

Blake

AN ILLUSTRATED QUARTERLY
VOLUME 21 NUMBER 1 SUMMER 1987

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INFORMATION

Managing Editor: Patricia Neill.

Blake/An Illustrated Quarterly is published under the sponsorship of the Department of English, University of Rochester.

Subscriptions are \$18 for institutions, \$15 for individuals. All subscriptions are by the volume (1 year, 4 issues) and begin with the summer issue. Subscription payments received after the summer issue will be applied to the 4 issues of the current volume. Foreign addresses (except Canada and Mexico) require a \$3 per volume postal surcharge for surface mail, a \$10 per volume surcharge for air mail delivery. U.S. currency or international money order necessary. Make checks payable to *Blake/An Illustrated Quarterly*. Address all subscription orders and related communications to Patricia Neill, *Blake*, Department of English, University of Rochester, Rochester, NY 14627, USA.

Many **back issues** are available at a reduced price. Address Patricia Neill for a list of issues and prices.

Manuscripts are welcome. Send two copies, typed and documented according to the forms suggested in the MLA Style Sheet, 2nd ed., to either of the editors: Morris Eaves, Dept. of English, University of Rochester, Rochester, NY 14627; Morton D. Paley, Dept. of English, University of California, Berkeley, CA 94720.

International Standard Serial Number: 0006-453x. *Blake/An Illustrated Quarterly* is indexed in the Modern Language Association's International Bibliography, the Modern Humanities Research Association's Annual Bibliography of English Language and Literature, *English Language Notes'* annual Romantic Bibliography, ART bibliographies MODERN, American Humanities Index, the Arts and Humanities Citation Index, and Current Contents.

Blake in the Marketplace, 1986

BY ROBERT N. ESSICK

After several hyperactive years, the Blake market experienced some slowing of momentum in 1986. No Blake paintings or drawings appeared at auction or in dealers' catalogues, but two slight pencil sketches (illus. 6 & 7) changed hands privately and the Tate Gallery acquired the tempera of *Moses Indignant at the Golden Calf* by bequest. That worthy institution also purchased at auction one of the great masterpieces by Blake's followers, Richmond's *Creation of Light* (illus. 9). The only newsworthy events in the market for Blake's separate plates were the appearance of a previously unrecorded state of "Mrs. Q" and the confirmation that a set of the Dante plates is indeed now worth over £20,000. But such prices still pale in comparison to the upper reaches of the art market: \$11.1 million for Manet's *La Rue Mosniers aux Pavés*, \$5.1 million for your basic Mondrian, \$2 million for James Rosenquist's *F-111* (about what the plane itself originally cost), and \$1.1 million for a reasonably comfy chair made in Philadelphia about 200 years ago.

Perhaps the most intriguing (non)event of the year was the failure of *Songs of Innocence* copy X (illus. 2-5) to find a purchaser at auction. Sotheby's estimate and reserve (the price below which the item is not sold) were simply too high for only 14 plates on 7 leaves. Although offered in a print sale, the bound collection of plates must have been perceived as a book by potential bidders, and thus its incompleteness was crucial. The fact that the book had also been on the market for a year or two before the auction and advertised in *Apollo* without finding a buyer might have given some hint of the lack of interest at anything close to the asking price. Perhaps the recto/verso printing, a format that hinders leaf-by-leaf sale ("suitable for framing"), helped preserve the volume from a dealer who might break it up. But while the market was displaying this reasoned restraint in late June, one-half of one plate from *Innocence* (illus. 1) fetched £5800 hammer price (plus 10% buyer's premium) only five months later. I trust that this sale will not tempt owners of illuminated books to snip them into little pieces before sending them to market. Thankfully, copy X is back in the safe hands of its owner and no longer on the auction (or chopping) block.

The year of all sales and catalogues is 1986 unless noted otherwise. The auction houses listed above add

ABBREVIATIONS

BBA cat.	Bloomsbury Book Auctions, London catalogue or sales list issued by a dealer (usually followed by a number or letter designation) or auction house (fol- lowed by the day and month of sale)
CL	Christie, Manson & Woods, Ltd., London
CNY illus.	Christie, Manson & Woods, New York the item or part thereof is reproduced in the catalogue
pl(s).	plate(s)
SL	Sotheby's London
SNY st.	Sotheby's New York state of an engraving, etching, or litho- graph
Swann	Swann Galleries, Inc., auctioneers, New York
#	auction lot or catalogue item number

their purchaser's surcharge to the hammer price in their price lists. These net amounts are given here, following the official price lists. Each year, the auction firms become a little slower in issuing their price lists. Thus, I have not been able to cover several sales coming in the last few months of the year. These will appear in the 1987 review. Copy designations and plate numbers for the illuminated books follow G. E. Bentley, Jr., *Blake Books* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977). "Butlin # ___" refers by entry number to Martin Butlin, *The Paintings and Drawings of William Blake* (New Haven & London: Yale Univ. Press, 1981), 2 vols.

I am grateful for help in compiling this list to David Bindman, Martin Butlin, Ruth Fine, Thomas Lange, Raymond Lister, Arthur Vershbow, David Weinglass, and Richard Godfrey and Henry Wemyss of Sotheby's.

ILLUMINATED BOOKS

"The Echoing Green," pl. 1, from *Songs of Innocence*. Top design only, hand colored. SL, 1 Dec., #172, illus. (£6380 to the London dealer Libby Howie for a private collector). See illus. 1.

"Night" from *Songs of Innocence*, the lower design only of the second pl. with 9 lines of the text and lower design of the first pl. on the verso. Printed in light brown, with black ink and water colors added by hand, 3.1 x 6.4 cm. Lott and Gerrish, June cat., #27, recto and verso illus. color (£1250). Now in the collection of David Bindman, London. Previously sold Sotheby's Belgravia, 5 April 1977 (£420).

Songs of Innocence, copy X. SL, 27 June, #746, pls. 13, 14, 19, 27 illus. in black and white, pls. 17, 25, 36, 54 illus. color (bought-in at £40,000 on an estimate of £80,000–100,000). See illus. 2–5 and discussion above.

DRAWINGS AND PAINTINGS

Moses Indignant at the Golden Calf. Tempera on canvas, 38 x 26.6 cm., c. 1799–1800. Butlin #387. Acquired 1986 by the Tate Gallery by bequest from the estate of Ian L. Phillips. The Tate is cleaning and restoring the painting; no photo currently available. The sketch for *Hecate* (Butlin #319) remains in the possession of the Phillips family.

Sketch, Probably for Bunyan's Dream. Sold April by Mrs. Edna M. Maggs to R. Essick. See illus. 6.

Study for The Flight of Moloch. Sold July by David Bindman to R. Essick. See illus. 7.

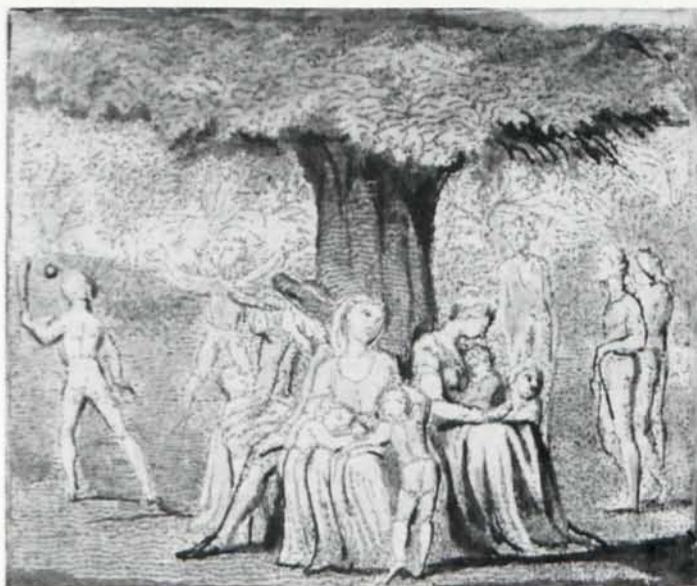
MANUSCRIPTS ABOUT BLAKE

Edmund Blunden. Autograph manuscript of Blunden's introduction to an intended facsimile of Blake's plates for Rees's *Cyclopaedia*, a critical appraisal of the book and of Blake's plates, 3 pp., folio, from Keynes's collection. SL, 27 May, #523 (Richards, £154).

E. J. Ellis. Gilchrist, *Life of Blake* (1863), signed on the title-page by Ellis and dated March 1869, with his extensive annotations in vol. 1. D. Heald, March private offer, acquired by R. Essick.

SEPARATE PLATES & PLATES IN SERIES,
INCLUDING PLATES EXTRACTED FROM
PRINTED BOOKS

Blair's *Grave*. 3 pls. from, with 1813 imprints: "Death of the Strong Wicked Man," "Christ Descending into the Grave," and "The Descent of Man into the Vale of Death." Swann, 19 Dec. 1985, #136 (\$100).



1. Blake. "The Echoing Green," pl. 1, from *Songs of Innocence*. Relief etching printed in blue, a previously unrecorded impression. Upper design only, 5.9 x 6.9 cm. Hand colored in brown, with a very pale violet on the front-most woman's dress and on the shirt of the standing figure far right. The brown tints would appear to be underpainting to create shaded areas after another layer of wash (green, for example) is applied. Thus, the print represents an early stage in Blake's hand coloring procedures. Photo courtesy of Sotheby's, London.

