's mental nature, a mastery of its form and its visionary conceit is, in microcosm, a mastery of Blake.

[1] Our main reference for Blake's work is D. V. Erdman, ed., *The Poetry and Prose of William Blake* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1965), hereafter referred to parenthetically in the text as "E" followed by a page number. "K" followed by a page number indicates the location of a passage in G. Keynes, ed., *Blake: Complete Writings* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969).

[2] This tradition had its starting point with W. M. Rossetti in Alexander Gilchrist, *Life of William Blake* (1880: rpt. New York: Phaeton Press, 1969), II, 112-13, and with E. J. Ellis and W. B. Yeats, *The Works of William Blake* (1893; rpt. New York: AMS Press, 1973), II, 34-36. It was further developed, indirectly, by W. B. Yeats, *A Vision* (London: Macmillan, 1937), and, directly, by Kathleen Raine, *Blake and Tradition*, I, 302-25.

[3] The "Orc cycle" tradition was initiated by Northrop Frye in *Fearful Symmetry* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947), p. 229, and has been taken up by a number of scholars, including John H. Sutherland, "Blake's 'Mental Traveller'," *ELH*, 22 (1955), 136-47, reprinted in Judith O'Neill, ed., *Critics on Blake* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1970), pp. 69-78; Morton D. Paley, "The Female Babe and 'The Mental Traveller'," *SiR*, 1 (1962), 97-104, incorporated, in somewhat altered form, in Chapter 5 of Paley's *Energy and the Imagination* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), pp. 122-41; and Hazard Adams, *William Blake: A Reading of the Shorter Poems* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1963), pp. 77-100. In *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), pp. 322-23, Frye expresses a view more akin to the earlier tradition.

[4] Frye (*Fearful Symmetry*, p. 444, n. 7) expressed dissatisfaction with his own reading of the Female Babe as "imaginative achievements," a reading followed by Sutherland and Adams, and later (*Anatomy of Criticism*, p. 322) he identifies the female figure with "the natural environment." Paley ("Blake's 'The Mental Traveller'," pp. 100-01), who points out the significance of the concept of the Female Babe, finds Frye's later reading also unsatisfactory, and sees her instead as a united form of the "numerous evil females of Blake's pantheon."

[5] We thus agree with John Sampson, *The Poetical Works of William Blake* (1905; rpt. Boston: Milford House, 1973), p. 273: "The poem . . . must be understood as a picture of man's spirit, passing through successive mental states, and at last returning, 'in endless circle,' to the point from which he started. In other words it is a restatement of Blake's favourite doctrine of constant generation and regeneration." However, Sampson does not elaborate his view.

[6] "The Mental Traveller" and *A Vision of the Last Judgment* are of about the same period. Blake's letter to Ozias Humphrey, explaining his design of the Last Judgment, is dated 1808 (E544, K442), and the Notebook descriptions are "For the Year 1810" (E544, K604). G. E. Bentley, Jr., (cited in Paley, *Energy and the Imagination*, p. 122, n. 1) dates the entire Pickering manuscript, in which "The Mental Traveller" appears, as no earlier than 1805.

[7] In identifying the two components of Man as "Spiritual" and "Natural," we follow Blake's occasional usage. For instance: "The Natural Body is an Obstruction to the Soul or Spiritual Body" (*Anno. Berkeley*, E653, K775). Error is identified with Nature: "Error or Creation will be Burned Up . . . " (*VLJ*, E555, K617).

[8] Cf. "God is Man & exists in us & we in him" (*Anno. Berkeley*, E654, K775). For Blake's theology, we refer the reader to Frye, *Fearful Symmetry*, especially Chapter 2, "The Rising God," pp. 30-54. Another useful account is contained in Albert S. Roe, *Blake's Illustrations to the Divine Comedy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953), pp. 8-29.

[9] We differ here from Frye (*Fearful Symmetry*, p. 386). He rejects the idea of "pulling the Bible around in a circle" on the grounds that that would imply unending time, which would pervert the biblical meaning of the word "eternity." However, the gap between the two ends of the biblical narrative is included in Blake's cycle and transcends time.

[10] " . . . the Spiritual Body or Angel . . . always behold the Face of the Heavenly Father" (*Anno. Berkeley*, E653, K774).

[11] Just as the Last Judgment is seen as a process lasting a full half-cycle (from the incarnation to the state of Eden), so the fall is seen as a process lasting the remaining half-cycle (from the state of Eden to the state where the incarnation takes place). However, we use the word "fall" to denote the specific stage of the process where the Natural principle attains dominance over the Spiritual.

[12] The parallels for imagery at the points of the fall, incarnation, and apocalypse have been pointed out by various writers. Of these writers, Raine (*Blake and Tradition*, I, 306-25) offers the most comprehensive identifications. Raine has also been most successful in tracing Blake's imagery for the fall. In his earlier work, Blake, possibly inspired by Thomas Taylor's account of the Persephone myth (see Raine, I, 67, 133), concentrates on the theme of the descent of the soul, personified by a female figure (Lyca, Thel, Oothoon, the early Vala).

[13] Our quotations from Crabb Robinson's records are taken from G. E. Bentley, Jr., *Blake Records* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), hereafter referred to as "BBR." We silently incorporate Bentley's emendations of the punctuation, and write abbreviations out in full.

[14] While these two principles function as though autonomous, the Spiritual is superior. In *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, in the "Devil's" voice, Blake states as an error the notion "That Man has two real existing principles Viz: a Body & a Soul," and that, on the contrary, "that calld Body is a portion of Soul discernd by the five Senses" (*MHH* 4, E34, K149). The Devil only exists "by God's permission" (BBR 318). Kathleen Raine therefore rightly states that "There is only one agent" (*Blake and Tradition*, I, 313). It follows that an apt visual image for representing the two components in Man is provided by the complementary bright and dark parts of the moon's disk in its cycle of phases. The lunar symbolism has been elaborated upon by Yeats in the construction of his theory of the double gyres in *A Vision*, and Raine applies this theory in her reading of the poem.

[15] Viewing the infant Natural principle as a serpent coiled around the "tree" of the fully manifested spirit, we would, antipodally, view the infant Spiritual principle as a serpent coiled around the "tree" of fully manifested nature. This is supported in *The Four Zoas*, Night 7 (a), where Orc is described as organizing a serpent body and stretching up Urizen's tree of mystery (80: 44, 81: 3-5, E349, K324: 152, 162-64). The first tree is the tree of life, and the second tree is the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

[16] S. Foster Damon, *William Blake: His Philosophy and Symbols* (1924; rpt. London: Dawsons, 1969), p. 297, and Raine, *Blake and Tradition*, I, 319-20. Also, Raine (I, 320) calls the activity of stanza 23 the building of "rational Rome," an identification which we adopt.

[17] R. H. Charles, *The Book of Enoch* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1912), p. 191: footnote to verse 9, p. 195: footnote to verse 42, and p. 199: footnote to verse 55. Blake made drawings for the Book of Enoch, first translated into English in 1821.

[18] One sees in Har and Heva an aged form of Adam and Eve, watched over by the "now aged" Mnetha (*Tiriel* 2: 6, E274, K100), their nurse, or Mother Nature. All three of these figures are of course associated with the Natural principle: we recall that Adam (with Eve) is natural Man, while "Goddess Nature" is "Satan's Wife" (*Laocoön*, E270, K777). In the second illustration to *Tiriel*, reproduced in G. E. Bentley, Jr., *William Blake: Tiriel* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), plate II, Mnetha is drawn in an elongated form, inexplicably so unless we take her to suggest the serpent. This illustration shows the advanced state, deep in the fall, of the *Paradise Lost* illustration, *Satan Watching Adam and Eve* (reproduced in *William Blake: water-color drawings*, Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1957), where Satan is shown with the serpent, his wife, coiled about him.

[19] See, for instance, James Evans, "Epistemology, Aesthetics, and 'Divine Analogy': A Study of the Poetics of William Blake," Diss. Queen's University at Kingston 1974, p. 147.

[20] For interpretations of the Zoas and their Emanations, see, for instance, Roe, *Blake's Illustrations to the Divine Comedy*, pp. 23-29, 165-71, and Milton O. Percival, *William Blake's Circle of Destiny* (1938; rpt. New York: Octagon Press, 1964), pp. 18-46. In *The Four Zoas*, Night 9, seven Zoas and Emanations are named as they arise from the feast, while Urizen is in the vicinity (E385, 388, 390; K372, 376, 377).

[21] Blake's diagram, "Miltons Track" (E132, K523) in *Milton* 36, depicts the Zoas in a cyclic order which is the mirror image of that shown in Figure 2. His fourteenth Job illustration, *When the morning Stars*, shows the regions of the Zoas arranged around the central figure in accordance with the order shown in Figure 2.

[22] Damon, *William Blake: His Philosophy and Symbols*, p. 224.

[23] For instance, Percival, p. 12, and Roe, p. 21. Paley (*Energy and the Imagination*, pp. 122-23) similarly indicates that Man, to be regenerated, must break "a bound circle."

[24] Blake talks of "the vast form of Nature like a serpent . . . " (*Jerusalem* 43: 76, E190, K655). The natural component of the cycle is thus aptly represented in versions of the Uroboros in which the serpent's body is thick in its middle and thins out towards its ends (see, for instance, Carl Jung, *Psychology and Alchemy, Collected Works*, 2nd ed., Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970, XII, p. 103). The implied complementary serpent, thickest where the serpent of nature is thinnest, and vice versa, represents the spirit.

[25] Judith Rhodes, "Blake's Designs for *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*: Thematic Relationships in Diagram", *Blake Newsletter*, 4 (1971), 135-36, reprinted in Robert N. Essick, ed., *The Visionary Hand* (Los Angeles: Hennessey & Ingalls, 1973), pp. 449-51.

[26] See "Blake's Visions of the Last Judgment," a pamphlet issued by *Blake Newsletter, An Illustrated Quarterly* for the MLA Blake Seminar, 1975.

[27] *Ibid.*

[28] "Ah! Sun-flower" (E25, K215), another poem with a "curious circular movement" (Rosemary Freeman, *English Emblem Books*, London: Chatto & Windus, 1948, p. 28).

ANOTHER "NEW" BLAKE ENGRAVING: MORE ABOUT BLAKE & WILLIAM NICHOLSON

CHRISTOPHER HEPPNER

In an interesting recent essay, Rodney M. and Mary R. Baine offer good evidence for proposing William Nicholson as the original model for Inflammable Gass the Wind finder in Blake's *An Island in the Moon*.[1] The weakest link in their argument is perhaps the merely circumstantial nature of the connections between Blake and Nicholson before the 1800s: "Blake is almost certain to have known Nicholson in the 1800's; but he could have met him in the late 1770's or early '80's."[2]

In the same paragraph, however, lies a clue that, when followed up, provides the definite evidence missing in the argument. The Baines, in suggesting that Blake may have met Nicholson through the publisher Joseph Johnson, comment that Blake in 1782 may have "engraved some of the twenty-five unsigned plates for Nicholson's *An Introduction to Natural Philosophy*, published . . . by Johnson." Blake did in fact sign one of the plates in this book, for the vignette used on the title-page of both volumes of the first, 1782, edition (see illus. 1 for title-page) is unmistakably signed "Blake sc," and there seems no doubt[3] that it was indeed William Blake the poet who engraved this admittedly not very exciting temple of science in the clouds (illus. 2). The same plate has been used for both volumes; it is small (the plate-mark measures 81 x 44 mm.), and the signature (illus. 3) very small indeed (approximately 3.5 mm.), and quite faint. The signature is in fact at least as difficult to see as that on the small engraving by Blake on p. 127 of Vol. I of Lavater's *Essays on Physiognomy*, which managed to escape detection for so many years.[4] This does raise the possibility that Blake has placed other micro-signatures on plates which have been seen often without recognition. Obviously engravers made much use of magnifying lenses for their work, though Blake's modest myopia[5] may have helped a little. It is not surprising that Blake adapted with great skill, if little enthusiasm, to the craft of miniature painting.

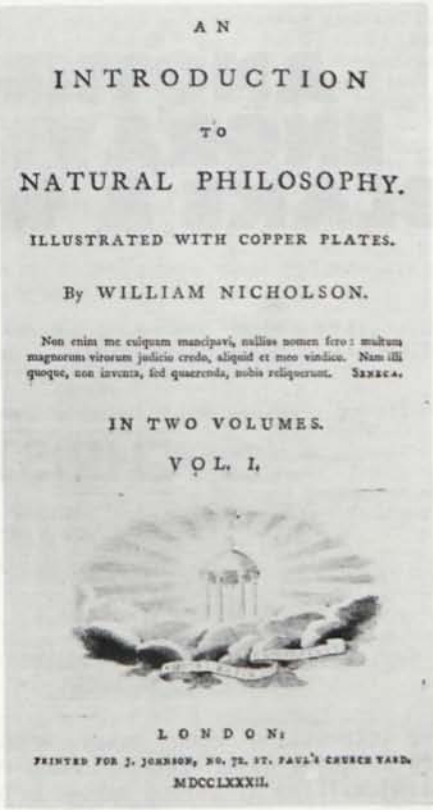
The Baines' essay suggests that Blake may have engraved some or all of the other plates in these volumes. That is certainly possible, but in largely technical engravings such as these are for the most part, it is impossible to draw definite conclusions in the absence of clearly defined stylistic features. The clumsy handling of the small temple on Plate XV of Vol. I, p. 281 (illus. 4), however, contrasts badly with the fineness of the basically similar temple in Blake's vignette. Blake is known to have done the technical engravings for James Earle's *Practical Observations on the Operation for the Stone*,[6] but they are again considerably finer than the work in the plates in the Nicholson volumes. In fact, Blake's commercial work in this early period was usually small in scale and quite fine-toned, as demonstrated by such plates as those for *The Poetical Works of John Scott* (1782), *The Novelist's Magazine* (1782-83), and Ritson's *Select Collection of English Songs* (1783). Blake himself later took some pride in this early work, much of it after Stothard's designs, and refers in the "Public Address" to "those little prints which I engraved after him five & twenty years ago & by which he got his reputation as a draughtsman."[7] My own view therefore is that it is relatively unlikely, though just possible, that Blake engraved more than the title-page vignette for *An Introduction to Natural Philosophy*.

The work was popular, and went through five English editions. "The Second Edition, with Improvements," is dated 1787,[8] and keeps Blake's vignette, though in the British Library's copy the signature is almost invisible. It would appear that the fine lines of Blake's plate did not stand

up to the heavy wear of substantial editions, for the third, fourth, and fifth London editions, dated 1790, 1796, and 1805, substitute a new and unsigned vignette (illus. 5) for the title-page, similar to Blake's in general outline but considerably coarser. I do not know who made this later plate, but its style seems much too crude to be attributable to Blake.