"Christ Trampling on Urizen." SL, 25 April, #134, signed by E. J. Shaw, heavy wove paper, scuff marks in sky, water stained, creased (not sold).

Dante, illus. to. SL, 27 June, #747, 1892 printing, slight foxing, more pronounced on pl. 6, pl. 2 illus. (£24,200—a new auction record); the set acquired by Keynes from the Linnell family in 1912; probably the set offered by Colnaghi, March–April 1977 cat., #8 (\$12,000). SNY, 20 Nov., #4, pl. 3 only, few slight stains (\$1540).

"Hawker, Rev. Robert." CL, 13 May, #53, small margins, illus. (not sold; estimate £700–900); only the fifth recorded impression.

Job engravings. Weston Gallery, Feb. cat. 2, #14, pl. 13 only, "Proof" issue on French paper, illus. (\$1265). SNY, 14 Feb., #201, "Proof" issue on French paper, some foxing, pl. 15 illus. (\$8525); #365, issue not indicated but apparently the regular issue of 1826, some marginal soiling (\$6325). Black Sun Books, July cat. 70, #13, "proof impressions on India paper, mounted on heavy sheets of paper" (and thus probably the restrikes of 1874), "original light blue boards and printed paper label on spine" (\$17,000). SL, 19 June, #123, "proof impressions on india paper," cover label loosely inserted, pl. 5 illus. (Hirschl, £9680).

"Mrs. Q." SL, 1 Dec., #173, color printed with hand tinting, previously unrecorded state with signatures but before title inscription, illus. (£1100 to D. Heald for R. Essick).

BOOKS WITH ENGRAVINGS BY & AFTER BLAKE

Bell's Edition of the Poets of Great Britain, 1777-83. Swann, 17 April, #151, 109 vols., fancy bindings, in 2 contemporary traveling boxes (\$7500); no indication that Blake's print after Stothard for one of the Chaucer volumes is present rather than Cook's of the same design.

Blair, *Grave*. SL, 9 Dec. 1985, #231, 1808 quarto, spotted, uncut (Seibu, £165). Phillip Pirages, Jan. cat. 10, #64, 1808 quarto "untrimmed," "Day of Judgment" illus. (\$1750). Jeffrey Stern, Jan. cat. 3, #458, 1813 quarto, "original blind decorated gilt lettered cloth" (like the 1870 folio?), with 4 pls. by Blake for Lavater's *Physiognomy* and "nine" [sic?] pls. for Wollstonecraft's *Original Stories* (1796) "inserted" (£425). Claude Cox, Jan. cat. 52, #18, 1808 quarto, some spotting, uncut (£350). Wilsey Rare Books, Feb. cat. 18, #49, 1808 quarto, "original blue boards," uncut, no mention of cover label (\$650). SNY, 14 Feb., #366, 1808 quarto, some soiling, some leaves loose, binding worn (\$440). Claude Cox, April cat. 53, #30, 1813 quarto, publisher's blue cloth, "blocked in blind and lettered in gold" (like 1870 reissue?), rebacked (£120). Swann, 22 May, #40, 1870 folio, rebound (\$300 on an estimate of \$80-120). Alan Thomas, May cat. 48, #41, 1808 quarto, fancy binding (£350). Ben Abraham Books, Sept. cat. 6, #11, 1808 quarto, some foxing (\$1500); same copy, Jan. 1987 cat. 7, #13 (\$1500). Although I have not seen either copy, the two 1813 quartos (noted above) in publisher's bindings, suspiciously like that used for the 1870 reissue, suggest that John Camden Hotten received some unbound 1813 quarto sheets when he acquired Blake's plates from Ackermann. Hotten then bound these up in the same publisher's cloth he used for his facsimile reprint of 1870.

Bürger, *Leonora*. SNY, 14 Feb., #367, some minor spotting and soiling, rubbed, but a good copy (Quaritch for Arthur Vershbow, \$935).

Cumberland, *Attempt to Describe Hafod*. Cavendish Rare Books, May cat. 22, #38, with half-title, "large paper . . . seemingly a presentation copy" (£185). The fairly detailed cat. description makes no mention of the presence of the map, attributed to Blake, nor could a member of the dealer's staff, contacted after the book had been sold, recall the map's presence.

Cumberland, *Thoughts on Outline*. CNY, 16 May, #137, advert. leaf at end, rubbed, title-page misprint uncorrected (\$385).



2. Blake. "Infant Joy" from *Songs of Innocence* copy X. Relief etching with white-line work, 11 x 6.8 cm., printed in green and hand colored. The flowers are tinted blue, as in 7 other recorded impressions. Photo courtesy of Sotheby's, London.

Darwin, *Botanic Garden*. Jeffrey Stern, Jan. cat. 3, #457, 3rd ed., "fine contemporary" binding (£425). Lawson, Jan. cat. 225, #19, 1799 octavo ed., 2 vols. (£95). George's, July cat. 690, 1st ed. of Part I, 2nd of Part II (£200). Spelman's Bookshop, Oct. cat. 9, #607, 1799 octavo ed., 2 vols., fine contemporary calf (£280). Lawson, Nov. cat. 228, #47, 1st ed. of Part I, 4th of Part II (£165). Blackwell's, Dec. cat. A85, #496, 1st ed. of Part I, 3rd of Part II, frontispiece stained, other pls. brown (£200).

Darwin, *Poetical Works*. O'Flynn Books, May cat. 26, #53 (£180).

Enfield, *Speaker*. Peter Murray Hill, winter cat. 173, #66, 1797 ed. (£40).

- Flaxman, *Iliad*, 1805. Zeitlin & Ver Brugge, Nov. cat. 292, #41, bound with *Odyssey*, 1805, foxed (\$200).
- Gay, *Fables*. Argonaut Book Shop, May cat. 97, #99, 1st ed., "large and thick paper . . . uncropped," tissue guards over pls., slight foxing (\$500). Edward Nudelman, June cat. 10, #60, "12 woodcut[sic] engravings by Blake" (\$350). SL, 10 June, #1269, with Milton, *Paradise Lost*, 1799 (Siebu, £264). Quaritch, Aug. cat. 39, #116, 1st ed. (\$675). Heritage Bookshop, Dec. cat. 160, #65, 1st ed. (\$450). James Cummins, Dec. cat. 18, #46, lacking last 12 pp. (\$425).
- Gough, *Sepulchral Monuments*. Howes, June cat. 231, #787, 2 vols. in 5, 1786-96, fancy binding (£500). David Bickersteth, July cat. 93, #25, 2 vols. in 3, 1786-96 (£440).
- Hayley, *Life . . . of Cowper*, 1803-1804. Phillips, London, 20 March auction, #233, spotted (estimate £40-50).
- Hayley, *Triumphs of Temper*, 1803. G. W. Stuart, Feb. cat. 6, #91 (\$395). Lawson, Nov. cat. 228, #48 (£165). George's, Nov. cat. 687, #89, large paper, fancy Bedford binding (£450). James Cummins, Dec. cat. 18, #371 (\$350).
- Hogarth, *Works*. CL, 30 May, #113, 1822 issue (Burgess, £918). SL, 19 June, #154, Baldwin and Cradock issue, c. 1835-37 (Marks, £275). Beeleigh Abbey Books, Aug. cat. 41, #255, Baldwin and Cradock issue, c. 1835-37 (£1600).
- Hunter, *Historical Journal*, 1793 quarto. SL, 15 April, #796, soiled, worn (not sold); 8 May, #59, "tall copy" (Blackwell, £2640). SNY, 24 Sept., #168, title-page shaved, some wear and tears (\$1320). SL, 23 Oct., #520 (Bonham, £1540).
- Josephus, *Works*. BBA, 12 Dec. 1985, #138, issue of c. 1800, 58 pls. only (Jeffrey, £82). Demetzy Books, Feb. private offer, first(?) issue, c. 1785-86, rebaked (\$250). Baughman Rare Books, July cat., #288, first(?) issue, c. 1785-86 (\$565).
- Lavater, *Aphorisms on Man*, 1794. James Cummins, Dec. cat. 18, #377, disbound, foxed (\$100).
- Lavater, *Essays on Physiognomy*, 1810. CL, 27 Nov. 1985, #85, 3 vols. in 5, original boards uncut, some covers loose (Hetherington, £108).
- Malkin, *Father's Memoirs of His Child*. W. Thomas Taylor, Sept. cat. 42, #16, modern binding, slight damp staining (\$400). Lawson, Nov. cat. 228, #49, half-calf (£165).
- Nicholson, *Introduction to Natural Philosophy*, 2nd ed., 1787. R. & D. Emerson, Feb. private offer, new binding (\$275).
- Rees, *Cyclopaedia*. BBA, 30 Oct., #140, vols. 1-20, 22-39 and 6 pls. vols., worn (Jeffrey, £176).
- Shakespeare, *Plays*, 1805. BBA, 6 March, #152, 9 vol. issue, spotted, some leaves loose (not sold).
- Stedman, *Narrative*. W. & V. Dailey, March cat. 41, #161, 1806 ed. (\$600). Sims, Reed & Fogg, summer cat. 86, #2018, 1813 ed. (£750). BBA, 31 July, #425, 1796 ed., some spotting (Elliott, £242). SNY, 24 Sept., #214, 1796 ed., pls. hand colored, rebaked (\$1760).
- Stuart and Revett, *Antiquities of Athens*. CL, 16 April, #193, 3 vols., 1762-94, lacking pl. 29 in vol. 2, some staining (Weinreb, £2160). SL, 8 May, #174, 4 vols., 1762-1816, original boards uncut (Sotiriadis, £2860); #304, 4 vols., 1762-1816, rubbed and stained (Weinreb, £2750). D. & E. Lake, Nov. cat. 81, #78, 5 vols., 1762-1830, some foxing (\$8000).
- Vetusta Monumenta*. SL, 11 March, #594, 5 vols. in 3, 1747-1835, some tears, worn (Downie, £165). This collection may include Ayloff's *Account of Some Ancient Monuments* (1778), with 7 pls. attributed to Blake, although the cat. makes no mention of it.
- Virgil, *Pastorals*. Marlborough Rare Books, Oct. cat. 117, #37, vol. 1 only, worn contemporary sheep, some brown-ing, cut no. 1 illus. (£3800).
- Wollstonecraft, *Original Stories*, 1791. Jeffrey Stern, May cat. 4, #394, lacking pl. 2 (£245). SNY, 24 Sept., #117, Stopford A. Brooke's copy, with a duplicate set of the pls. bound in (Justin Schiller for R. Essick, \$1430). The duplicates of pls. 3 and 5 are in a previously unrecorded first state. This minor discovery suggested to me that all pls. exist in 3 states. Since pls. 1 and 2 were already known in 3 states, I started searching for unrecorded first states of pls. 4 and 6. These I soon found, via photo files, in a copy of the 1791 ed. in the Rosenwald Collection, Library of Congress, call no. PZ6.W7. Since all these first states, both previously recorded (pls. 1, 2) and newly identified (pls. 3-6), have imprints, all would appear to be published states rather than working proofs.
- Young, *Night Thoughts*, uncolored. SL, 9 Dec. 1985, #230, lacking Explanation leaf, soiled, worn, upper cover loose, p. 8 illus. (Seibu, £880). SNY, 14 Feb., #370, Explanation leaf torn and repaired, covers loose (\$1320). Phillip Pirages, July cat., #181, lacking Explanation leaf, "excellent impressions," pp. 26-27, 49 illus. (\$3500).



3. Blake. "The Little Girl Lost" (pl. 2) and "The Little Girl Found" (pl. 1) from *Songs of Innocence* copy X. 11 x 6.8 cm. Photo courtesy of Sotheby's, London.

BLAKE'S CIRCLE & FOLLOWERS

Works are listed under artists' names in the following order: untitled paintings and drawings sold in groups, single paintings and drawings, letters and manuscripts, separate plates, books with plates by or after the artist.

BASIRE, JAMES

"Le Champ de Drap d'Or," etching/engraving after F. Edwards. CL, 13 May, #24, folds, tears, stains (£162).

CALVERT, EDWARD

"Chamber Idyll," wood engraving. Weston Gallery, Feb. cat. 2, #15, from the *Memoir*, illus. (\$1740).

"Cyder Feast," wood engraving. Lott & Gerrish, June cat., #144, from the *Memoir*, illus. (£850).

"Lady and the Rooks," wood engraving. Lott & Gerrish, June cat., #145, from the *Memoir*, illus. (£400).

"Return Home," wood engraving. Lott & Gerrish, June cat., #146, from the *Memoir*, illus. (£400).

"Sheep of His Pasture," engraving. SL, 26 June, #441, 2nd st., printed in brown (£440).

FLAXMAN, JOHN

Charity: Attendants Supporting a Mourning Woman. Pencil, 9 1/8 x 8 1/4 in. CL, 4 Feb., #53, with a drawing attributed to Mather Brown (£172).

Anatomical Studies, 1833. Pickering & Chatto, Oct. cat. 69, #50, foxed, worn (\$350); same copy, Nov. cat. 70, #25 (\$350).

Eight Illustrations of The Lord's Prayer, 1835. Sanders of Oxford, March cat. 110, #217 (£45).

Iliad illustrations. Thomas Thorp, fall cat. 458, #125, with *Odyssey*, Aeschylus, and Hesiod illustrations, in 1 vol., Florence, L. Piazzini, 1826 (£220). See also Flaxman, *Iliad*, under *Books with Engravings by and after Blake*.

Lectures on Sculpture, 1829. Philadelphia Rare Books, Oct. cat., #65, lacking frontispiece (\$200).

FUSELI, HENRY

Celadon and Amelia, circle of Fuseli. Oil, 121.9 x 101 cm., after Fuseli's painting in the Staatliche Kunsthalle, Karlsruhe. CL, 28 Feb., #164, illus. (£756).

Cleopatra Receiving the Asp. Pencil, pen, touches of wash, 21.5 x 30.5 cm., paper watermarked 1805. SL, 10 July, #50, illus. (not sold).

Dr. James Paying a Bill. Pencil, pen, wash, 11 3/4 x 8 7/8 in. CL, 8 July, #105, illus. (not sold on an optimistic estimate — and high reserve? — of £5000–7000).

Head of a Woman Wearing a Necklace and Elaborate Headdress. Pencil, 22.5 x 15 cm. SL, 13 March, #106, illus. (£3520).

Self-Portrait, in dressing-gown and night-cap, smoking a pipe. Black ink, 4 1/2 x 5 in. CL, 8 July, #106, illus. (£4104).

Study of a Young Lady with an Elaborate Headdress. Pencil, 18 x 21 cm. SL, 10 July, #51, illus. (£2420).

Study of Mrs. Fuseli, Wearing an Elaborate Headdress. Gray wash, pen, pencil, 21.5 x 13.5 cm., anatomical sketch on verso. SL, 10 July, #49, illus. (not sold).

3 autograph notes and 2 autograph letters, 1 to "Du Rouvray" discussing an engraving of a picture of Achilles and Briseis. CL, 29 May, #310 (Browne, £432).

"Death of Oedipus," mezzotint by W. Ward. CL, 11 Nov., #19, hand colored, some staining (£440).

"Evening thou Bringest All," lithograph. R. E. Lewis, Jan. 1987 cat., #9, 2nd st., printed in brown, some soiling, illus. (\$5800).

"Vision of the Lazar-House," engraving with aquatint by M. Haughton, 1813. R. E. Lewis, April private offer. See illus. 8.

Boothby, *Sorrows Sacred to . . . Penelope*, 1796. Quaritch, Aug. cat. 39, #92, fancy binding (\$1250).

Specimens of Polyautography, 1803. 12 lithographs, including works by Barry, Stothard, and Fuseli. SL, 27 June, #745, 4 pls. illus. (£9350).

Winckelmann, *Reflections on the Painting and Sculpture of the Greeks*, 1765. Spelman's Bookshop, Oct. cat. 9, #120 (£300).

Young, *Catalogue of the . . . Collection of . . . J. J. Angerstein*, 1823. Sims, Reed & Fogg, summer cat. 86, #3489 (£45).

LINNELL, JOHN

Cattle at Hampstead. Water color, 7 x 9 in., signed and dated [18]24. Martyn Gregory, Nov. cat. 45, #107 (£950).

Eve Offering the Forbidden Fruit to Adam. Water color, 21 x 16.5 cm. SL, 13 March, #66, illus. (£1320).

Job Offering up Sacrifices for his Children. Oil by Linnell and Hannah Palmer, 56.5 x 76.2 cm. CL, 28 Feb., #85, illus. (£1404). The picture bears no similarities to Blake's Job designs. Previously offered CL, 26 July 1985, #290 (not sold).

Landscape Sketch in Hertfordshire. Pencil, 25.4 x 38 cm., signed and dated 1814. Agnew, Jan. cat. 113, #79 (£350).