There were also several American editions of Nicholson's work, the National Union Catalogue listing editions published in Philadelphia in 1787, 1788, and 1795-93 [*sic*]. Of these I have seen only the edition published in 1788 by Thomas Dobson; it is in one volume and is called "The Third Edition." There is no engraving on the title-page; most of the other plates in the book are extremely close but reversed copies of the plates in the first London edition, suggesting that some process of tracing was used to make the plates for the American editions.

The uncovering of this overlooked Blake engraving is a useful reminder that Blake seems very often to have made intellectual and poetic use of the books he illustrated. I do not know if it was the custom of



AN

INTRODUCTION

TO

NATURAL PHILOSOPHY.

ILLUSTRATED WITH COPPER PLATES.

By WILLIAM NICHOLSON.

Non enim me cuiquam mancipavi, nullius nomen ferox multum magnorum virorum judicio credo, aliquid et meo vindico. Nam illi quoque, non inventa, sed quaerenda, nobis reliquerunt. SENECA.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

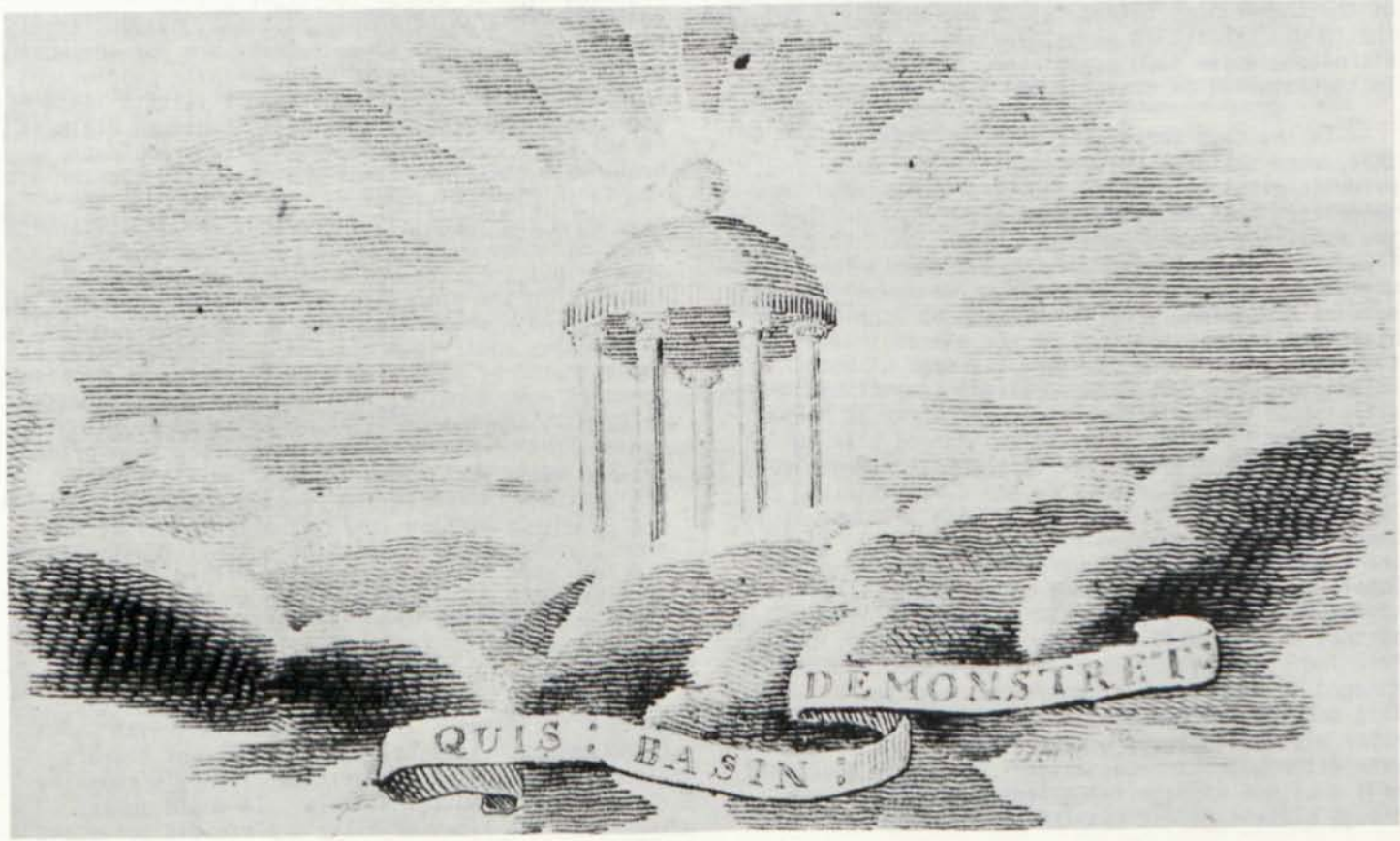
LONDON:

PRINTED FOR J. JOHNSON, NO. 72. ST. PAUL'S CHURCH YARD.

MDCCLXXXII.

1 Titlepage of first edition of William Nicholson, *Introduction to Natural Philosophy*, London, 1782.

2 Blake's vignette for titlepage of Nicholson's *Introduction to Natural Philosophy*, 1782; plate size 81 x 44 mm.



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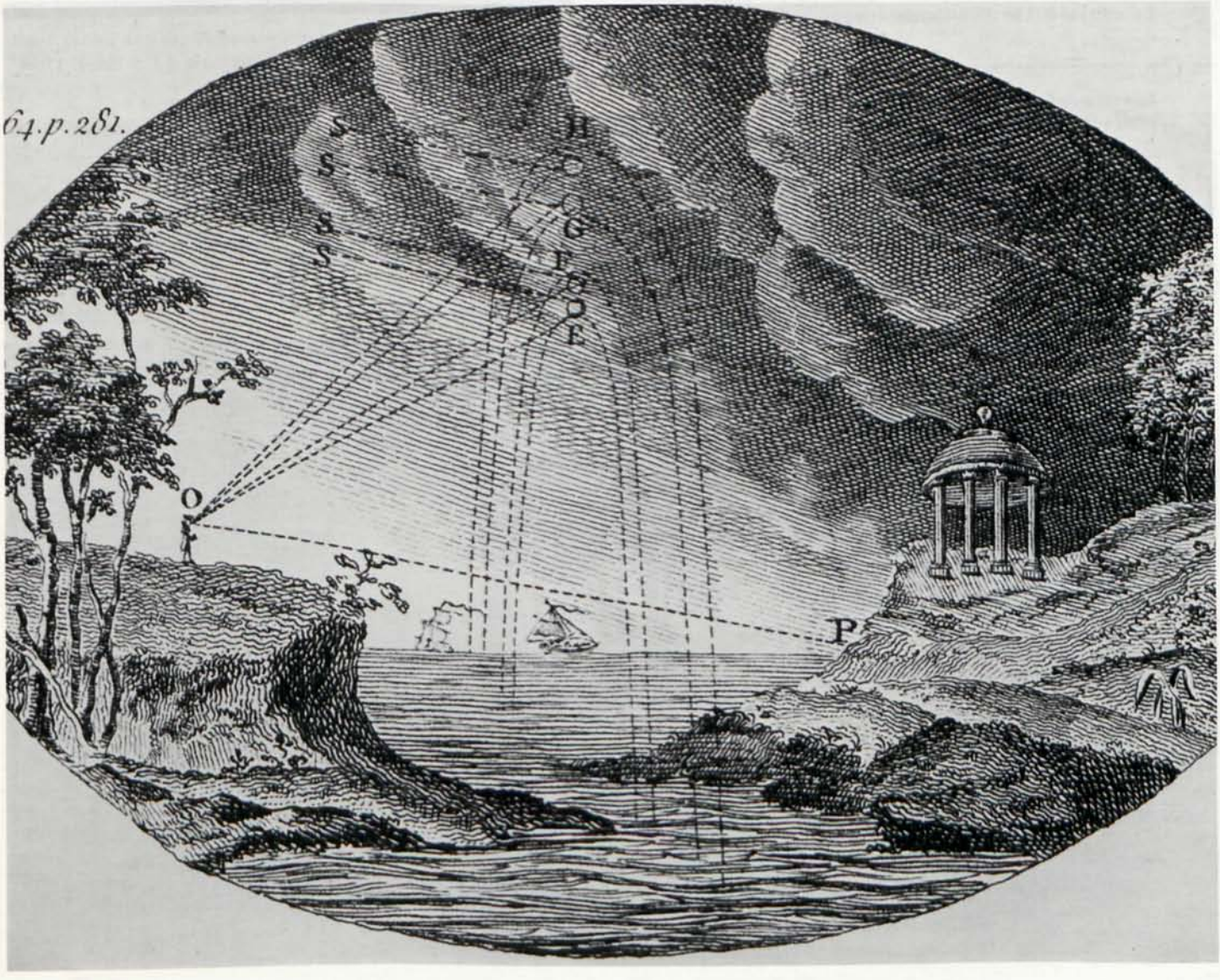
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publishers to present courtesy copies of books to their illustrators, but the evidence already offered by the Baines in their article suggests strongly that Nicholson's *An Introduction to Natural Philosophy* joins such books as Lavater's *Aphorisms on Man* and Stedman's *Narrative*[9] in the group of works that Blake both illustrated and used. With the confidence born of knowing for certain that Blake did illustrate Nicholson's work, I would like to make a few further suggestions about the possible intellectual relations between the two men.

The Baines state that Nicholson shared Blake's "political and religious views."[10] This may well be true in general terms, but it would seem that the two were far apart on fundamental questions of method in the arts and sciences. Nicholson begins with an "Introduction" that defines "Demonstration" and gives three "Rules of Philosophizing," in the following schematization:

> I
>
> No more causes of natural things ought to be admitted than are true, and sufficient to explain the phenomena.
>
> II
>
> And therefore effects of the same kind are produced by the same causes.
>
> III
>
> Those qualities which do not vary, and are found in all bodies with which experiments can be made, ought to be admitted as qualities of all bodies in general.[11]

The mode of argument here is reminiscent of that found in *There is No Natural Religion*, and this added to the evidence that the Baines present for Blake's mockery of Nicholson as Inflammable Gass suggests that Blake may have thought of Nicholson as a type of the rationalizing enlightenment mind intent upon narrowing philosophy to natural philosophy.

In the world of the arts, it is worth noting that the first version of "Holy Thursday" cuts across and silences (for "a quarter of an hour") the games that Inflammable Gass has been playing with his dangerous toys and "magic pictures" of fleas and lice (*Island in the Moon*, E 452-53). The Baines mention Nicholson's camera obscura in reference to Inflammable Gass's claim to own such a device (E 443). There is an illustration of one in Nicholson's book (my illus. 6), and a description: "This is one of the most pleasing and delightful experiments in optics, and never fails to strike the beholder with surprise and admiration. Which indeed is not to be wondered at, for if there be any pleasure in contemplating a well executed painting, how much more

3 Enlargement of Blake's signature (3.5 mm.) from titlepage vignette.

4 Figure illustrating "Theory of the Rainbow" from Nicholson, 1782; Vol. I, p. 281. The plate is 173 x 166 mm.; this figure is 109 x 72 mm.

5 Titlepage vignette for Nicholson, *Introduction to Natural Philosophy*, 5th ed., London, 1805; plate size 78 x 43 mm.

forcibly must the attention be fixed when the painting is drawn by the unerring hand of nature?"[12] In *The Ghost of Abel*, many years later, Blake stated that "Nature has no Outline: but Imagination has" (E 268); I suspect that even in the 1780's Blake would have found Nicholson's natural aesthetics as unsatisfying as his natural philosophy.

[1] Rodney M. and Mary R. Baine, "Blake's Inflammable Gass," *Blake Newsletter 38* (Fall 1976), pp. 51-52. It was this essay which drew my attention to Nicholson's book.

[2] Baine, p. 51.

[3] The combination of date, publisher, and style of signature make this virtually certain. I do not know who designed the plate; it may have been Stothard, who designed many of Blake's early plates for Johnson, but a search through the Stothard material in the British Museum Print Room failed to turn up any evidence.

[4] See G. E. Bentley, Jr., "A 'New' Blake Engraving in Lavater's Physiognomy," *Blake Newsletter 22* (Fall 1972), pp. 48-49.

[5] See David Bindman, ed., *William Blake: Catalogue of the Collection in the Fitzwilliam Museum Cambridge* (Cambridge: Heffer and Sons, 1970), p. 60.

[6] See Leslie F. Chard II, "Two 'New' Blake Engravings: Blake, James Earle, and the Surgeon's Art," *Blake Studies*, 6:2 (1975), 153-65.

[7] David V. Erdman, ed., *The Poetry and Prose of William Blake* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1970), p. 561. Further references to this edition will take the form E 561.

[8] An "Advertisement" in this edition states that "Many additional figures have been inserted in the plates"; proof that the same plates were used can be found on pl. 22 of Vol. II, where the original title of one figure, "Refractive power of the Air Fig. III, p. 57" has been altered to read "Fig. 130," though the original "57" is still barely visible.

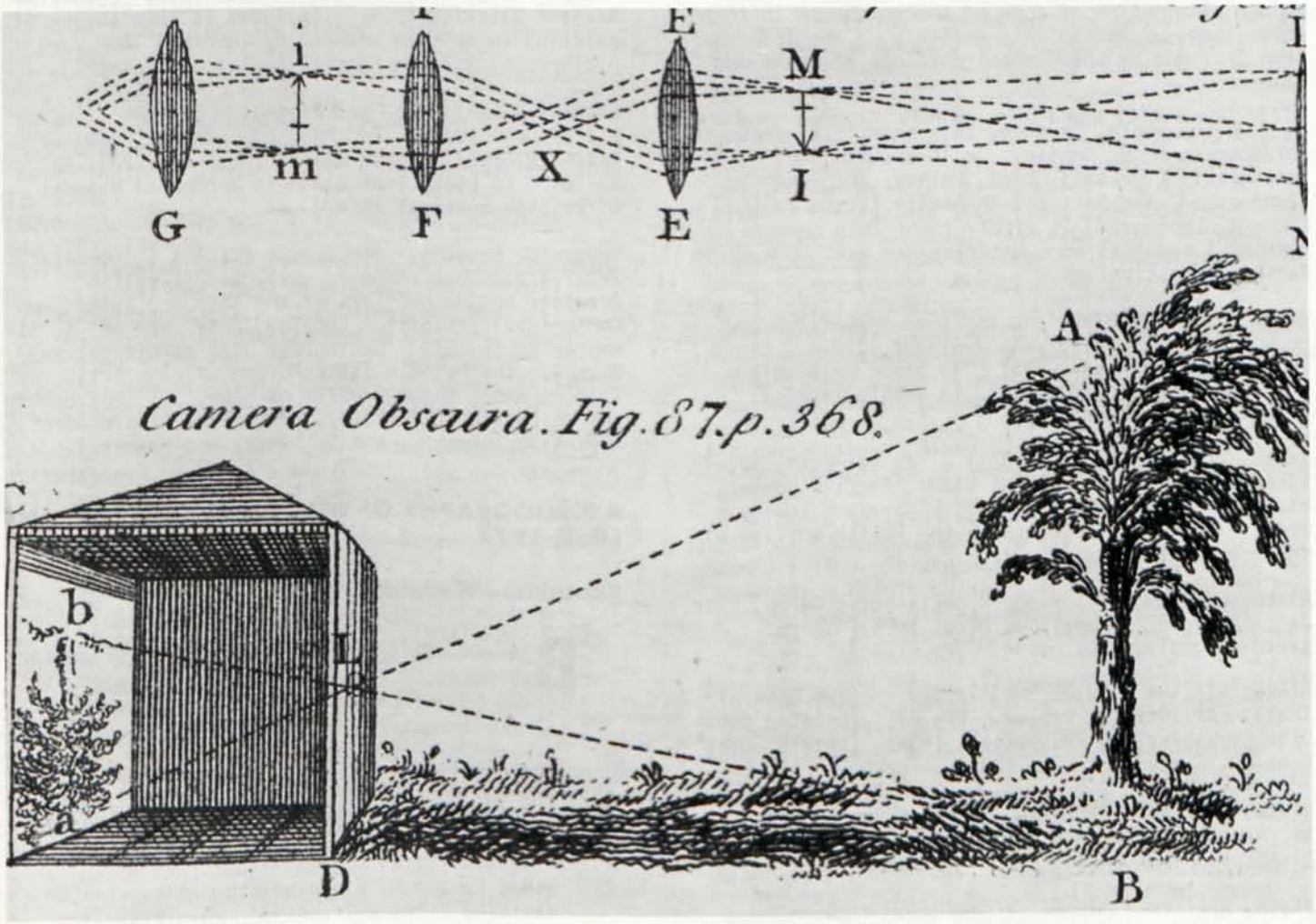
[9] See David V. Erdman, *Blake: Prophet Against Empire*, revised ed. (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1969), pp. 230-42. See also G. E. Bentley, Jr., *Blake Books* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1977), pp. 685-88 for books illustrated by Blake for Cumberland and Hayley that the writers presented to him.

[10] Baine, p. 51.

[11] William Nicholson, *An Introduction to Natural Philosophy* (London: J. Johnson, 1782), I, 6.

[12] Nicholson, I, 368.

6 Figure of a "Camera Obscura" from Nicholson, 1782, Vol. I, p. 368. The plate is 170 x 161 mm., and this figure approximately 70 x 38 mm.



CHECKLISTS

SOME MINOR ADDITIONS TO BENTLEY'S "BLAKE AMONG THE SLAVS"

Detlef W. Doerrbecker & Marta Slowiková

Due to the generous help offered to us by the staff at the National Library of Czechoslovakia (Praha) and at the Státní Vědecká Knihovna (Olomouc) we have been able to trace a number of translations of Blake's works into Czech and Slovakian, as well as several Slavic "Critical Studies" of the poet-painter's work. This material is listed here in alphabetical, respectively chronological order, a few explanatory notes being supplied in square brackets. We feel obliged, however, to warn our readers as regards the accuracy of the bibliographical data. Not only did we have to face the difficulties with the Slavic library and cataloging conventions described by Prof. Bentley (see *Blake* 41, 11 [1977], 50), but also time prevented proper examination of some of the volumes. In these cases then, we had to rely entirely on the information provided by the general catalogs at Praha and Olomouc.

On the whole, however, this short list seems to corroborate G. E. Bentley, Jr.'s surmise that "especially [for the] Czech, Polish, and Rumanian [languages], the Saltykov-Shchedrin [State Public Library, Leningrad] is likely to be less comprehensive," and that more material may well turn up on further investigation.

Anon. "William Blake" in *Kulturní výročí Světové rady míru v r. 1957: Bibliografické letáky*. Brno: Universitní knihovna, 1957 ["Na pomoc knihovníkům a čtenářům," vol. 12], n. p. [A bibliographical guidesheet for librarians.]

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Cannon-Brookes, Peter. *Dvě století britského malířství: od Hogartha k Turnerovi*. [Two Centuries of British Painting; exhb. cat.]. tr. Jana Solperová. Praha: Národní Galerie, and Bratislava: Slovenská Národná Galéria, 1969. [Included in this survey of painting in Britain between c. 1650 and 1850 were pictures by Romney, Fuseli, Blake, and Palmer.]

Chudoba, František. *Pod listnatým stromem*. [Under a Deciduous Tree]. 2nd rev. ed. Praha: Jan Laichter, 1947 ["Výbor Laichterův," vol. 73], Pp. 95-104. [A chapter on Blake in a book on aspects of British cultural life.]

Hawcroft, Francis. *Anglijskie risunki i akvareli XVIII-XIX vekov: Katalog vystavki*. [English Drawings and Watercolors of the 18th and 19th Centuries: Exhibition Catalog]. tr. and ed. A. S. Kantor-Gukovskaja. Leningrad: The Hermitage, and Moscow: The Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts, 1974. [Among the 100 works on show, all lent by the Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester, there were several by Romney, Fuseli, Blake, and Palmer.]

A BIBLIOGRAPHY OF WILLIAM BLAKE IN JAPAN, 1969-1977

Kazumitsu Watarai

Blake Books (1977) covers works on Blake in Japan up to about 1969. The following list attempts to fill in lacunae in *Blake Books*.

Bokushin: Bunkagu Kikan [*The Faun*: The Quarterly of Literature] Vol. V (January 1976) [Special Issue: William Blake: The Book of Prophecy and Mystery]:

1. * "Blake's Plate." Pp. 6-14.
2. * Hideo Funato. "Blake no ato o tazunete [On Visiting Blake's Traces]." Pp. 16-25.

3. * W. B. Yeats. "Blake no geijutsu kan [The Criticism of Blake's Art]."[1] Tr. Takayuki Hiranuma. Pp. 26-37.
4. * R. Kassner. "Genshi Geijutsu [Vision and Art]." Tr. Kiyozumi Haruyama. Pp. 38-49. [Presumably a translation of his 1900 essay.]
5. * Narumi Umetsu. "Ningen no jitsuryoku to yu koto [On Ability of Man]." Pp. 50-55.
6. * Yasunari Takahashi. "Yogen to Innocence [Prophecy and Innocence]." Pp. 56-62.
7. Shigeru Taniguchi. "Blake kenkyu bunken ni tsuite [A Bibliographical Study of Blake]." Pp. 63-68.
8. * Toru Egawa. "Blake shinwa jiten [A Dictionary of Names in Blake's Myth]." Pp. 69-79.
9. * "Blake's Chronology." Pp. 80-83.
10. * Hisayoshi Toriumi. "Blake to kakumei no shinwa [Blake and the Myth of Revolution]." Pp. 84-97.
11. * "Albion no musume tachi no genso [*Visions of the Daughters of Albion* (1)]." Tr. Hisayoshi Toriumi. Pp. 98-105.
12. * "*America*." Tr. Toru Egawa. Pp. 106-19.
13. * "*Europe*." Tr. Hideo Funato. Pp. 120-33.
14. * Toru Egawa. "Jojoshi to yogensho [Lyric Poetry and the Book of Prophecy]." Pp. 134-43.
15. * M. L. Cazamian. "Rinri to sei no kachi--shoki yogen sho [The First Book of Prophecy]." Tr. Yoshiro Hara. Pp. 144-49. [Presumably extracted from his book of 1947.]
16. * Hideo Kishi. "Sei no genso--Pickering kohon ni tsuite [On "The Pickering MS"]." Pp. 150-59.
17. * "*The Book of Urizen*." Tr. Sotoyoshi Masutani. Pp. 160-75.
18. * "*The Book of Ahania*." Tr. Kojiro Ito. Pp. 176-89.
19. * "*The Book of Los*." Tr. Hideo Kishi. Pp. 190-93.
20. * "*The Song of Los*." Tr. Takayuki Hiranuma. Pp. 194-99.
21. * Sotoyoshi Masutani. "Blake no shocho to eizo [Symbol and Image of Blake]." Pp. 200-11.
22. * Masahiko Maeda. "Jerusalem to mokujiteki sozoryoku [Jerusalem and Apocalyptic Imagination." Pp. 212-25.
23. * Shigeko Tsuchiya. "Genshi no nimensei [Two Faces of Vision]." Pp. 226-36.

Bokushin: Bungaku Kikan [*The Faun*: The Quarterly Literature], Vol. VI (July 1976) [Special Issue: William Blake: Songs of Innocence]:

1. * "*Songs of Innocence and of Experience*: Plate." Pp. 6-15.
2. * Bunsho Jugaku. "Osanaki Blake [The Childhood of Blake]." Pp. 16-21. [Reprinted from *Blake to (and) Whitman*, II (1932), 387-93.]
3. * K. Yura, T. Yokoo, M. Yoshimura, R. Kida. "Kon'nichi ni ikiru Blake; zadankai [Today's Blake; A Round-Table Talk]." Pp. 22-53.
4. * "*Songs of Innocence and of Experience* (1)." Tr. K. Yuaa. Pp. 54-63.
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6. * Masahiko Maeda. "'Innocence' to 'Experience' no shutten ni tsuite [On the Source of 'Innocence' and 'Experience']." Pp. 74-83.
7. * "*Shiteki Sobyo* [*Poetical Sketches*]." Tr. Takashi Hiranuma. Pp. 84-94.
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9. * Yukiko Imamura. "Blake imeiji jiten [A Dictionary of Blake's Images]." Pp. 101-11.
10. * "From the *Notebook* (1)." Tr. K. Yura. Pp. 112-15.
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12. * Soetsu Yanagi. "Blake no kotoba [Blake's Words]." Pp. 138-45. [Reprinted from *Shirakaba* (*The White Birch*), V, 7 (1914)--apparently not in *Blake Books*.]
13. * Makoto Sangu. "Blake no hanga ni tsuite [On Blake's Engravings]." Pp. 146-51. [Reprinted from *The Collected Works of Makoto Sangu*, Vol. III--neither essay nor book is recorded in *Blake Books*.]
14. * "*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*." Tr. Michiko Uchida. Pp. 152-69.
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  2. Takahiko Okada. "Moeru kokoro de hono o shimesu [To Reveal the Flames with a Heart that Burns]." Pp. 55-59.

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§ ---- "Owari no toki--'Jerusalem' shiron [The time of the end--On *Jerusalem*]." *Albion*, XX (1974), 33-47.

---- "Vision no hizumi--'Four Zoas' o megutte [The Warp of Vision--On *The Four Zoas*]." *Critica*, XVI (1972), 2-13.

Yamanaka, Sakiyo. "'Jerusalem' ni okeru kirisutokyo kan to sono koso [William Blake's Idea of Christianity in *Jerusalem*]." *Seinan Gakuin Daigaku Eigoeibungaku Ronshu: Studies in English Language and Literature Seinan Gakuin University*, XVI, 1-2 (1974), 33-46.

§ ---- "William Blake no ba--Prophetic Writing o kenkyu suru ni saishite [The Place of William Blake--A Study of Prophetic Writing]." *Eigoeibungaku Kenkyu: The Study of English Literature*, VI, 1 (1959).

Yasuda, Masayoshi. "Blake ni okeru niju no 'invocation' [Double Invocations in Blake]." *Kwansei Gakuin Daigaku Ronko: Eibeibungaku Gogaku Kenkyu: Kwansei Gakuin Studies in English*, XXVI (1974), 1-13.

§ ---- "'Introduction' to 'Songs of Innocence' ni tsuite [On the "Introduction" to *Songs of Innocence*]." *Kwansei Gakuin Daigaku Keizaigakubu, Bungaku Gogaku Ronshu: Essays in Language and Literature, The Faculty of Economics of Kwansei Gakuin University*, (1969), 59-74.

---- "Blake no keiken no kan'nen [Blake's Concept of Experience]." *Kwansei Gakuin Daigaku Ronko: Journal of Kwansei Gakuin University*, XVIII (1971), 107-20.

§ ---- "William Blake and His Myth-Making." *Kwansei Gakuin Daigaku Obun Kiyo: The English Journal of Kwansei Gakuin University*, XX (1973)[?]).

---- "Blake ni okeru Muse [The Muse in Blake's Poems]." *Kwansei Gakuin Daigaku Ronko, Eibungaku Gogaku Kenkyu: Kwansei Gakuin Studies in English*, XXXII (1976), 13-30.

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Yoshimura, Masakazu. "Blake to 'Enkan' [Blake and the "Cycle"]." *Okayama Daigaku Kyoyobu Kiyo: Journal of The School of General Education, Okayama University*, XI (1975), 87-111.

[1] No Yeats essay with a title much like this is known in English.

MINUTE PARTICULARS

AN ILLUSTRATION TO ROBERT BAGE

Martin Butlin

The Blake exhibition at the Tate, and the happy coincidence of a BBC Radio 4 serial, produced one discovery of interest, the subject of the hitherto unidentified book illustration in the Bateson Collection.[1] In the "Times Diary" in *The Times* for 25 May 1978 it was reported that Professor Noel McLachlan of Melbourne University had recognized the drawing as being an illustration to Robert Bage's *Hermsprong, or Man as He is Not*, first published in 1796 and again in 1799, 1809, 1810 and 1828. The novel, subtitled to contrast it to Bage's previous novel *Man as He is* of 1792, deals with the opposition between Lord Grondale and the radical Mr. Hermsprong, brought up in savage America and a reader of Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man*; he is only revealed at the close to be Charles Campinet, the wrongfully disinherited heir of Lord Grondale's elder brother.

William Blake, Illustration to Robert Bage's *Hermsprong*, c. 1820. Pen and wash. Bateson Collection, on loan to the Tate Gallery, London.