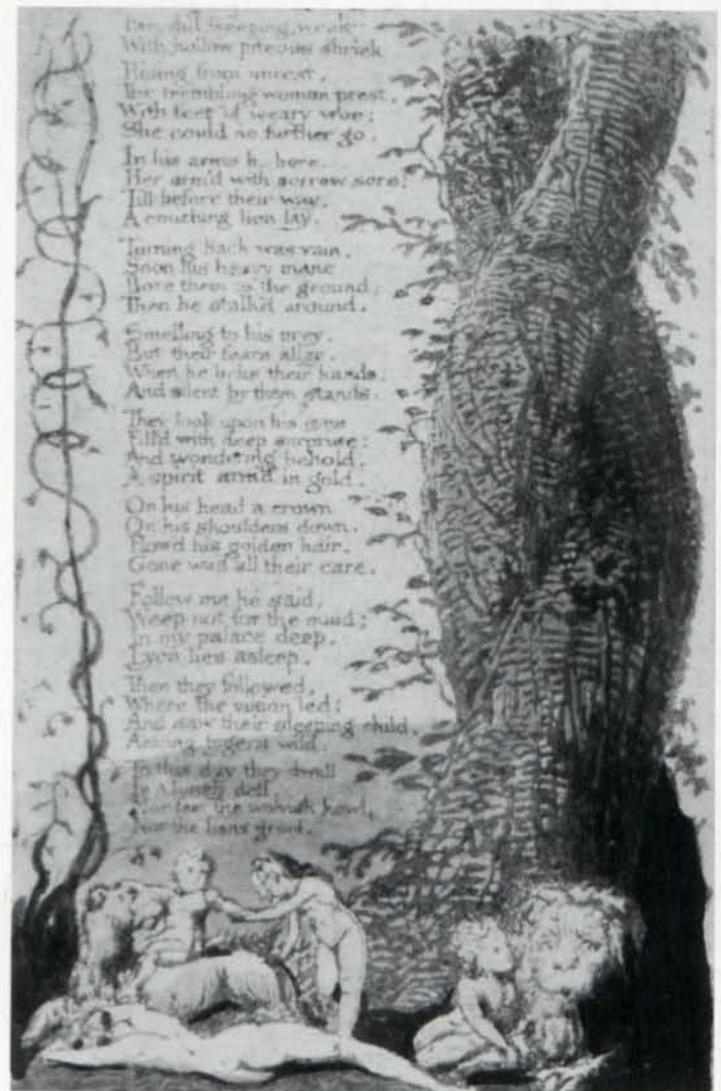
Mountain Track. Oil, 70.5 x 98.5 cm., signed and dated 1869-75. SL, 9 July, #96, illus. color (not sold).

Noon. Oil, 72 x 100 cm., signed and dated 1871. SL, 1 Oct., #138, illus. color (£11,000). By the 1860s, Linnell's style had become formulaic, but this very lovely painting shows his ability to exceed the usual limitations of his self-imposed conventions.

Pastoral Scene. Oil, 76.2 x 101.6 cm., signed and dated 1872. CNY, 26 Feb., #143, illus. color (not sold).

Portrait of John Chin. Oil, 28.8 x 22.2 cm., signed and dated 1816. CL, 17 Oct., #129, illus. (not sold).

Portrait of Selby Lowndes. Pencil, 6 $\frac{1}{8}$ x 4 $\frac{3}{8}$ in., signed and dated 1820. CL, 22 July, #27, with 5 other portrait drawings by Linnell (£64).



4. Blake. "The Little Girl Found," pl. 2, from *Songs of Innocence* copy X. 11 x 6.9 cm. Photo courtesy of Sotheby's, London.

Portrait of the Rev. William Allies, c. 1819, and a portrait of Mary Linnell dated 1829. Pencil, 17.5 x 13 cm., the second smaller. SL, 24 April, #283, Allies portrait illus. (not sold). Offered again, SL, 16 Oct., #424 (same result).

Rev. Edward Bury. Pencil heightened with white, 24.5 x 14.5 cm. SL, 10 July, #126 (£858).

Shallows. Oil, 31 x 43 cm., signed. SL, 9 July, #97, illus. (not sold).

Shepherd and a Shepherdess. Oil, 76 x 101.5 cm., signed and dated 1872. SL, 1 Oct., #287, illus. color (not sold).

Trees in North Wales. Pencil, 4 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ in., signed and dated 1813. CL, 22 July, #7, with 5 drawings by another hand (£108).

Wooded Landscape with Figures on a Path. Oil, signed and dated 1838. CL, 25 July, #206, illus. (not sold).

MORTIMER, JOHN HAMILTON

Portfolio of 6 drawings, including anatomical studies. Pen and ink, various sizes. SL, 24 April, #233 (not sold); 16 Oct., #363 (not sold).

Group of 3 studies, and studies of 2 helmeted heads of soldiers. Pen and ink, 7 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 7 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. CL, 8 July, #81 (£453).

War Instigated by the Demon of Discord and Restored by the Virtues. Pencil, pen, wash, red chalk, 9 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. oval. CL, 8 July, #80 (£702).

PALMER, SAMUEL

Figures Rowing on a Lake. Sepia wash, 3 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. Martyn Gregory, Nov. cat. 45, #120, illus. (£1800).

Landscape with Windmill. Sepia wash, 3 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. Martyn Gregory, Nov. cat. 45, #121, illus. (£3000).

"Bellman," etching. Craddock & Barnard, April cat. 151, #199, 7th st., 1926 printing (£1720); same impression, July supplement to cat. 152, illus. (£1720). CL, 23 April, #621, 5th st., pencil signature, illus. (£2052). SL, 26 June, #457, 7th st., 1926 printing (£990); #458, the same (not sold).

"Christmas," etching. SL, 25 April, #364, 5th st., 1926 printing (£330).

"Cypress Grove," etching. Lott & Gerrish, June cat., #461, 2nd st., illus. (£180).

"Early Ploughman," etching. SL, 25 April, #367, 6th st., slight foxing, with "Rising Moon," final st., foxed and with minor damage (not sold). Craddock & Barnard, April cat. 151, #198, 9th st., 1926 printing (£430). Lott & Gerrish, June cat., #457, 8th st., 1926 printing, illus. (£750). SL, 26 June, #460, 6th st., pencil signature (£385).

"Herdsman's Cottage," etching. Lott & Gerrish, June cat., #455, 2nd st., printed before the published ed., illus. (£455). CL, 25 June, #713, 2nd st., pencil signature, from the collection of George Richmond (£345). Garton & Cooke, Sept. cat. 36, #54, 2nd st., inscribed "Proof on Japan p: by Goulding," pencil signature, illus. (£1500); #55, 2nd st. on laid paper, 1872 printing (£450).

"Homeward Star," etching. Lott & Gerrish, June cat., #459, 4th st., 1927 printing (£300); #460, 3rd st., 1924 printing, illus. (£460).



5. Blake. "A Cradle Song," pl. 2, from *Songs of Innocence* copy X. 11 x 7 cm. The white-line hatching on the background drapery and the white line delineating the woman's profile are particularly clear in this impression. Photo courtesy of Sotheby's, London.

"Lonely Tower," etching. Weston Gallery, Feb. cat. 2, #16, 6th st., pencil signature, illus. (\$4700). SL, 25 April, #368, impression from the cancelled pl. (not sold). SL, 26 June, #459, 5th st., pencil signature and inscribed "Trial Proof," illus. (£2310).

"Moeris and Galatea," etching. Lott & Gerrish, June cat., #463, 2nd st. (£160); #464, 4th st., printed in the 1920s, illus. (£300).

"Morning of Life," etching. SNY, 7 March, #403, 6th st., pencil signature and inscribed "Trial Proof—Very Good" (\$1210).



6. Blake. *Sketch, Probably for Bunyan's Dream*. Pencil, approx. 16 x 12.7 cm., on laid paper watermarked M & J LAY 1816. Inscribed by Frederick Tatham, lower right. Essick collection. Butlin, #830, dates the drawing to c. 1824-27 and suggests that it is an alternative version for the first design in Blake's water-color series illustrating *Pilgrim's Progress*. This textual source, however, does not offer an easy identification of the hovering figure (unless he is a personification of "the Similitude of a Dream") or the figure walking away on the left.



7. Blake. *Study for The Flight of Moloch* (Milton's "Nativity Ode"). Pencil, approx. 26 x 20.3 cm., c. 1815. Butlin #541. Essick collection. The underdrawing of the 3 figures nearest the bottom of the sheet accords with their positions and gestures in the first series (1809) of the "Nativity Ode" water colors (Whitworth Art Gallery), but the overdrawing on these figures and the arm positions of the idol, the outline of his crown, and the leg positions of his spirit departing at the top all follow the later series of c. 1815 (Huntington Library). Thus, this working sketch is the intermediary between the two finished versions of this design.

"Opening the Fold," etching. SL, 25 April, #369, 3rd st., pencil signature, slight foxing (£440). Lott & Gerrish, June cat., #458, 4th st., illus. (£900).

"Rising Moon," etching. Garton & Cooke, summer cat., #72, 7th st. (£375).

"Sepulchre," etching. Lott & Gerrish, June cat., #462, 2nd st., illus. (£180).