The drawing shows the encounter in chapter 5 between Lord Grondale and Hermsprong following the latter's rescue of Lord Grondale's daughter Caroline Campinet and her aunt Mrs. Merrick from being nearly "smashed to pieces down Lippen Crag" after the horse pulling their "chair," a form of light chaise, had bolted. Lord Grondale, who has not yet learned of the near accident, is highly angry to find his niece "leaning on the bosom of a young man. . . . Yet he did not knock the stranger down--he did not. He only said, with the air of a great and angry man, 'Who are you, Sir?'" To this Hermsprong, a "well dressed young man," replies at first with silence, then with "I am a man, sir." When asked his rank and fortune he replies, ". . . As to rank,--I have been taught only to distinguish men by virtue," a sentiment that would have appealed to Blake. Behind, Mrs. Merrick sits in the chair, still dazed "with open eyes, which seemed not to see," while the servant Philip holds the horse's head. Blake has shown the setting, "a steep declivity" running down to the river Gron by which stands the village of Grondale; it is "a fine autumnal evening." The drawing, which is in monochrome pen and sepia and measures 6 3/8 x 4 9/16 ins. (16.3 x 11.6 cm.), is close in style to Blake's illustrations to Milton's *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* which are on paper watermarked 1816 and may indeed date from even later, say *c.* 1820. It is just possible, allowing for the fact that the book illustration is even more accomplished in Blake's late, sensuous manner than the Milton illustrations, that it may have been done in connection with the 1828 edition of *Hermsprong*, which has a vignette frontispiece by T. Williams showing the same episode. Blake's more ambitious design could have been abandoned as unsuitable or as the result of his death in 1827. However, there is no documentary evidence for Blake's connection with this edition. (I am indebted to Professor McLachlan and Judy Egerton for this identification and much of its elaboration respectively.)

[1] Exh. Tate Gallery 1978 (255, repr.); also repr. Geoffrey Keynes, *A Bibliography of William Blake*, 1921, pl. 25. It is No. 682 in my detailed catalogue of Blake's works, now in the press.

A NOTE ON COWPER AND A POISON TREE

Nelson Hilton

Cowper's incidental poem, *On the Death of Mrs. Throckmorton's Bullfinch* (1789, 1792) offers a likely source for a description in Blake's *A Poison Tree*, in the *Songs of Experience* (dated 1794). In Blake's poem the wrath of the speaker grows to bear "an apple bright"; this is beheld by the envious "foe" who--the last stanza relates--

> . . . into my garden stole,
> When the night had veild the pole;
> In the morning glad I see;
> My foe outstretched beneath the tree.

In Cowper's poem, "Bully" leads a peaceful existence in his well-latticed cage, since his "Dire foe" the cat is not permitted to live in the house. Unfortunately, on one occasion his foe was a rat:

> Night veil'd the pole--all seem'd secure--
> When led by instinct sharp and sure,
> Subsistence to provide,
> A beast forth-sallied on the scout,
> Long-back'd, long-tail'd, with whisker'd snout,
> And badger-colour'd hide.
>
> (31-36)

"Poor Bully's beak," like Orpheus' head, is all that "remain'd to tell / The cruel death he died."

Blake's adaption or unconscious echoing of this material is hardly central to his poem, but it does offer further evidence of his early attention to Cowper. The poem could have been seen by Blake on its first appearance in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, February 1789; again in the *Speaker*, 1792; or possibly in the offices of Joseph Johnson, who published it in the 1794-95 edition of Cowper's *Poems* (see *Cowper, Poetical Works*, ed. H. S. Milford, 4th ed., corr., add. Norma Russell, Oxford Standard Authors [London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1967], p. 383).

WILLIAM BLAKE'S VISIONS OF THE DAUGHTERS OF ALBION: A POEM BASED ON DOUBT

Dwight E. Weber

Among the unique features of William Blake's *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* are the names. The names of all five major "characters" appear for the first time in this poem. Harold Bloom has stated that the "Father of Jealousy . . . whom we have met before in Blake as Winter, Tiriel, Restraint, the Devourer, and the Nobodaddy who successfully masquerades as God the Father in *Songs of Innocence*" is "first introduced in this poem under his Blakean name of Urizen."[1] Moreover, while Oothoon and Theotormon, the doubtful lovers, reappear in *Europe a Prophecy* and *The Song of Los* and, along with the Daughters of Albion and Bromion, in *The Four Zoas*, *Milton*, and *Jerusalem*, they all originate in the 1793 printing of *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*.[2] Blake may have selected the names for their derivative significance. For instance, Theotormon is nominally "the man tormented by his own idea of God."[3] The name of Urizen, likewise, may suggest "the *horizon* of thought,"[4] as he and his agent try to restrain Oothoon's imagination, or, quite possibly, it may play upon the words "your reason." However, another, more covert method of naming exists, antecedent to this search for derivatives.

Blake's names, all original with this poem, are functions of their first letters. That is, the poet started with the initial letters and then found apt names to complete each letter, or character. These characters form an anagram for "doubt" (Daughters, Oothoon, Urizen, Bromion, Theotormon). Indeed, the poem begins and ends with doubt. The Daughters of Albion watch Oothoon's progress and doubt their ability to seize a similar freedom from Leutha's vale. Bromion assaults the exultant Oothoon and casts doubt upon the validity of her so-called independence. Finally, Theotormon's conscience keeps him dubious of the love and sexual freedom to which Oothoon wishes him to awake. Blake, then, reveals his poetic theme anagrammatically through his names.

Certainly, doubt is a major theme in the poetry of William Blake. Plate 4, "Air," of *For the Sexes: The Gates of Paradise* shows a miserable character "On Cloudy Doubts and Reasoning Cares";[5] moreover, in the accompanying poem, Blake attacks "Doubt which is Self contradiction" (E265). His "Auguries of Innocence" warns: "He who shall teach the Child to Doubt / The rotting Grave shall neer get out" (E483). One may think of the Daughters, the children, of Albion in this connection. Urizen, the source of all this doubt, may come to mind as well in Blake's satiric verse, "You dont believe I wont attempt to make ye" (E492). Here the word "Doubt" is placed in the mouth of Sir Isaac Newton, the scientist parodied by Blake in "The Ancient of Days," who, in the frontispiece to *Europe a Prophecy*, defines the "horizons of thought" with his compass.[6] Doubt limits a person, hinders him from becoming all he can be, and prevents him from drawing the "distinct, sharp, . . . and wirey . . . bounding line" (E540) by which he will live his own life. In *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, Blake places Urizen at the center of doubt, both in a thematic and anagrammatical way. In fact, Urizen and Bromion act in the poem and in the anagram to separate the Daughters and Oothoon, the females, from any consummation with Theotormon, the male.

This approach to the poem through anagram does not refute any of the previous speculations about the derivations of the characters' names. The names of Theotormon, Bromion, and Oothoon, as Northrop Frye claims, may well be Ossianic, in so oceanic a poem.[7] Yet the focus on the anagram places the horse back before the cart. Blake appears to have predetermined

his thematic anagram prior to his selection of suitable, properly lettered names from Ossian or elsewhere. Furthermore, the word play seems to indicate the presence of an eighteenth-century wit in Blake, even as he dealt with the most Romantic of themes.

[1] Harold Bloom, *Blake's Apocalypse: A Study in Poetic Argument* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1970), p. 106.

[2] "Bromion," "Daughters of Albion," "Oothoon," "Theotormon," in Samuel Foster Damon, *A Blake Dictionary: The Ideas and Symbols of William Blake* (Providence: Brown University Press, 1965).

[3] Bloom, p. 102.

[4] Bloom, p. 17.

[5] William Blake, *The Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, ed. David V. Erdman (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1965), p. 259. Hereafter E.

[6] Bloom, p. 157.

[7] Northrop Frye, *Fearful Symmetry: A Study of William Blake* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), p. 238.

"NEW" BLAKE ENGRAVINGS AFTER BLAKE'S DESIGNS, 1837, 1859, 1861

G. E. Bentley, Jr.

Comparatively few printings of Blake's designs are known between his death in 1827 and the revival of interest in him by Gilchrist's biography in 1863, and it may therefore be worth recording several new printings here.

The first is:

B. Hamilton. *Gallery of British Artists*, from the Days of Hogarth to the Present Time, or Series of 288 Engravings of their Most Approved Productions, Executed on Steel in the First Style of Outline, Selected, arranged, and accompanied with descriptive and explanatory Notices in English and French. In Four Volumes. Paris, 1837.

A duplicate titlepage reads: *Galerie des Artistes Anglais*, depuis Hogarth jusqu'a nos jours ou suite de 288 gravures de leurs productions les plus estimées, soigneusement gravées au trait sur acier, Choisie, mise en ordre at accompagnée de Notes descriptives et explicatives an Anglais et en Francais. En quatres volumes. Paris, 1837.

This is evidently just a re-issue of Hamilton's *English School* (1830-32), misleadingly retitled, without advertisement or explanatory matter other than for the designs, with the same number of plates (288) and the same Blake plates and descriptions of "Death's Door" "La Porte du Tombeau" (No. 181) and "Death of the Strong Wicked Man" "Mort d'un Réprouvé" (No. 271) and explanations as before, arranged in alphabetical order.

The second is:

Thirty Pictures by Deceased British Artists Engraved Expressly for The Art-Union of London by W. J. Linton. [London] 1860.

Plate X (12.1 x 20.8 cm) is "Death's-door" after W. Blake. There is no accompanying text. The same plate, with the inscription altered, appeared in John Jackson [& William A. Chatto], *A Treatise on Wood Engraving*, Historyical and Practical (1861), as the frontispiece (in the Bodley copy) or "at p. 632" (according to the text, p. 591*), "inserted" "by the kindness of the Council" of the Art Union, in whose "Volume of 1859 [*sic*]" "It was [*first*] published". (I am sorry to say that *Blake Books* [1977] does not indicate that Jackson's book had a Blake plate.) Linton went on to make "Facsimile" illustrations "from Blake's Own Works" for Gilchrist's "*Pictor Ignotus*" of 1863 and to write and illuminate Blake-like poems himself after he had settled in North America.

A NEW BLAKE DRAWING IN THE BOSTON MUSEUM OF FINE ART

David Bindman

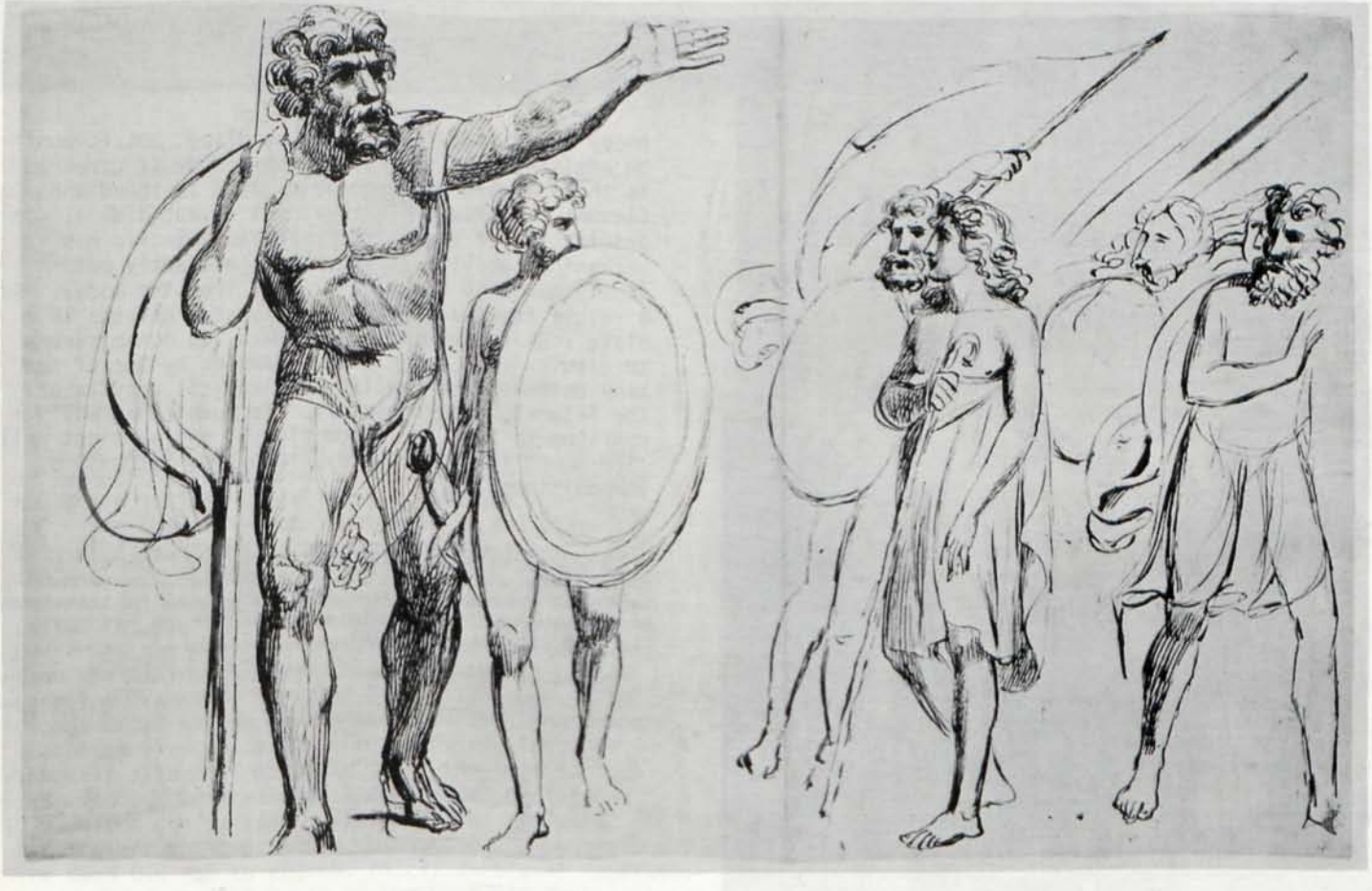
The pages of this journal have frequently recorded the reappearance of early Blake drawings and I am happy to add another one, this time in the Boston Museum of Fine Art.[1] It is a large double-sided sheet measuring 30.2 x 48.2 cm and the recto (illus. 1) contains a fine study of *Goliath cursing David* in pen over a pencil underdrawing.[2] There can be no doubt that it is an early drawing, dating from the early 1780s, but it contains in all essentials the composition of the Butts watercolor of the same subject, dated by Butlin c. 1803-05 (illus. 3). Other early drawings are often crude foreshadowings of later motifs, and we begin to see from them why Blake could claim in the *Descriptive Catalogue* that "the productions of our youth and of our maturer age are equal in all essential points."