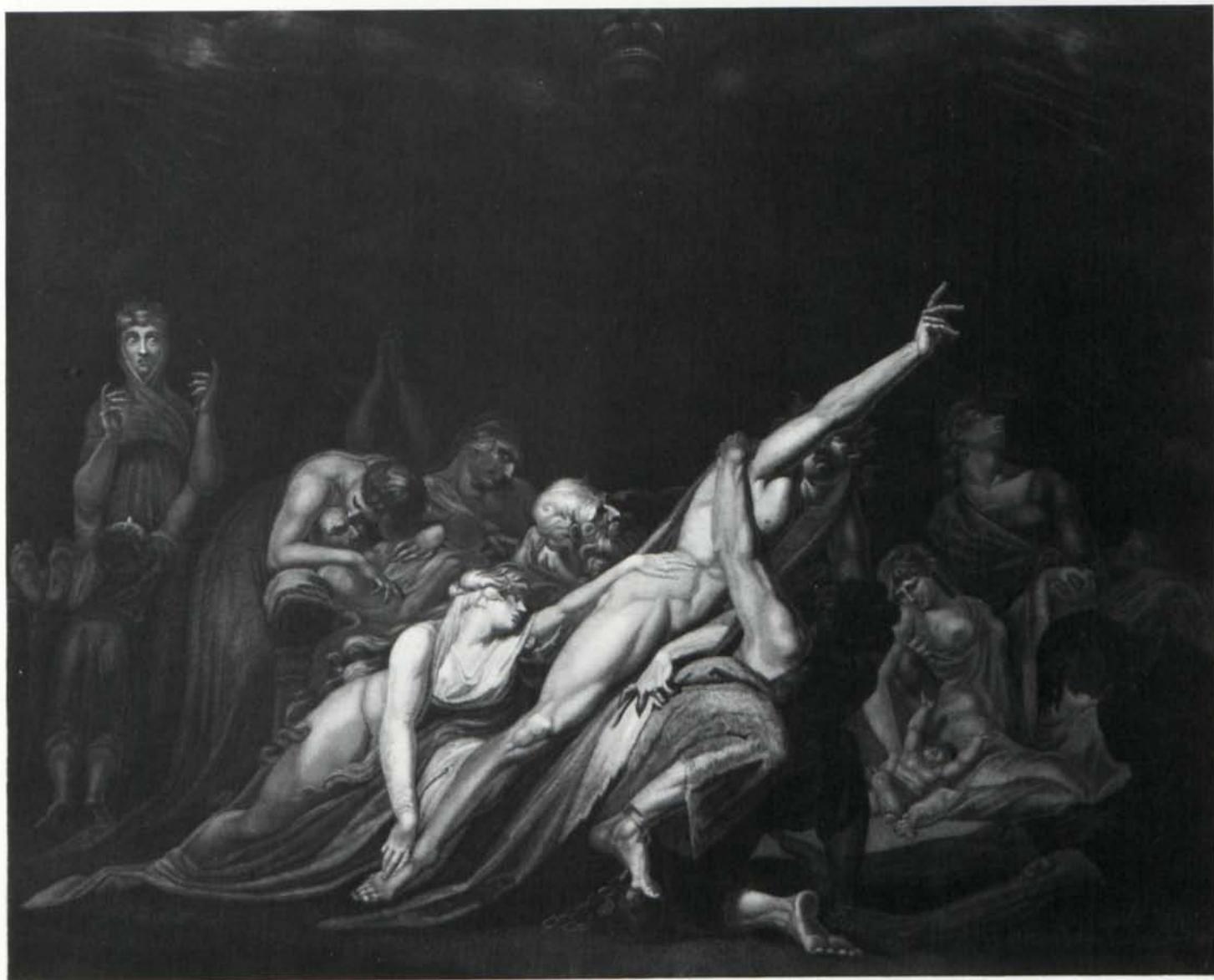
"Skylark," etching. Lott & Gerrish, June cat., #452, between 6th and 7th st., laid India, illus. (£750); #452, 7th st. (£425).

"Sleeping Shepherd," etching. SL, 25 April, #365, 3rd or 4th st. (not sold).

"Weary Ploughman," etching. CL, 23 April, #620, 8th st. (£216). SL, 25 April, #366, 8th st., with 2 etchings by W. L. Wyllie (£308). Lott & Gerrish, June cat., #453, 7th st., illus. (£1600); #454, 8th st., minor damage (£500). Garton & Cooke, Sept. cat. 36, #56, 8th st., 1865 printing, illus. (£600).

"Willow," etching. Lott & Gerrish, June cat., #451, 3rd st., 1926 printing, illus. (£425).

Hamerton, *Etching and Etchers*. Lott & Gerrish, June cat., p. 64, 1868 ed. with Palmer's "Early Ploughman" (£850); 1880 ed. with Palmer's "Herdsman's Cottage" (£550).



8. *The Vision of the Lazar-House* (Milton's *Paradise Lost*). Engraved by Moses Haughton after the painting by Henry Fuseli for his "Milton Gallery." Etching/engraving with aquatint, 53.8 x 67.2 cm., open-letter proof (first published state?), published 10 Oct. 1813. Essick collection. The painting is lost, but two preliminary drawings survive. This large print is now quite rare. David Weinglass tells me that, in his researches for a catalogue of prints after Fuseli, he has not found another impression (the one listed by the Victoria & Albert Museum as being in its collection cannot be located.)

Palmer, A. H., *Life and Letters of Samuel Palmer*. Blackwell, June cat. A83, #41, 1st ed., rubbed (£220). Swann, 22 May, #281, 1st ed., large paper (withdrawn). Sims, Reed & Fogg, summer cat. 86, #1277, 1st ed., original cloth (£285).

Palmer, S., *An Address to the Electors of West Kent*, 1832. Marlborough Rare Books, Oct. private offer, disbound (£450).

Palmer, S., *English Version of the Eclogues of Virgil*. D. McDowell, March cat. 3, #436, 2nd ed., 1884 folio, publisher's vellum (£550); same copy, Nov. cat. 5, #418 (£550). CL, 23 April, #622, 2nd ed., publisher's cloth (£410). CNY, 16 May, #182, 1st ed., large paper, publisher's vellum (\$638). Swann, 22 May, #282, apparently 1st ed., original cloth (\$425). CL, 21 Oct., #371, pls. only from 2nd ed., with "The Early Ploughman" (£220). Sims, Reed & Fogg, summer cat. 86, #2131, 1st ed., large

paper, rebound but preserving original vellum front cover (£850). SL, 19 June, #165, 1st ed., original vellum (Jacobson, £572). Blackwell, Dec. cat., #105, 1st ed., small paper, Eton College prize binding (£400).

Palmer, S., *Shorter Poems of Milton*, 1889. CNY, 16 May, #183, large paper, publisher's vellum, pl. 3 foxed (\$220). CL, 30 May, #269, original cloth scuffed (Vine, £97).

RICHMOND, GEORGE (excluding later portraits)

Group of 7 drawings, pencil, ink, and water colors, including 3 washerwomen; Calais, 1828; Moses, c. 1820-23; a devil; bearing wood. 11 x 7 $\frac{3}{8}$ in. and smaller. CL, 29 April, #10 (not sold).

Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Pencil and colored chalk, 44.5 x 61 cm. SL, 10 July, #88, illus. (£880).

The Creation of Light. SL, 12 March, #75, illus. color (£52,800 to Spink for the Tate Gallery). See illus. 9.

ROMNEY, GEORGE (excluding portrait paintings)

Folio of 46 drawings, mostly pencil, various sizes, including studies for the Opening of the Ark, Charity, Canidia, L'Allegro, Titania's Chariot. SL, 13 March, #64, 2 illus. (£3520).

Folio of 22 drawings, mostly pencil, various sizes. SL, 16 Oct., #343, 1 illus. (£418).

Folio of 22 pencil drawings, 28 x 42 cm. SL, 16 Oct., #342, 1 illus. (£330).

Folio of 9 drawings, pencil, various sizes, including studies for Banquo and the Ghost, Fall of the Rebel Angels, prison scenes, the flood. SL, 13 March, #65, 1 illus. (£1210).

Clustered and Embracing Figures: Study for Howard Visiting the Lazaretto. Pencil, 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ x 9 $\frac{1}{8}$ in., with 2 others. CL, 18 March, #78 (£151).

Couple Walking, Arm in Arm. Pencil, 11 x 14 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. CL, 18 March, #77 (£205).

Studies for Cimon and Iphigeneia. Pen and wash, 10 $\frac{1}{4}$ x 16 in. CL, 8 July, #25 (not sold).

Study for Viscountess Bulkeley as Hebe. Pen, pencil, wash, 7 x 3 $\frac{3}{4}$ in. CL, 18 March, #73, illus. (£1188).

Study of a Woman Holding a Lyre. Ink and wash, 23 x 18 cm., foxed. SL, 16 Oct., #385, illus. (£330).



9. George Richmond. *The Creation of Light*. Tempera on panel, 47.5 x 40.5 cm., signed "George Richmond/1826" lower right. The Tate Gallery, the new owner of this magnificent painting, is now repairing the minor damage left of the figure and above his head. Blake executed the same subject as a water color for Thomas Butts (Butlin #433). Might there be some compositional relationship between Blake's design, untraced since 1853, and Richmond's? There is no record of Richmond having access to Butts's collection, where Blake's drawing would have been by the time Richmond met Blake. Photo courtesy Sotheby's, London.

Suppliant and Commanding Figures. Pencil, 15 x 22 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. CL, 18 March, #75, illus. (not sold).

Tancred Supported by Erminia and Vafrino, 3 studies for. Pen and ink, averaging 7 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 6 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. CL, 8 July, #24 (not sold).

Temptation of Christ and Angels in Flight, 2 in 1 frame. Pencil, dated "Sept 93," 5 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 8 $\frac{7}{8}$ in. and smaller. CL, 18 March, #75, 1 illus. (not sold).

STOTHARD, THOMAS

Methought I was enamoured of an Ass. Water color, 5 x 5 7/8 in. CL, 18 March, #47, illus. (£378).

Triumph of Britannia. Oil on panel, 29 x 95 cm. SL, 12 March, #69, illus. color (£2860).

"Pilgrimage to Canterbury," etching/engraving by Heath and Schiavonetti, 1817. CL, 13 May, #43 (£291).