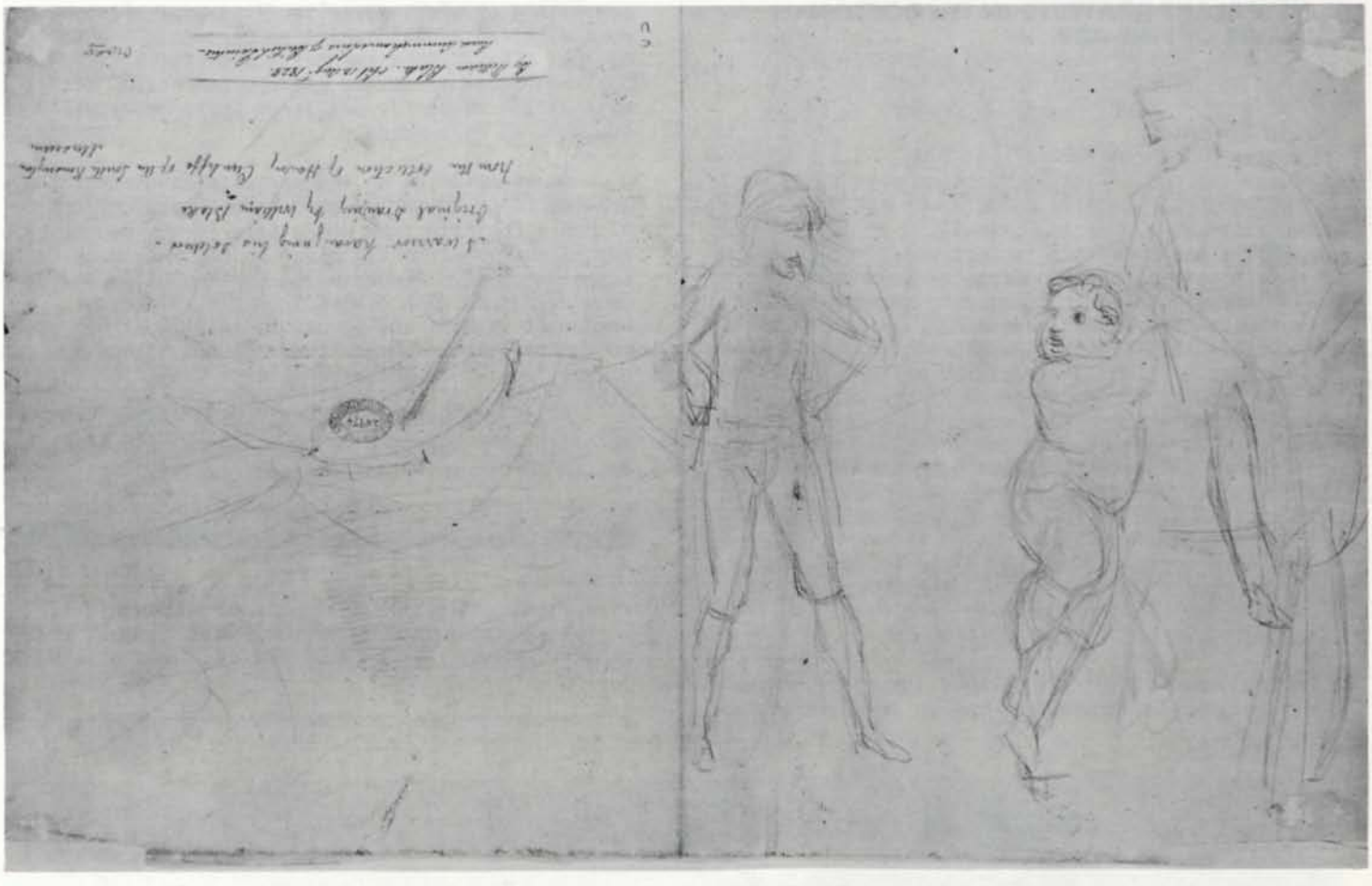
The verso (illus. 2) is much less finished but contains a motif, otherwise unknown in Blake's oeuvre, of a Pulchinello-like figure with a long nose fighting a child which appears to cling to its mother. The form on the left seems to be a kind of boat reflected in water, but the connection with the rest of the design is unclear. Again the style suggests an early date.

An inscription on the verso tells us that the drawing belonged to the well-known Blake collection of Henry Cunliffe from whose sale it was bought by Keppel and subsequently given to the Museum by David Keppel in 1914. According to Martin Butlin the drawing passed with others from Mrs. Blake to Frederick Tatham, and it was in lot 170 at his sale on 29 April 1862, where it was bought with five others for 14/-by Toovey for Henry Cunliffe.

One might ask why Blake's early drawings have so often gone unrecognized even in major collections. We can now appreciate their seminal qualities and

1 W. Blake, *Goliath cursing David* (I Samuel, 17: 41-43). Courtesy Museum of Fine Art, Boston, Gift of David Keppel, 1914.





2 Verso of illus. 1.

3 W. Blake, *Goliath cursing David*, watercolor. Courtesy Museum of Fine Art, Boston.

enjoy their individuality of handling, but it must be admitted that they are rather crude if compared to those of his contemporaries like Stothard and Flaxman. Although Blake was not an autodidact, the originality of the motifs tends to outstrip his mechanical abilities, which were evidently not finely honed by constant drawing from the model. As a result there are often embarrassing defects in Blake's early drawings which have led connoisseurs to dismiss them as inferior examples by one of the many unidentified English Neoclassical artists of the late eighteenth century. No doubt they will continue to turn up in odd places, and we might well find among them more early prototypes for mature compositions.

[1] I would like to thank the staff of the Print Room at the Boston Museum who so kindly showed me the drawing and Martin Butlin who confirmed the attribution and provided the information on the provenance. The drawing will appear in his forthcoming catalogue raisonné as no. 119A.

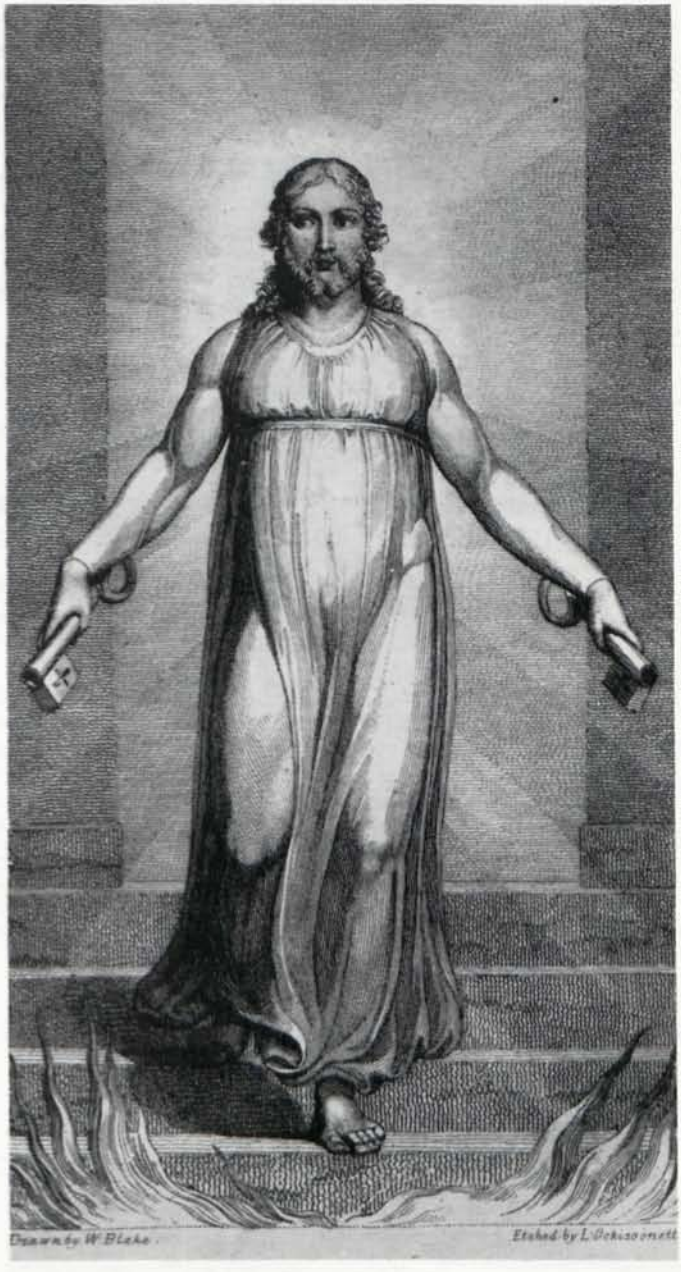
[2] Museum no. 14.955.

ECHOES OF BLAKE'S GRAVE DESIGNS IN 1838

G. E. Bentley, Jr.

The fame and influence of Blake's designs to Blair's *Grave* (1808) are indicated in a modest way in *The Pictorial Edition of The Book of Common Prayer* [1838],[1] generously pointed out to me by my colleague Professor Peter Morgan. The work is remarkable for over 750 small woodcuts, mostly vignette capitals and rather larger chapter headings. The engravings are anonymous, but the authorship of most of the designs is attributed in the "List of Illustrations" to artists such as Raffaelle, Rubens, Tintoretto, and Lebrun, with a scattering of more recent designers such as Reynolds, Westall, and Flaxman (eight designs, chiefly from his *Lord's Prayer* [1835]). The only Blake in the "List" is on p. 192: "Initial letter--Christ with the keys of Hell and Death.--BLAKE" (3.5 x 4.0 cm). The design (illus. 1 here) is made so small and conventional as to be scarcely recognizable as Blake's for the plate called "Christ descending into the Grave" (see illus. 2); the focus on Christ is diminished, the facial features are made simpler and conventional, and the distracting horizontal and diagonal lines of the capital "A" entirely alter the force of Blake's design.

Far more interesting is the border to the design of Rubens' "Resurrection" (illus. 3) serving as the headpiece to "The Collect" on p. 199 (11.0 x 13.7 cm). The border is not identified in the "List of Illustrations," but it is unmistakably taken from the engraved titlepage to Blair's *Grave* (illus. 4) and the design of "The Death of The Good Old Man" (illus. 5) for Blair's *Grave*. At the bottom of the border is the skeleton faithfully copied (reversed) from the Blair titlepage. To the right is the plunging trumpeter from the Blair titlepage, with clouds added at the bottom and some trailing drapery obscuring his genitals. (The hands and feet are somewhat altered from Blake.) At the left is the same figure, reversed, with some added background clouds and the tactful omission of the genitals. At the top are the two angels conducting the soul of The Good Old Man to heaven, fairly carefully repeated, reversed, from "The Death of The Good Old Man" (illus. 5). All together, the border seems to show the angels of the Last Judgment, at The Resurrection of Christ, trumpeting to the skeleton rising at their call at the bottom, and at the top we see two other angels (or perhaps the same ones having sprouted wings) carrying a man (the resurrected and newly fleshed and bearded skeleton?) to heaven. The method



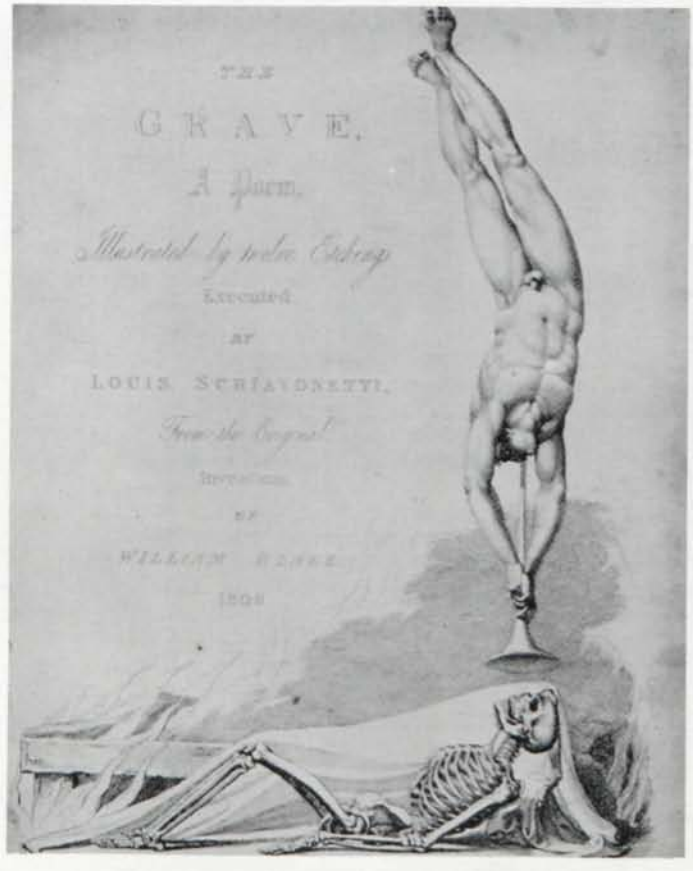
1 Initial letter, "Christ with the keys of Hell and Death" from *Pictorial Edition of the Book of Common Prayer* [?1838], p. 192.

2 "Christ descending into the Grave" designed by Blake for Blair's *Grave* (1808) engraved by Schiavonetti.

3 Chapter heading from Rubens' "Resurrection" from *Pictorial Edition of The Book of Common Prayer* [?1838], p. 199.

4 Blakè's titlepage design for Blair's *Grave* (1808) engraved by Schiavonetti.

5 Blake's design for "The Death of The Good Old Man" for Blair's *Grave* (1808) engraved by Schiavonetti.



and intention are not Blake's, but they are not entirely inconsistent with his either.

Blake's designs to Blair's *Grave* were printed in 1808 (twice), 1813, and 1826, but since in all printings before 1830 the designs were scarcely altered, it is not possible to say which edition was being copied in the 1838 *Common Prayer*. The 1838 borders do, however, bear one striking similarity to the new editions of Blair's *Grave* of 1847 and 1858 with new plates after Blake engraved by A. L. Dick. In Dick's version of the Blair titlepage, the plunging trumpeter is delicately draped with a wisp of unattached diaphonous veil, as in the 1838 design. James Montgomery, who subscribed to the 1808 edition of Blair's *Grave*, found that "several of the plates were hardly of such a nature as to render the book proper to lie on a parlour table for general inspection," and Robert Hunt complained in *The Examiner* for 7 August 1808 that "an appearance of libidinousness [*in the Blair designs*] intrudes itself upon the holiness of our thoughts."[2] Regency and Victorian sensibility evidently required changes in Blake's vision, and in the 1838, 1847, and 1858 versions of Blake's titlepage for Blair's *Grave* the trumpeter seems to have stooped to truth and moralized his song.

[1] THE / PICTORIAL EDITION / OF / THE BOOK / OF / COMMON PRAYER, / ACCORDING TO THE USE OF THE / United Church of England and Ireland /TOGETHER WITH / THE FORM AND MANNER OF MAKING, ORDAINING, / AND CONSECRATING / OF / BISHOPS, PRIESTS, AND DEACONS. / ILLUSTRATED WITH / MANY HUNDRED WOOD-CUTS. / TO WHICH ARE ADDED, / ORIGINAL NOTES, / AND AN / INTRODUCTORY HISTORY OF THE LITURGY. / BY THE / REV. HENRY STEBBING, M.A., / MINISTER OF ST. JAMES'S EPISCOPAL CHAPEL, HAMPSTEAD ROAD. /-/ LONDON: / C. KNIGHT & CO. 22 LUDGATE STREET [?1838]. Quarto: a-e^{4} B-4X^{4}, pp. [i]-xl, 1-[712].