"Power of Innocence" and "Innocent Stratagem," stipple engravings by J. Strutt. CL, 11 Nov., #41, some staining, with 2 other prints (£110).

"Shakespeare's Seven Ages of Man," engraved title and 7 pls. BBA, 5 June, #498, hand colored, foxed (Fogg, £242).

Bijou, 1828. Book Press, July cat. 25, #53, publisher's binding (\$95). William Allen, winter 1986-87 cat. 276, #80 (\$25).

Bray, *Life of Stothard*, extra-illustrated copies only. Beeleigh Abbey Books, Aug. cat. 41, #40, 2 vols., with 169 added pls. (£395); same copy, George Houlé Books, Sept. cat. 35, #102 (\$1200).

Collins, *Poetical Works*, 1797. Jeffrey Stern, May cat. 4, #430 (£70).

Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*, 1790. Claude Cox, May cat. 54, #73 (£120).

Hayley, *Triumphs of Temper*, 1799. Deighton Bell, July cat. 236, #431, rebacked (£35).

Rogers, *Italy*, 1830. Swann, 12 June, #302, foxed (\$60). Blackwell, June cat. A83, #384, foxed (£35). SL, 10 June, #994, with Rogers, *Poems*, 1834 (Thorpe, £154).

Rogers, *Pleasures of Memory*. Claude Cox, May cat. 54, #89, 1793 ed., worn (£25); #90, 1802 ed. (£18). Thomas Thorp, June cat. 457, #298, 1810 ed., large paper? (£50).

Rogers, *Poems*. Sterling Books, April cat. 63, #316, 1834 ed. (£55). Claude Cox, April cat. 53, #104, 1814 ed., rebacked (£15). Sanders of Oxford, March cat. 110, #491, 1812 ed. (£38). Blackwell, Dec. cat. A85, #116, 1812 ed. (£50). Claude Cox, Dec. cat. 57, #175, 1834 ed. (£30).



DISCUSSION

with intellectual spears & long winged arrows of thought

Reply to Mary V. Jackson

by Charu Sheel Singh

Mary V. Jackson's aim in reviewing my book, *The Chariot of Fire: A Study of William Blake in the Light of Hindu Thought*, (*Blake* 18 (1984):721-25), is brought out in the concluding paragraph: "this study is not a search for the truth or a truth or even the facts, but an effort to vindicate one faction and bury its opponents." To this end she begins her review by quoting from the foreword written by P. S. Sastri where he says that British literature cannot be viewed "through the insular binoculars of the British Isles alone," if that literature has any permanent value. While accusing me of always quoting out of context, and being parochial, Jackson shows remarkable talent in the art of rhetoric by not quoting from the foreword: "Without rejecting what Blake inherited from Christianity, he brought out the impact of the Gita on Blake's poetry. Mr. Singh's problem was not Blake's Christian framework, for this has been overworked by able scholars." The language and terminology that Jackson does not understand, she calls "undigested lumps of arcane terminology." But this merely begins a list of blunders.

The quotation from Trevelyan, which seems to Jackson "apropos of nothing" (p. 122), in fact, is the starting point of the discussion that considers British colonialism in India from the earliest times up to roughly Blake's time. Sometimes Jackson says exactly what I have said, but her "peevishness" (the word occurs many times as an accusation upon the author) completely blinds her to the facts. The lines she quotes are these: "no real attempts were made by the Europeans to study Indian culture in its full outgrowth although they were not ignorant of a culture 'fully conscious of its own antiquity'"; she then draws a typically wayward conclusion: "the large number of studies and translations that Singh himself catalogues suggests there was some interest in some aspects of that culture." In fact, the catalogues I have given are in support of my assertion that Western scholars were not ignorant of a culture "fully conscious of its own antiquity."

In the next paragraph the reviewer says that when the accounts by the eighteenth-century indologists were largely reliable, why should I have belabored Europeans' sins of neglect? This observation she makes when a simple survey is being carried out to the point of establish-

ing Blake's context. Jackson shows her total ignorance of influences and counter-influences upon Indian, Greek, and Egyptian religion when she says: "All other matters aside, I hardly think that the idea that the ancient Egyptian and Greek religions were influenced by elements of Hinduism will take the scholarly community by surprise." All credits to Jackson for not allowing me to build a perspective to W. Blake. I would, however, suggest that Jackson read A. L. Basham's *The Wonder that was India* and S. Radhakrishnan's *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*; she might even study P. J. Marshall, ed., *British Discovery of Hinduism in the Eighteenth Century*. Then Jackson the moralist tells me: "the only appropriate contest is between fact and error, good judgment and poor, great aesthetic discernment and little . . ." It will do her good if she took such lessons for herself. A person who shows total ignorance of historical facts and the tradition she is offering a review of, how could she be expected to distinguish facts from errors? It is not for giving surprises that I wrote my thesis. The idea was to give an angle and perspective to Blake scholarship that had not been considered in detail. Whether I succeeded in this task is for the reader to judge. I only wish Jackson had the civility to ask the reader to judge the real value of the book instead of offering atrocious "aesthetic" judgments. She even tells me that I should have followed Kathleen Raine's example and method of scholarship. For Jackson's kind information, Raine herself suggested to me the same when I met her in England. I tell Jackson, Raine's method would have destroyed my thesis. Her book presents no *thesis*, develops no single argument, and shows an organizational drawback from beginning to end. If Jackson cares to look up a few reviews of Raine's *Blake and Tradition*, she would find I am not the first person to make such remarks.

There are many examples of semantic confusion. Jackson says that I misquote Erdman and that Erdman is right when he says that in the Gita, desire is the "inveterate foe" while in *The Marriage* it is 'the comforter.' Jackson and Erdman should re-read the Gita. Jackson misquotes me by not quoting the crucial verse number I have given on p. 46 (Gita, chap. 7, verse 11) where Krishna simply says of diverting all desires towards the god within. There is no renouncing all forms of desire and it is really difficult for fuzzy-minded persons (again an accusation against the author) like Jackson to understand the complexities of a text like the Gita. Jackson could further read R. C. Zahener's translation of the Gita, especially the introduction, where he clearly says that in the Gita desires are not to be renounced or killed; they are simply to be directed towards God. Is not attainment of God a form of desire which is the Gita's supreme ideal?

One may go on citing the sheer sense of peevishness

and banality that pervades the entire review. Jackson should at least know what it means to be "impersonal." She has absolutely no right to accuse an author in straight and banal language. There are other ways to show disagreement. At one point she says I misquote Charles Eliot. She accuses me of not having quoted the clause, "but it does not appear that . . ." which should have been prefixed to what I have quoted: "asceticism, celibacy or meditation formed part of its (Egypt's) older religious life, and their appearance in Hellenic times may be due to a wave of Asiatic influence starting originally from India." Jackson's "crucial first part of Eliot's clause" all the more establishes what I am saying, and in no way contradicts my intended point. On the contrary, look at an example of Jackson's scholarship and judiciousness. On p. 123 of *Blake* she says that after some razzledazzle I conclude: "Blake derived his idea of the natural cycle and the sun from the *Vedic* hymns." The concept under discussion is that of the natural cycle, and what in fact I say is this: "Michael Davis thinks that Blake wrote his poems to the seasons after he had composed the rest of the songs in the *Poetical Sketches*. . . . If this is true, then it is very likely that Blake derived his idea of the natural cycle and the sun from the *Vedic* hymns." About the sun image I say: "The idea of the sun riding a chariot drawn by horses is common to both the Hindu and the Greek traditions, and Blake may have derived his image from either." My "crucial first clause" is "If this is true, then it is very likely that" which the reviewer does not quote [but see 124, col. 1 *eds.*]. And this is not manipulation. One could go on citing examples like these to no purpose. Even Dr. James Hogg, the publisher, is not spared. The attack on him is wild and barbarous. I am convinced there are better readers in the Western world (like F. T. Prince whose comments I print on the back of the book) and reviewers like Pamela Dunbar (see the review of my book in *Modern Language Review*, 1985, last issue of the year) who could see what is exactly there in the book.

As for Jackson's complaint on sources and their use, I would like to clarify that William Jones had translated *Vedic* hymns and it is only because of the unavailability of his works that I have quoted from W. J. Wilkins. I could only ask the reviewer to read the book a bit more carefully to find it mentioned therein that Joshua Reynolds had painted a picture of William Jones. Blake was a student of Reynolds for some time and Blake, Jones, and Reynolds were members of the Royal Academy where Blake had also exhibited his paintings several times. In these circles indological works were often discussed as Ozias Humphry tells us.

On the whole, Jackson's is the best example of how not to review a book and make the would-be reader feel it is all whimsical and fuzzy.

Reply to Charu Sheel Singh

Mary V. Jackson

Beneath the surface of Charu Sheel Singh's rejoinder to my review of *Chariot of Fire*, I sense feelings of both outrage and pain. For the pain of the person, I can only feel sorrow, and I do. But I feel a graver concern for the scholar, for his inability or unwillingness to look candidly at the quality of the work he has offered his colleagues. My criticisms of *Chariot* are just, indeed charitable—given such glaring flaws as arguments for direct influence on Blake by obscure writers unborn or in the cradle during his lifetime, combined with misleading data on the dates of their books. In any case, his book is "out," my review written, and his riposte duly recorded. It is now to be hoped that the scholar in Charu Sheel Singh will, at this remove in time, find the leisure and the calmness of temperament to assess rationally his beloved intellectual progeny, which he will find to contain much in need of mending.