The engravings are attributed, without evidence, to John Jackson (1801-48) by Percy Muir, *Victorian Illustrated Books* (1971), who also reproduces the larger of the two plates discussed here, implying that it is an "original design."

John Jackson thought well enough of Blake to write an account of him in Jackson [& William A. Chatto], *A Treatise on Wood Engraving, Historical and Practical* (1839), 715-17. and to reproduce as a frontispiece to the edition of 1861 (reprinted Detroit, 1969) the Blake design of "Death's Door" for Blair's *Grave* engraved by W. J. Linton. This plate had previously appeared to illustrate Anon., "Death and Immortality," *Illustrated Exhibitor and Magazine of Art*, 1 (12 June 1852), 369-71, and ibid., *The Ladies' Drawing Room Book* (N.Y. [1852]), pp. 15-16--a proof is in The British Museum Print Room. Linton later made the facsimile illustrations for Gilchrist's *Life of William Blake, "Pictor Ignotus"* (1863) and used the design from Blake's *Europe* (1794) pl. 12 for his own *Famine: A Masque* (Hamden, Connecticut: [Linton's own] Appledore Press [?1887]) (reproduced in F. B. Smith, *A Radical Artisan: William James Linton 1812-97* [1973] at p. 150), perhaps originally made for Gilchrist though not used there (Smith p. 197).

[2] *Blake Records* (1969), 194, 197.

VISION IN FICTION: TWO NOVELS ABOUT WILLIAM BLAKE

E. B. Bentley

William Blake has rarely been the subject of fiction, if we bar the accounts of his Irish grandparentage, his sojourn in a madhouse, and the more decorative flights of his critics.[1]

WILLIAM BLAKE:

OR,

The English Farmer.

BY

THE REV. W. E. HEYGATE, M.A.,

AUTHOR OF

PROBATIO CLERICA, GODFREY DAVENANT, ETC.

LONDON:
JOSEPH MASTERS,
ALDERSGATE STREET, AND NEW BOND STREET.

1848.

Only two novels seem to have been written explicitly about William Blake, both listed in the *Blake Newsletter* of 1975: The Rev. W. E. Heygate, *William Blake* (London: John Masters, 1848) and Peter Carter, *The Gates of Paradise* (London: Oxford University Press, 1974). The former is an "improving" book (p. viii) about a feckless young yeoman named William Blake who is turned to God, or at least to conforming Christianity, with the help of a quietly sententious village rector, and it concludes with all well in the Moat House:

> It was the reign of rest and peace; that time to which many hearts are looking, a time when the work of life is over, and there is a tarrying and reposing before the break of endless day.
>
> (p. 204)

1 Titlepage to Heygate, *William Blake*.

2 Frontispiece by N.D. Sears to W.E. Heygate, *William Blake* (1848) showing Moat House (reproduced from the copy in Bodley).

3 Fermin Rocker's design (one of fourteen in *The Gates of Paradise*) showing Blake and Ben studying the text of "London" which they have just made on the rolling press in Blake's work-room in Hercules Buildings, Lambeth. In the dust jacket illustration, Blake's hair is shown as fiery red.

The subtitle of the novel, "The English Farmer" (omitted in the *Blake Newsletter* listing), indicates its subject and its irrelevance to the poet-painter.[2]

The Gates of Paradise,[3] on the other hand, does deal with the author of *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, and in the Preface Peter Carter notes that "The details concerning Blake, his wife, and his friends are factual. The rest is fiction . . . ."

It's a good tale, set in 1796 and woven around William and Catherine Blake, a runaway apprentice named Ben Pendrill who needs befriending, and a grubby old man named Grale who spies for a living.

The year 1796 is right for the politics although wrong for *Songs of Experience*, since Mr. Carter has Blake write "The Tyger (p. 38) and "The Sick Rose" (p. 106) during the course of the story.

The Blakes actually did assist a young artist, though in different circumstances,[4] and in Carter's story the Blakes take in runaway Ben and teach him to read from *Songs of Innocence* (p. 8), to print (p. 11), to engrave (p. 17 etc.), and Ben helps with *Songs of Experience*. Some details of the eighteenth-century apprenticeship system are neatly worked in with Ben, who becomes an apprentice engraver.

We meet members of the real world of William Blake, including Mr. Godwin, Miss Wollstonecraft, Mr. Parker, Mr. Stothard, Mr. Moser (d. 1783), and especially Mr. Flaxman and Mr. Butts. With the assistance of John Flaxman, "Muster-Master General" Thomas Butts takes Blake "under [*his*] protection" (pp. 103, 105) and thus deflects the thought-police from him.

Often the dialogue is plausibly Blakean:

> 'Do you still attend that church, the one with the strange beliefs?' Godwin asked.
>
> 'The Church of Swedenborg? Occasionally. Their beliefs are not strange enough for us these days.' William's face was expressionless but his voice was light, almost mocking. (p. 13)

Later Blake says to Stothard:

> '. . . you speak of the new age; I tell you this, Sir, these changes, and any others in the world, are without meaning unless men are changed in their hearts and learn to live in eternity.'
>
> Parker was indignant. 'Live in eternity? Come, Mr. Blake. This is close to priest-craft.'
>
> 'Those words do not frighten me,' William said. 'We hear too much of priest-craft in these days. Let us hear a little more of soldier-craft, or business-craft, or politician-craft. I tell you that all ages are the same, but that genius is above the age.' (p. 47)

The story is, of course, about a boy, and Carter often sketches the relationship of Blake and Ben deftly. When Ben first arrives, Blake shows him a woodcut:

> He took an inked roller and ran it over the wood. Then he placed a strip of paper over the wood and pressed it down. When he took the paper away there was an animal on it.
>
> Ben whistled in surprise. 'It's a dog,' he said.
>
> William was slightly offended. 'It's a lamb,' he said. 'Do you know what a lamb is?'
>
> 'No.' Ben didn't.
>
> 'Well, that is one,' William said firmly, but he stole another glance at the sketch as he put it down. (pp. 17-18)

At the end, Mr. Grale the spy, abandoned by his secret police paymaster and left to his rather horrible self, is taken in by the Blakes, to Ben's astonishment, and Ben himself is apprenticed to Mr. Fox the engraver, his sixty-guinea fee being paid by Thomas Butts.

The story presents a loving and sensitive relationship amongst the Blakes and their young friend Ben. Blake's poems, visions, and ideas are seen through Ben and his reactions in a believable way. The unfolding of William's generosity of spirit and deed with Mr. Grale is especially satisfying to the sentimental reader. Peter Carter's *Gates of Paradise* is interesting reading for the way it presents and interprets William Blake and is rewarding for more than the story to young readers.

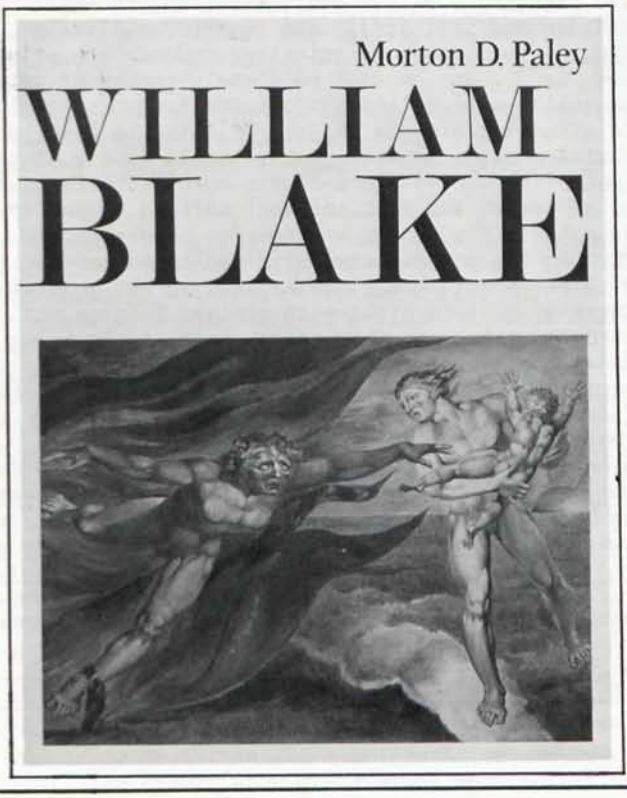
[1] E. J. Ellis & W. B. Yeats, *The Works of William Blake* (1893) and E. J. Ellis, *The Real Blake* (1907); Elizabeth O'Higgins, "Blake's Joy of the Yew", *Dublin Magazine*, XXX, i (1956), 21-29; S. Foster Damon, *A Blake Dictionary* (1965); Anon., "Hôpital des fous á Londres", *Revue Britanique*, 3 S, 4 (1833), 179-87).

[2] The Rev. W. E. Heygate, *William Blake:* or, The English Farmer (London: John Masters, 1848).

[3] Peter Carter, *The Gates of Paradise*, Illustrated by Fermin Rocker (London: Oxford University Press, 1974).

[4] G.E. Bentley, Jr., *Blake Records* (1969), 524-25.

REVIEWS



Morton D. Paley. **William Blake.** Oxford: Phaidon Press. New York: E. P. Dutton, 1978. 192 pp. + 148 black-and-white illustrations, 15 in color. $19.95.

Reviewed by Robert R. Wark

Readers of this journal are well aware of the quantity and complexity of studies related to Blake. They are probably also aware that the rapid proliferation of these often recondite monographs tends to build a wall around Blake, cutting him off from the general public and even from the interested but non-specialist student. It is necessary that this wall be breached periodically if Blake is not to become a remote cult image, familiar only to a coterie of initiates. Morton Paley's Phaidon *William Blake* is a praiseworthy attempt to provide this access for people who are not inside the camp of regular Blakeans.

The book is physically well-designed for its purpose. Produced in the normal Phaidon monograph format, it consists of sixty-four pages of text with forty-seven text illustrations; a section of one hundred and sixteen plates with fifteen in color; a convenient chronology; a glossary; and a separate section of notes on the plates. The plates are of fine quality; the text is spaciously printed; the book is a pleasure to handle.

To provide a brief, general introduction to Blake that is also valid is a formidable task. Ideally the person undertaking it should be a Blake specialist, familiar with the enormous literature on the man, but at the same time able to extricate himself sufficiently from this terrain to map its general contours clearly for the non-specialist. He should be equally at home with the visual and verbal components of Blake's art, and familiar with the currents of late eighteenth century thought, history, and culture with which Blake came in contact. Paley comes close to being such a paragon, although he is perhaps too much the specialist to be sensitive to every point at which the layman and non-specialist need guidance.

Paley chooses a biographical framework for his text, but allows himself sufficient flexibility to discuss coherent topics within that framework. It's a sensible solution to the problem of organization that works well for the task at hand. There are ten sections: (1) Blake's early life, training, and work down to 1790. (2) The Lambeth books, to the mid-1790s (this is the longest section). (3) The color-printed monotypes, and illustrations to *Night Thoughts* and Gray. (4) The Felpham episode. (5) Return to London, *The Grave*, Canterbury Pilgrims. (6) Blake's thoughts on art. (7) Bible illustrations. (8) *Milton* and the illustrations to Milton's poems. (9) *Jerusalem*. (10) Job and Dante. A large amount of information is packed into the text; there is no significant aspect of Blake's work of potential interest to the non-specialist that is not touched on.

Ideally the person to measure the success of the book should be a member of the audience to whom it is presumably directed, the interested layman with no special knowledge of Blake or his art. The present reviewer is an art historian, concerned with Blake in the general context of Georgian art, but not a Blake specialist. I find it interesting that Paley, who is an historian of literature, gives more of his text to an explication of the visual than the verbal side of Blake. He provides what I find a clear, consistently well-informed account of Blake's artistic training, of his affiliations with older artists (such as Barry, Fuseli, and Mortimer)

and with those of his own generation (such as Flaxman and Stothard). His remarks on Blake's frequently complex technical procedures are brief but lucid. The section on Blake's theory of art is unusually well-balanced and perceptive, especially in assessing Blake's thought relative to Reynolds's. Furthermore, I find it reasurring to read a Blake specialist who is aware of his hero's limitations as an artist and does not feel obliged to justify or explain away these weaknesses. There should be more on the general stylistic and formal affiliations of Blake's art, how Blake relates to the general currents of late eighteenth century British and European art. But this aside, Paley seems to me to do an admirable job of telling the interested layman what he will want to know about the visual side of Blake. The bulk of the text is devoted to explanations of individual plates and designs. Paley also demonstrates the various ways in which the visual and verbal interrelate in the illuminated books, choosing a series of plates from *America* as the primary vehicle for this purpose.

I did not find a comparable overview of the verbal component of Blake. Paley seems to assume a much broader knowledge of late eighteenth century British poetry in general and of Blake's poetry in particular than he does for the visual side. Nor did I find any general assessment of Blake's intellectual position relative to his contemporaries. The text is richly sprinkled with penetrating remarks on both these matters. But they nearly all deal with particulars--the interpretation of an individual page or verse. There are illuminating paragraphs on Blake's relations with the Swedenborgians. There is nearly always a helpful sentence or two about the theme of a particular poem. But the interested layman looking for guidelines in approaching the verbal component of Blake's art will find less than for the visual. Obviously Paley is well qualified to supply this information. That it is not there may be the result of unconscious assumptions concerning the audience for the book. Or perhaps the expected audience is students of literature already familiar with the verbal side of Blake, seeking a guide to the visual. I think the book meets admirably the needs of this last group, but is not yet the ideal answer for those unfortunates totally beyond the pale.

Joseph Burke. **English Art 1714-1800.**
Oxford History of English Art, vol. IX.
Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977. xxxii + 425 pp., 120 plates. £ 12.50.
Reviewed by David Irwin

The eighteenth century in artistic terms did not stop in 1800. Crucial ideas were still developing and flourishing well into the nineteenth century. The period about 1800 was one of artistic excitement, as well as a time of literary and political upheavals. Neoclassicism, the main movement or style, was only in the middle of its second phase about 1800; the final, third stage had yet to emerge. This fact was recognized by the organizers of the "Age of Neoclassicism" exhibition held in London in 1972; they gave themselves a brief covering the period up to 1840. The other main umbrella often used to cover the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries is obviously that of Romanticism. That interesting show in Detroit and Philadelphia in 1968, "Romantic Art in Britain," was devoted to the century between 1760 and 1860. Although these dates were arguably a bit too far apart, especially at the latter end, it was a fault in the right direction.