More on *The Romantic Body*

Jean H. Hagstrum

I risk seeming ungrateful and even churlish in replying to so generous and appreciative a review (see below, 17) as Anne Mellor's of my latest book, *The Romantic Body* (Tennessee, 1985). Stimulated by the suggestiveness of her disagreements, I make a few comments, not, I hope, to quibble but to further argument on what I consider important issues and problems.

Mellor refers to my "effort not to read Keats too pornographically." I assure her that no energy whatever was expended in resisting erotic double entendres. If I missed sexual nuances, I did so because they slid silently past me unregarded. I pause on this point because ever since Freud we have been discovering innuendo everywhere, and in reaction I have successfully covered my gamesome critical eye. It is time to ask what, if any, critical tools are now available to tell us when we go too far. Because I insist on the physical basis of Keatsian love, Mellor wants me to see Psyche's "welcoming vagina" in the "casement ope at night / To let the warm Love in," the same opening that encloses Coleridge's Eolian harp, "that simplest Lute, / Placed length-ways in the clasping casement." But if Coleridge's casement is the vagina, the lute will have to be phallic and the desultory breeze will have to blow from the coy maid. So be it—or so *may* it be. But some will be disturbed by "length-ways," and

when, as the poem proceeds, the strings are "boldlier swept," the literal imagination can lead us to leering laughter. Honestly, I do sense sexual emotion in Coleridge's poem, but how far should I go in seeking literal referents? If the vagina is either vaguely or literally present in "The Eolian Harp," it is, I think, gratuitously discovered in the "Ode to Psyche." I argue in the book that the poem proceeds on two levels, the sexual and the mental-imaginative, and that in Keats's development the myth undergoes further refinement and transcendence within the compass of the poem. Keats, having already established the deliciously physical early in the poem, finally turns to domesticity, the working brain and shadowy thought. If this is indeed the movement of the poet's thought both within and before the poem, do we need or want a vaginal allusion at the close, in the "casement ope at night"? I do not, for critical and aesthetic reasons.

I am inclined to be more dogmatic about Mellor's suggestion that in the "Ode on Melancholy" the words, "whose strenuous tongue / Can burst Joy's grape against his palate fine," reveal "a climax achieved by cunnilingus." I much prefer my own reading, which sees the orgasm under military and Christian veils. The tongue does indeed invoke that other boneless member, which, however, has powers and possibilities that the lingual cannot achieve. It stiffens to attention in saluting female space, and it buries seed (like the grain of corn in the Gospels) that can bring forth fruit. This troping better supports the Delight-Melancholy oxymoron than does cunnilingus, which strikes me as leading to an imagistic muddle. The tongue would remain literal while the palate would have to be figurative, even though it is "*his palate fine.*"

Before leaving Keats I must defend myself against the charge of ignoring his periods of irony and despair with respect to love. I lead the reader (admittedly using the letters more fully than the poems) to the depths of his "posthumous" existence. But am I wrong in reading "To Autumn" optimistically and in arguing, in a lengthy discussion, that Keats's art and spirit drive toward life rather than death? At least the argument should be fully described and answered point by point.

About Blake I must make a few corrective comments. Mellor says that my geographical metaphor of bordering countries suggests that I conceive of Beulah as being *beside* but not *below* Eden. True enough, I make the two contiguous, since I believe sexual energy flows back and forth between them. But I do not equalize these psychological, artistic, and moral zones. I say: "Why does Blake structure his Beulah as threefold? A very important reason is that *three* is one—but *only* one—digit less than *four*, the number of Edenic fulfillment and integration, and we shall make much of the fact that threefold Beulah is below, but not far below,

fourfold Eternity" (p. 128). Mellor says that I have not come to terms with the "desire, guilt and ambivalence" Blake felt toward inversions. Perhaps not, since I do not know fully what is intended by these and similar assertions. But I deal at some length with the hideousness and perversions of fallen sexuality here and also in my book on Blake as poet-painter and in my article on the story of Luvah and Vala in the Curran-Wittreich collection. In the present book I wanted to stress the ultimate optimism of Blake's total thought.

As in the case of Keats on life vs. death, I do not find my argument adequately described or confronted. "What is new here," writes Mellor, "is Hagstrum's insistence that Blake placed a greater value on the female and on Beulah than I and other feminist readers have thought." I don't think it is enough to assert in refutation that Blake did not "finally" see the female as equal to the male. We can know what Blake *finally* meant only by understanding the direction and the climaxes of his myth. I have tried hard to answer the question, Is woman present in Eden? Would Blake grant that my reviewer and I could both properly engage in mental fight? Or is Eternity for men only? "Are we Contraries, O Anne Mellor, Thou & I" (cf. *Milton* 41:35)? Or is one of us a Negation?



REVIEWS

The Romantic Body

*Love and Sexuality
in Keats, Wordsworth,
and Blake*



JEAN H. HAGSTRUM

Jean H. Hagstrum. *The Romantic Body: Love and Sexuality in Keats, Wordsworth, and Blake*. Knoxville, Tennessee: University of Tennessee Press, 1985. xvi + 177 pp.; illus. \$14.95.

Reviewed by Anne K. Mellor

The Romantic Body is an eloquent and persuasive defense of what Lionel Trilling powerfully argued over twenty years ago in "The Fate of Pleasure," that Wordsworth and Keats (and, Hagstrum would add, Blake and Byron, Shelley and Coleridge) believed that "the grand elementary principle of pleasure" constitutes "the naked and native dignity of man" and is the principle by which man "knows, and feels, and lives, and moves" (as

Wordsworth put it in the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*). Pleasure, here, is of course explicitly sensual or sexual pleasure, as well as the mental and poetic images which that bodily delight produces. Only in an era in which deconstructive and semiotic approaches dominate our reading of texts, in which desire and pleasure are confined to linguistic strategies, would Trilling's insight require Hagstrum's strenuous defense. But today Hagstrum's unabashed insistence that "real experience" exists outside of "fiction, rhetorical and verbal structures," that human experience is sensual experience, and that poetry expresses or communicates that experience, may be welcome to many.

Hagstrum first sketches in the cultural background of the romantic celebration of the body and sexual pleasure. He points up the overt depiction of sexuality in early nineteenth-century British art and fiction—the eroticism of Fuseli's and Barry's female figures, the identification of the sexual act with political rebellion against the ancien régime in Gothic fiction, Thomas Little's widely endorsed view that a spontaneous and mutually satisfying sexual relationship between intellectually improved women and men was both a law of nature and the basis of the highest cultural achievement, uxorial bliss.

Hagstrum then invokes Keats as the celebrant of intense adolescent sexual desire, rightly emphasizing the degree to which Keats' early poetry focuses on the snowy heaving breasts and imagined luxuries of the beloved. His insistence that "The Eve of St. Agnes" is "a masterpiece of the intensest eroticism" strikes me as persuasive—who would deny the sexual consummation so deliciously achieved by Madeline and Porphyro? But in his treatment of Keats' affirmation of physical love, Hagstrum both overstates and understates his case. On the one hand, he would eliminate from his readings of "The Eve of St. Agnes" and the Odes the powerful skepticism about the endurance and the value of sexual love that Keats surely expressed. Madeline and Porphyro experience the pinnacle of sexual delight but that delight is framed by betrayal and death; the Urn is a "cold Pastoral" because it is an "unravished" bride, but a ravished bride knows a "heart high sorrowful and cloy'd." In stressing Keats' delight in love and sexual pleasure, Hagstrum too often underplays his equally strong doubts, that "Love in a hut, with water and a crust, / Is—Love forgive us!—cinders, ashes, dust; / Love in a palace is perhaps at last / More grievous torment than a hermit's fast."

On the other hand, in his effort not to read Keats too pornographically, Hagstrum overlooks several instances in which Keats' language carries a more specific sexual nuance than Hagstrum notes. I am thinking especially of the conclusion of "Ode to Psyche," which Hagstrum interprets as a domestic idyll, the husband Cupid returning to "a welcoming home and hearth."

But surely in the context of Hagstrum's insistence on the physical basis of Keatsian love and poetic delight, the "casement ope at night / To let the warm Love in" must also be read as Psyche's welcoming vagina, that same casement that encloses the colian harp, that "coy maiden" yielding to her lover, in Coleridge's "The Eolian Harp." And the force of Hagstrum's reading of Melancholy as not only a goddess "but also a palpable female being" who "reveals herself only to one of the opposite sex 'whose strenuous tongue / Can burst Joy's grape against his palate fine'" must lead not only to the "orgasmic climax" he sees, but to a climax achieved by cunnilingus—the "strenuous tongue" is not just the Christian "moral-military metaphor" Hagstrum notes but a more active sexual instrument. There is an element of pornographic vulgarity in Keats' poetry that Hagstrum is understandably reluctant to acknowledge, the very element that caused Byron—who knew a sexual innuendo when he saw one—to call Keats' writing "*p-ss a bed* poetry," "the *Onanism* of Poetry," and Keats himself a "miserable Self-polluter of the human Mind" (*Byron's Letters and Journals* 7: 200, 217).