Yet for chronological convenience the editors of the Oxford History of English Art and the Pelican History of Art have chosen either 1800 or 1790 as terminal dates when commissioning eighteenth-century studies. At least in the Pelican series the British sculpture and architecture volumes by Margaret Whinney and John Summerson go as far as 1830, but the painting survey by Ellis Waterhouse stops in

1790. For a continuation into the nineteenth century in the Pelican series we await Michael Kitson's volume. In the Oxford series we have T. S. R. Boase's volume, which covers the first seventy years after 1800. In this instance a terminal date of 1870 makes sense, but that is another story not for discussion here.

Burke seems to hint at the difficulty of his concluding date in the final paragraph of his book. Discussing Wordsworth, in a chapter entitled "The Transition to Romanticism," Burke writes that the poet, "who disliked the picturesque and described it in *The Prelude* as ' . . . a strong infection of the age. . . . / Bent overmuch on superficial things', has in these two passages identified the dividing line between the Rule of Taste and the liberty of nature, crossed by artists as well as poets *well before* the close of the century in which he spent the first thirty years of his life" (my italics).

Not only do the dates of 1790 or 1800 distort what was actually happening in the art world, it also cuts through the careers of major artists whose lives happen to span the end and the beginning of the centuries. This is of course inevitable with any date that is selected at any period. But in the case of these standard histories there are some unfortunately truncated artists whose two halves never seem to meet each other, apparently leading separate lives, and reminding one of the two halves of the *Visconte dimezzato* in Italo Calvino's fairy tale.

In the context of this periodical, it will be appropriate to start by looking at the results of editorial policy in the Oxford series on the career of William Blake. In Burke's volume he is mentioned on four occasions. In an excellent chapter devoted to "The Royal Academy and the Great Style" Blake appears, along with Turner, as one of the painters whose imaginations were "haunted all their lives by themes of *istoria*." Later in the same chapter, whilst discussing James Barry's paintings at the Society of Arts, Burke says that the Irishman lacked the "mystic fervour" of Blake, a fair comparison since Barry could on occasions be singularly earthbound. Still in the same chapter, whilst mentioning single-handed undertakings to illustrate the works of famous authors, Burke mentions Fuseli's Milton Gallery and Blake's Dante project. The only other citation of Blake is in a chapter on "The Expansion of Neo-Classicism," where Burke quotes from the 1809 *Descriptive Catalogue*. Each of the references is apposite, but the main discussion of Blake does not occur until Boase's volume.

Some of the other artists who have suffered similarly by being torn between two volumes include John Flaxman. His early period, embracing commissions for Wedgwood and major works in the 1790's, features in Burke, but later works have had to be omitted and appear in Boase. As a result, in neither volume is Flaxman's overall development discussed properly. Fuseli hardly comes into Burke at all. Sir Thomas Lawrence and Thomas Rowlandson are omitted. Sir Henry Raeburn, a fine portraitist who is much underrated in the general literature, appears on only one page in Burke, and is also scantily treated by Boase, and is therefore virtually omitted by both authors. Of the principal artists at the turn of the century one of the few to receive anything like adequate coverage is Benjamin West. But like Flaxman his oeuvre as a whole is unsatisfactorily treated.

Editorial decisions over dates are one matter, the actual content of Joseph Burke's volume is quite another. It is a brilliantly skillful compression within four hundred pages of a great deal of material and especially valuable since it discusses all the arts, including gardening and the decorative arts, within the covers of one book--a virtue of editorial policy, since this is a characteristic of all the Oxford History of English Art series. Too often in art historical literature, painting, sculpture and architecture are discussed in isolation from each other, and the decorative arts are usually squeezed out or given a mere nod. Art historians, with a few exceptions, have been such snobs over the decorative arts in the post-medieval period, relegating research on them--quite wrongly--to a lower order of intellectual activity. The barrier between the so-called "fine" arts and the rest is only a recent invention, for which Michelangelo is partially to blame. It is a barrier which did not exist in the eighteenth century, since artists like Robert Adam and Flaxman were not alone in designing in several fields. Across the Channel, the decorative arts were of crucial importance in contemporary France, and an integral part of the artistic creativity of the time, yet they are omitted from the Pelican History of Art volume by Wend Graf Kalnein and Michael Levy, thus diminishing its usefulness.

It was particularly encouraging therefore to open Burke's volume and find amongst the plates a double-page spread showing a Rococo staircase in a country-house in Devon opposite a Rococo design for a table and a silver wine cooler. The plates in general are in fact refreshingly unhackneyed. Other plates include a Roubiliac monument opposite a Paul de Lamerie ewer; and a Robert Adam staircase opposite a sideboard and other furnishings designed by him. Such juxtapositions make a fuller and deeper understanding of the whole period possible, in a way that cannot be achieved in volumes devoted to the arts separately. Some styles cannot be discussed adequately without taking all the arts into account; this is especially the case with the Rococo and with Neoclassicism.

Burke has some particularly good passages on the decorative arts. His discussion of the "Impact of the Rococo" in his fifth cahpter is a model of its kind, in which the essential interweaving of all the arts in the eighteenth century is very apparent, embracing also literature and music. The author had given a foretaste of his ideas in an interesting article published in *Eighteenth-Century Studies* in 1969, entitled "Hogarth, Handel and Roubiliac: a note on the interrelationship of the arts in England 1730-1760." In the same spirit Jean Hagstrum had written his important *Sister Arts* (Chicago Univ. Press, 1958) and more recently Morris Brownell has

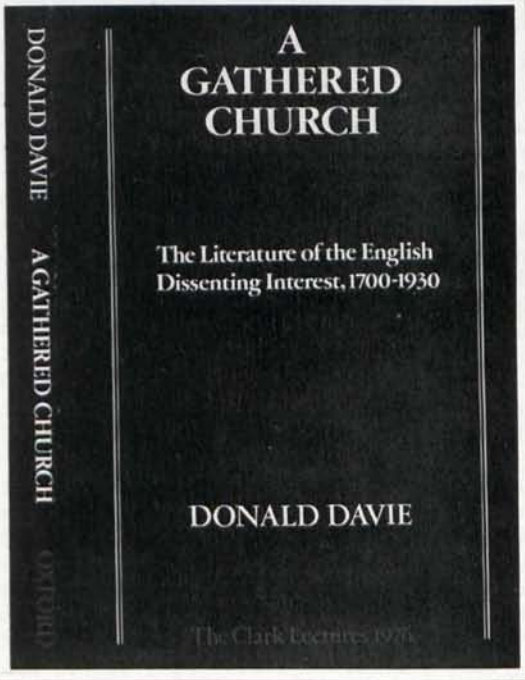
published his *Alexander Pope and the Arts of Georgian England* (Oxford Univ. Press, 1978). Ronald Paulson has produced some particularly stimulating articles on art written from the vantage point of an historian of English literature, often giving a refreshing new look at eighteenth-century Britain. Some of his articles on art have been usefully gathered together under the title of *Emblem and Expression* (Harvard Univ. Press, 1975). Within this growing awareness of interrelationships, Burke firmly places the silver, ceramics and furnishings of the period. The more boundaries that are broken down between the arts, and in many instances between disciplines themselves, the better. For a masterly new look at all the arts in eighteenth-century Britain, Burke's book is to be greatly welcomed and much valued.

As Britain has so often since the medieval period been a follower rather than a leader in the arts within a European context, the eighteenth century is an especially creative period. British contributions were of major importance in the areas of landscape-gardening and of Neoclassicism. Although one recent scholar would like to take Britain's lead away from her by saying that the "picturesque" garden was invented in France (heretical and unconvincing view!), any study of British art in the eighteenth century must have a great deal to say on the subject of both landscape gardening as well as landscape painting. Such a discussion must be interdisciplinary, and Paulson in his collected essays almost inevitably has a piece on "The Poetic Garden," starting with a walk at Castle Howard. Burke, on the other hand, starts his discussion with theory, with Shaftesbury and Pliny. Within less than thirty pages, Burke manages to squeeze in all the essentials, in an area of research that is now at last being developed, having lain largely dormant since Christopher Hussey's *magnum opus*.

As one would expect in a history of this kind, Burke discusses all the main artists and a surprisingly large number of minor ones as well. He is able, because he is looking at all the arts, to discuss Hogarth and Roubiliac in the same chapter; he naturally gives prominence to Reynolds; and he has much to say of interest about the development of architecture from the Palladians onwards. The only shift in the balance of priorities that I would like to have seen was more space devoted to Allan Ramsay, whose portaits are just as fine as--and occasionally finer than--those of either Reynolds or Gainsborough. Indeed in eighteenth-century studies in general, Gainsborough is in danger of being overrated. It is unfortunate that Ramsay is only allocated one plate, and that of the unusually dull portrait of the third Duke of Argyll.

Other reviewers have already pointed out that the long delay in the publication of the manuscript, finished in 1973, with parts completed even earlier, has meant that recent books and articles--although in some instances mentioned by the author--were not available for the main writing. The delay has also meant that minor details have not been updated, of which only two instances will be cited. We now know more about the mysterious Mr. Lightfoot responsible for the delightful Chinoiserie decorations in Claydon House, including even his Christian name. Amongst the plates, it would have been better to have included a more recent photograph of the Library at Kenwood. The later bookcases on either side of the fireplace have now been removed, and replaced by a very successful reconstruction of Adam's original mirrors, which has given the room an additional vitality in their reflecting light. But all such outdated information can easily be remedied in a second edition.

Overall, the author has written an immensely useful and indispensible working tool for anyone studying the eighteenth century. As Burke's volume is conceived quite differently from the rival Pelican series, he has provided the kind of book for which there has long been a need.



Donald Davie. **A Gathered Church: The Literature of the English Dissenting Interest, 1700-1930.** New York: Oxford University Press. $19.95.

Reviewed by Martha W. England

This book contains the six Clark Lectures delivered at Cambridge University in 1976, with thirty-five pages of notes and eleven photographs of architecture and memorials illuminating the points at issue. The first lecture charts the field. From Milton to the present, the writer searches for evidences of culture as these have changed. Primary consideration is given to esthetic patterns, proclivities and values. Two other questions are never far from the mind: political groupings and patterns of behavior; and religious groupings, beliefs and patterns of worship. At the close of the last lecture Mr. Davie remarks: "Some day I may stray from my proper field so far as to challenge certain received notions about the social and political history of the English Dissent over the past three centuries." These fields also are at least foreshadowed in the present publication.

Isaac Watts is the central figure of the second lecture, "Old Dissent, 1700-1740." Two lines of relationship are traced, between the work of Watts and Calvinist ideals of art on the Continent, those artistic ideals of simplicity, sobriety, and measure, manifested in Watts's ability to subordinate parts to the whole conception in a form of classicism so different from that of Pope that the speaker calls it "non-English." The other relation is to Hebrew poetry. Because the Old Dissent thought of itself as a chosen people living in tension with neighbors, Watts was "a poet of the tribal lay, a true analogue in Augustan England of David."

"Dissent and the Wesleyans, 1740-1800" first considers the lapsed Quaker, Matthew Green, whose poem *The Spleen* comments with rueful wit upon the changes from the time of George Fox to the day when the Quakers entered into the Industrial Revolution. *The Spleen* was admired by Pope and Walpole and Gray; admired also by Johnson as wit, but not as poetry, and he did not include Green in the *Lives of the Poets*. But Johnson would not omit Isaac Watts; he said nothing about the hymns (Johnson did not approve of hymns), and little about Watts as a poet, but praised him as man, as prose writer and especially as teacher. Watts and the Wesleys are the central figures, not that the Wesleys dissented from the Church, but because their followers did. The questions of "offensive" sexuality and masochism are raised here, and one is reminded that the dignified and decorous Dr. Watts was accused of such faults, as well as the extravagant Moravians.

The "Old Dissent" is represented by Robert Hall, Baptist minister, in the fourth lecture, "Dissent and the Evangelicals, 1800-1850." Hall, because dissenters could not be members of the University, was not quite "every inch a Cambridge man," but his love of Cambridge, and of scholarship, and of his friend Samuel Parr almost qualify him for that description. The New Dissent, Unitarians and Sandemanians, has Mrs. Elizabeth Gaskell for the Unitarian representative. The Unitarians, the intellectual *élite* of the Dissent, contributed to culture ideas, argument, speculative thought rather than works of art, and Mrs. Gaskell with her novels "is probably the nearest we can come to an exception to this rule." The Sandemanians are represented by the great scientist Michael Faraday. His popular lectures on science were a major source of income for the Royal Institute, and his love of the theater and novels and poetry enlivened these lectures, eloquent and energetic in style. The style of his sermons (he was an elected Elder) contrasts with the lectures, being "patient and formal exposition." He had been too poor to have any academic training. He had educated himself from *The Improvement of the Mind* by Watts and his first publication was on that book. Faraday alone would go far to justify Johnson's praise of Watts's book; and as for Watts, it should

be glory enough for any teacher to have educated Faraday--even, or perhaps especially--posthumously.

Lecture V, "Dissent and the Agnostics, 1850-1900," tells of the "loss of faith," in particular, George Eliot and Leslie Stephen. Many arguments with the two Arnolds, father and son, are brought into the discussion. Chiefly considered is their allegation that the Dissent had abandoned all cultural responsibilities. "Mark Rutherford" is compared with André Gide in a very illuminating discussion. The villain of this lecture is the evangelist Charles Spurgeon, whose effect upon the Dissent was "disastrous."

The sixth lecture, "Dissent in the Present Century," takes D. H. Lawrence as its battleground, the opponents being T. S. Eliot against F. R. Leavis. Eliot held in contempt Lawrence's Chapel background; Leavis defended it on the grounds that it was "the center of a strong social life." It seems to Mr. Davie, for all that, that this background failed Lawrence, just as the background of Dissent failed to sustain W. H. White. But the tradition did not wholly fail Edmund Gosse. *Father and Son* demonstrates this fact, and "one of the great and unexpected virtues of Gosse's beautifully tender book is the proof it gives of how a culture and a tradition were transmitted even within a sect so late-come and so rigid as that of the Plymouth Brethren."

If I were competent to do so, I should set this book beside the work of another poet and critic, Matthew Arnold. I am not. I have given a rather drab summary, which stands in relation to the book itself as a *précis* of a libretto stands in relation to its musical drama. Only major characters and plot line. But I can at least mention the music.

From the printed page there comes the sound of a voice, luminous and just. The thematic construction takes its ground bass from the heroic age of Milton and Bunyan. The action begins when the Hanoverians made the Dissent a part of the bourgeois culture. One major theme is stated in "O God, our help in ages past," the need of Establishment and Dissent for one another; the song is used in Establishment ceremonies in England, Canada and America. Another song by Watts introduces a major theme, "We are a garden." It is part of Watts's only song cycle, made from The Song of Solomon, and as that book has virtually been removed from the canon, so are Watts's songs almost unknown. The charge of "offensive sexuality" is part of the theme, and another part is the celebration of the Lord's Supper. This particular song describes the careful and loving preparation for the sacrament and the invitation to the Spirit to come, now that all has been made ready. With the song come thoughts of a real garden where Watts was a guest for more than thirty years, a decorous eighteenth-century garden. Here he walked and sang with the Wesleys, and said that one song by Charles Wesley was worth more than all of his own. And so this song is next quoted, "Wrestling Jacob," on the great paradoxes involved in the wounding of God and Man, of victory in defeat.

Thus the eloquent tongue of Mr. Davie evokes the very times as they pass in historical succession. Sometimes that tongue is in his cheek. The lecture on the late nineteenth century opens (appropriately) with something like a Gilbert and Sullivan patter song on the divisions among the Baptists. A Gathered Church, indeed! Sectarianism with a vengeance! And, appropriate to that era, *The Importance of Being Earnest* comes to mind; Froude and Stephen sound rather like Lady Bracknell. Sacred poetry and religious fictions have no place in literature at all. Ah, so? Well, that disposes of Milton and Bunyan. Bunyan, in fact, is "the Poet-apostle of the English Middle-Class imperfectly educated like himself." How delightful to contemplate the perfection of one's own education, and, of course, one's two good addresses.

In the lecture, a poem by Tyutchev sounds with grief for loss, the loss of faith, the loss of belief in the efficacy of prayer. The lecture closes in contrasting tone, Samuel Butler's satiric celebration of Charles Spurgeon in his flamboyant vulgarity; and in the satire there is still the sound of grief for something lost.

I take issue with two statements about Blake. I am reluctant to do so for readers who may not have Mr. Davie's book at hand, for his tone is quite as important as I represent it to be, and in both cases, it is the tone I dispute, not the facts stated. My ears are notoriously better than the brain between them; but they may not be infallible. Of Blake's *Mystery*, he says: "this term that the prayer book gives to the sacrament is consistently a term of abuse" (p. 98). So far as I recall, that is true. But Blake was not working from the prayer book. His most celebrated Mystery is from Revelation, used at the close of *Jerusalem* as St. John used it, an evil female. The Tree of Mystery is associated with the sacrament in *The Four Zoas* (Night VII, p. 80). Urizen compels his exhausted daughters to knead the fruit of the Tree into bread for a parody of a communion service and preaches a "communion sermon" that should have brought down upon him the "Woes" of Matthew 23 and the special "Woes" in 1 Corinthians 11:27 & 29. Blake, for about ten years, from 1795 was bitter in his comments on an Establishment that used its authority to support wars. And, in another context, Mr. Davie himself gives proof that the "daughters" were reluctant to take part in the sacrament: in St. Paul's Cathedral, Easter 1800, there were six communicants (p. 64).

It is true (p. 52) that Blake found no sustenance in any organized religion. His Mr. Huffcap could stand in for Spurgeon with his vulgar ranting. But Blake saw no good in any other sort of organization, school, art academy, nothing suited him. During a time when London's organized charities drew praise from the Continent, Blake had no part in them, and even "Holy Thursday" has been interpreted as an expression of his contempt for such works. Hogarth, quite a different sort of man, opened London's first art gallery in support of that charity and served with Handel on the board. Yet Blake apparently was not uncharitable by nature, nor does all of this add up to Blake's holding in contempt the true Bread and Wine that images the broken body and spilt blood. Lord David Cecil's life of Samuel Palmer describes that group of young men who made Blake's last years

happy. They were devout, intellectually sophisticated to various degrees, able to construe Blake's poems and his pictures, two of them artists, one of the two a great artist. They accepted Blake's special relation with Milton, and they established his special relation with Bunyan. They met at The House of the Interpreter. I am content to rest on their opinion.

I am not in agreement with another of Mr. Davie's opinions. The whole long passage (p. 53 f.) is relevant. The gist is that one may admire Blake "and still regard with alarm, as a very ominous symptom, the veneration which is now so freely accorded him." Mr. Davie spoke in 1976. For some years prior to that date, I had cause to think quite the contrary. I was living in a chancy and fascinating era in the history of education, every newspaper announcing some lower level of literacy and some higher estimate of the number of hours out of twenty-four that my students spent watching television commercials. The spontaneous interest of students in Blake was like money in the bank. Blake is, as Mr. Davie says, an "engaging" creature. *Engaging* is precisely the word. Think of how many things Blake was interested in! Think of the avenues he can open! Art, and his pictures of Chaucer and Spenser. Milton. Blake can lead students happily to concordances, analytical grammar, scholarly opinions. If Blake were nothing more than a means to an end, I should owe him much. But to me Blake is more, and perhaps I am *particeps criminis*.

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NEWSLETTER

MLA BLAKE 1979

W. J. T. Mitchell of the University of Chicago will be discussion leader for the 1979 Special Session on Blake at the MLA Annual Meeting. The topic will be "Blake on Language and Writing." Those interested in being on a panel should send Mitchell a paper of not more than fifteen pages by 30 March 1979 at the latest, sooner if possible.

MLA

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The topic for the 1979 meeting of the English Romantics Group of the MLA will be "Death & Dying in the Romantics." Papers should have a reading time of 20 minutes, and they should be submitted before 15 April to David V. Erdman, Crane Neck Point, Setauket, New York 11733.

••

At the next meeting of the Modern Language association of America (San Francisco, 27-30 December 1979), the Division of Literature and the Other Arts will sponsor a meeting on the subject of literary illustration. If you or any of your colleagues would like to submit a paper to be considered for inclusion on the program for this meeting, I would be very grateful for your interest and participation.

By literary illustration, the Executive Committee means visual art designed to be viewed and interpreted in conjunction with literary texts. The texts may be written in any of the languages normally represented at the MLA, and may date from any period. Medieval manuscript illuminations are no less eligible than, say, the Boydell Shakespeare Gallery or the works of Phiz. The Executive Committee does *not* encourage the submission of papers on pictorialist texts which are not actually illustrated.

Three or four papers will be selected for oral presentation by the authors in San Francisco. Papers should be 15-20 minutes in length, and should be submitted in full rather than in abstract. If slides are included in the presentation, please send them with the manuscript or describe them on an accompanying list. (Projection facilities will be provided at the meeting.) Papers should be sent to me at the Department of English, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, New Mexico 87131, by April 20 (March 20 for non-members of the MLA which has some travel funds for distinguished speakers in fields other than those directly represented by the MLA (such as art history), and for speakers who reside outside the United States and Canada. The Division must request such funds no later than April 15, and is not certain to receive them). Results will be announced by May 20. HUGH WITEMEYER, UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO, CHAIRMAN, EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, DIVISION OF LITERATURE AND THE OTHER ARTS, MLA.

MLA BLAKE 1978

Each year the MLA awards the William Riley Parker prize to the author of an outstanding article published in *PMLA* during the year. This year the Prize went to Morris Eaves, University of New Mexico, for "Blake & the Artistic Machine: An Essay in Decorum & Technology," which appeared in the October 1977 issue. At the general meeting Eaves accepted the cash prize of $500 and a citation which reads as follows: "This essay not only illuminates William Blake's esthetic and his stance as an artist and a critic of society but also casts new light on the relationship between art and technology. Morris E. Eaves sets his lucid exposition of Blake's attitudes toward technological change within the broad contexts of conceptual analysis, cultural history from the Renaissance to the present, and the influence of the machine on the human condition."

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At the Special Session on "Editing the Romantics" (discussion leader E. B. Murray, University of Missouri, St. Louis), G. E. Bentley, Jr., presented an illustrated lecture on the special editorial problems faced by an editor of Blake.

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An overflow audience of more than 100 attended the 1978 MLA Special Session on Blake's Concept of Self. Since abstracts of the first three papers read by John H. Sutherland, Christine Gallant, and Robert N. Essick appeared in the fall 1978 issue of *Blake*, I shall summarize them only briefly here. The discussion focused primarily upon points raised in the last paper on Blake's Spectre by Morton Paley, which I shall therefore report in more detail.

In "Some Blake Self-Images in *Milton* and *Jerusalem*: The Blake-Los Relationship," John Sutherland traced Blake's move from self-division to self-integration (defined as a union with Los) in *Milton* 10 and *Milton* 47. In *Jerusalem*, Los and Blake seem "close to full identification" with each other: both are engaged in the same "great task" and both are visually fused in the frontispiece. In *Jerusalem* 6, Los/Blake has gained control over his Spectre, his own self-defeating "pride and self-righteousness" which had appeared as separate entities in *Milton* 10. And on *Jerusalem* 100, Los/Blake compels his Spectre (his rational powers) and his Emanation (his now acknowledged "unconsious realms of imagination") to work "harmoniously for the integrated individual" and at the same time to create the world of space and time in which that individual can exist. Here, Sutherland concluded, Los "represents Blake's integrated self" and this plate therefore is "Blake's most convincing demonstration of his own hard-won inner harmony."

Christine Gallant then argued, in "Blake's Presence as First-Person Voice in *Jerusalem*," that the first-person voice operates much as does the authoritative dream-voice that Jung said emerged from the center of the total personality or what he called "the supraordinate Self." The message of this dream-voice "is a final summing-up of a long process of unconscious deliberation and weighing of arguments." In *Jerusalem*, Blake acts "as spokesman

for the unconscious as he encouragingly speaks to the reader who has not yet dared to descend into it." Blake also claims to speak the "Testimony of Jesus" and "God's words," thus utilizing the archetypes of Christ and God to preserve his conscious ego in the face of an overwhelming unconsciousness. Blake thereby identifies his first-person voice with that Self that includes both the conscious and the unconscious. Gallant then discussed the nine first-person passages in *Jerusalem*. The first six (1:1-5, 5:16-26, 15:4-35, 36:58-9, 34:27-48, 74:14-75:27) tell of Blake's life in an Ulro that grows closer and closer and in which he is increasingly separated from Jesus; the last three (97:5, 98:40-41, 99:5) define Blake's hard-won conviction that he has guided us through Ulro to the divine vision. By using the first-person voice in the last line of the poem, Gallant concluded, Blake emphasizes that this is a journey that we must *each* undergo, again and again.

Robert N. Essick's "William Blake: The Printmaker as Poet" traced Blake's use of imagery drawn from his etching and engraving techniques. The minute particulars of his discussion are too rich to be crudely summarized; readers should go to his forthcoming book on Blake as a printmaker (Princeton University Press, 1979) for a full exposition of this imagery. But his concluding argument can be described. Blake had a love-hate relationship with his commercial profession. He deliberately identified many of his printmaking activities with Urizen, thus suggesting that "commercial copy engraving could become a trap, a degradation of the artist's vision, and an aesthetic-economic system antithetical to Blake's highest aspirations." On the other hand, print-making can be "a medium for the expression of imagination and the transcendence of this world"; hence Blake *reverses* Urizen's unintelligible forms in the process of printing. As Essick emphasizes, "Urizen does not print his books. The *reversal* inherent in the printing process makes all the difference, just as it does in various forms--turning around, converting a state into its contrary, transforming finite into infinite--at key points in the journey towards apocalypse in Blake's poetry." Through *Milton*, *The Four Zoas* and *Jerusalem*, Blake struggled to define the proper relationship of craft to art, of his potentially destructive Spectre to the imagination of Los. As Essick concluded, "the drama of Los and his Spectre in *Jerusalem* is in part a mythic portrayal of the subordination of copy work to original composition presented in the *Public Address* and a vast metaphor for the redemption of traditional techniques underlying the maturation of Blake's graphic style from 1804 to the end of his life." Finally, Essick suggested that the physical labor and disciplined energy required of the engraver acted as a necessary counter-balance to Blake's "speculative and digressive mind," enabling him to combine in his best poems "his mental adventures and his keen sense of physical reality."

Morton Paley's essay on "Blake's Spectre" emphasized the *personal* aspect of the Spectre, i.e., Blake's Spectre as the embodiment of what Blake didn't like about *himself*, namely his fearful anxiety, his hostility (both passive and active), his envy, pride, and black melancholy, and his extreme sexual jealousy. Paley stressed Blake's use of the Spectre to reveal his "deep ambivalence about sexual feeling" in "My Spectre around me"; Blake characteristically separated sexual desire (which he associated with the Spectre) from a healthy love, and thus, Paley concluded, Blake is far from being "the exemplum of sexual harmony that some readers may wish to make him."

Paley then analyzed the strategies that Blake used to dominate and control his own evil "spectrous" feelings. He first had to recognize them, as Los does when he divides the Spectre from his Emanation (*J* 86:54); he then attempted to dominate and control them. But rather than merely casting them out, which Blake knew well could not be easily or permanently done, Blake offered an alternative solution. In Night VIIa of *The Four Zoas* and on plate 100 of *Jerusalem*, Blake envisioned a triumphant resolution in which his healthy imagination embraced the Spectre, acknowledging that the Spectre too has his place in the story. Only by coming to terms with his own jealousies, pride and vindictiveness could Blake attain his ultimate vision of imaginative unity: "Therefore the Sons of Eden praise Urthonas Spectre in songs / Because he kept the Divine Vision in time of trouble."

The questioning centered on the degree of success Blake achieved in his acceptance of and control over his Spectre, and especially on whether he liberated himself from a possessive, sexist attitude toward women (let me say, parenthetically, that I happen to think he did not). Even if Blake's self is imaged in his poetry as finally integrated, does that integration lead to productive relationships with other people, and especially with women? It was suggested that these questions could be fruitfully explored in another MLA Special Session on Blake and sexuality. ANNE K. MELLOR, STANFORD UNIVERSITY.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editors:
Without wishing to seem ungracious to Mr. Andrew Wilton for his generous review of my *Samuel Palmer a Biography* and *The Letters of Samuel Palmer*, may I make one observation?

In the latter Mr. Wilton takes me to task for my transcription of a phrase from a letter of 1839, viz., "inveighed Hannah into the conspiracy," and he says the word "must be 'inveigled'." Has Mr. Wilton examined the MSS? If not, I can assure him that "inveighed" is what is written in the originals. If Mr. Wilton consults *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* he will see that one meaning of inveigh is "to entice, inveigle."
Raymond Lister
Wolfson College
Cambridge
15 December 1978

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BLAKE

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Edited by Robert N. Essick and Donald Pearce

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