Hagstrum is most fully compelling in his discussion of the ways in which sexual energy infuses Wordsworth's life and poetry. Drawing on the passionate love letters Wordsworth wrote to Mary and on his openly acknowledged affair with Annette Vallon, Hagstrum convincingly argues that Wordsworth was a man of strong sexual and sensual feelings, that he saw those feelings as the origin of the poetic impulse, and that he viewed poetry itself as an act of copulatory "concordia discors," of perceiving the similitude in dissimilitude. Hagstrum's treatment of Wordsworth's relationship with Dorothy is I think definitive: an elegantly worded, sensitive, and complex analysis of the ways that intense passion can infuse a non-incestuous sibling relationship. His interpretation of *Laodamia* as a study in parental grief, rather than in sexual repression and rejection, is convincing, and I for one welcome the insight that the climactic vision on Mount Snowdon is achieved under the dominance of a powerful naked female (the Moon) who also gives birth through a breach of waters.

Hagstrum's discussion of sexuality in Blake's poetry and art is, in contrast, disappointing. Since few would completely endorse Leopold Damrosch's denial of the centrality of love and sexuality in Blake's thought, Hagstrum's detailed refutation seems labored, another instance—and the book has too many—of setting up a straw critic to refute (Joyce Carol Oates, invoked on more than one occasion, is hardly an authoritative reader of romantic poetry). Hagstrum's conclusion that "Blake never relinquished the idea that what poisoned sexuality was not the body itself, desire per se, but debilitations of mind and spirit coming from psychological and institutional tyranny" seems obvious.

What is new here is Hagstrum's insistence that Blake placed a greater value on the female and on Beulah than I and other feminist readers have thought. Hagstrum eloquently describes the power of Blake's heroines, of Oothoon, Ololon, and Jerusalem, and rightly insists that Beulah, the land of relaxation and sexual fulfillment, is necessary to the sustenance of Eden, the land of mental vision and creation. While I welcome Hagstrum's passionate defense of sexuality, of female autonomy, and of the interfusion of the sensual and mental life, I am not persuaded that Blake finally saw the female as equal in value to the male. Beulah remains *below* Eden, not beside it, as Hagstrum's geographical metaphor of "bordering lands" would suggest. And Blake consistently depicts male activities as both logically and temporally *prior* to female activities. Nonetheless, Hagstrum rightly observes that "emanation" is a two-way street, that in *Jerusalem* males emanate from females (Shiloh) just as females emanate from males. We need a more complex analysis of Blake's concept of emanation and sexuality than Hagstrum provides here, one that comes to terms with the desire, guilt, and ambivalence Blake felt toward homosexuality, toward anal and oral intercourse, and toward aggressive female sexuality, feelings which Brenda Webster has convincingly detailed in *Blake's Prophetic Psychology* (1983).

Hagstrum's brief epilogue includes an interesting reading of Hegel's *Ideel* as the philosophical parallel to the Romantic poetic ideal of "esteem enlivened by desire." *The Romantic Body* will endure as an elegant and passionate affirmation of the role of sexual pleasure in life and art, an affirmation that Keats, Wordsworth, and Blake, with increasing ranges of experience and philosophical complexity, fully endorsed.

Kenneth Gross. *Spenserian Poetics: Idolatry, Iconoclasm, & Magic*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985 [i.e., 1986]. 271 pp. \$24.95.

Reviewed by Robert F. Gleckner

In my recent *Blake and Spenser* book I strongly recommended to all Blakeans Kathleen Williams's *Spenser's World of Glass* as not only a fine study of Blake's Renaissance predecessor but, as it were, an illuminating book for the study of Blake. While my own acknowledgments extended to other fine Spenserians as well, most notably A. C. Hamilton, I must now add to my pan-

theon of "Blakean" Spenserians Kenneth Gross, whose book I wish I had been able to read before completing my own.

Gross's project is to "examine the work of a poet who both embraces and fears mythology, whose visionary quests come into conflict with a manifold skepticism of vision." His "route" to this examination is "through a study of . . . ideas about true and false gods, about their potent or empty images, and about the violence that might be worked against them" (9). While these may be recognized as at least intriguing ideas for the study of Blake, even more so is Gross's intention to show Spenser's "links to strategies of biblical writing." Such a linkage leads to Gross's characterization of Spenser's "strongly Protestant . . . stance" as at least analogous to, if not proleptic of, "the displaced, diffused, demystified, ironic, and hyperbolized Protestantism we have learned to call Romanticism." Although he acknowledges that that "likeness is far from exact," the poet he describes, he argues, is one "whom I think Blake or Keats or Ruskin could have taken seriously as a master" (10).

The book is organized into two nearly equal parts, with a "Coda" entitled "The Veil of Idolatry." Part 1 comprises two large chapters that lay the groundwork for part 2's discussion of four major episodes (or, really, episode clusters) in *The Faerie Queene*. The first chapter lays out "A Poetics of Idolatry" which has a provocative bearing on *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (at least as I read that vexatious and elusive work), and hence on much else in Blake's canon, most especially on the idea of allegory and its relationship to vision and prophecy. Chapter 2, on the surface of it, would seem to have little relevance to Blake, concentrating as it does on Spenser's *A View of the Present State of Ireland*; but its central thesis, Spenser's "Mythmaking in Hibernia" (the chapter title), is remarkably relevant, for that under-read work "raises some rather radical questions about the nature of fable, imagination, ideology, and law," as well as religion.

The chapter on *A View* is far too rich to lend itself to easy summary, but let me give here two or three out-of-context examples of the sort of argument (and the kinds of conclusions) Gross's fine analysis of the prose essay yields, especially those that should engage a Blakean's attention. After quoting part of the opening dialogue between Irenius and his questioner Eudoxus, Gross points out tellingly that the verbal scheme that dominates the passage is what Puttenham calls ". . . *aporia*, or the doubtful." Crediting Alpers in his *The Poetry of The Faerie Queene* with suggesting this technique as a characteristic Spenserian mode, Gross now elevates it to "one of Spenser's master tropes," entailing not merely a piling up of discrete images and verbal formulae for descriptive and narrative purposes but a "multiplication within a discourse of such a variety

of alternative perspectives as to call into question, or at least to delay, any divisive choice among those alternatives" (82). While versions of this essentially rhetorical figure underlie most if not all of Gross's analyses of the several *Faerie Queene* episodes he selects, let me cite particularly chapter 3 on Orgoglio and Arthur. The former Gross sees as interpreting for us what he calls "the poetics of Pride—delusive, idolatrous, catastrophic," while Arthur "unfolds the poetics of Magnificence—disillusioning and iconoclastic, but redeeming certain otherwise dangerous literary enchantments" (115). As a result "the allegorical battle becomes a battle about allegory," which in turn generates "darker layerings of skepticism and self-reflexivity" that emerge as premonitions and enactments of the dangers attendant upon the generation of any fixed "sense" in the poem (115).

The rest of this remarkable chapter deals even more broadly (as do chapters 4 on Britomart, Amoret, and Busyrane, 5 on the Garden of Adonis, and 6 on Mt. Acidale and the Blatant Beast) with Spenser's "willfully protean writing [which] contains a violence against the powerful machinery of allegory"—an intricate, fantastic narrative that, paradoxically because of its "eclectic opacity," forces us to forestall absolute choices as to the ultimate sense of the fable (117). Concluding the chapter is a quite dazzling analysis of Arthur's dragon helm and shield—the former an "allegorical watcher" (*Drakon*) that "constitutes a talismanic defense against the reductions . . . of allegorical reading" (135), the latter a "text as mirror-shield defensively [turning] our narcissistic will to interpret back on itself, asking us to reflect on our own hermeneutic presumptions and presuppositions." More simply, as Gross concludes, the shield "is an allegory that slays allegory" (143); it "defeats the Orgoglio in us which seeks a final meaning behind the text's bright, dark, reflective surface, or would reify its unsettled and unsettling tropes into a fixed iconic symbol or a fixed violence against the symbol" (139).

As with chapter 2, chapter 1 on "The Poetics of Idolatry" does not lend itself to comfortable encapsulation. Much of it has to do with biblical texts in the context of evolving workable definitions of the elusive terms that inform Gross's total argument, "idolatry," "iconoclasm," and "magic." All three impinge so powerfully on each other that disentangling their all too frequent fossilization into neat and "meaningful" metaphors becomes virtually impossible. For example, "the identification and elimination of an idol can register a certain critical consciousness about the limitations of any image, [but] certain acts of iconoclasm may still entail a continuing, though more ironic and dialectical process of imagemaking" (28). Thus Gross finds in a variety of biblical texts (Psalms 19 and 115, Isaiah, Genesis 2, Numbers 21, and others) that "even a divinely instituted

form of sacred figuration . . . can collapse into the condition of an idol if it is taken as final or complete, as sacred in and of itself, or if it binds revelation within delusively stable or merely anterior forms." Thus iconoclasm is extended to

attacks on ritual, legalism, syncretistic mythology, false prophecy—and finally to the crucial identification of idolatry with false forms of reading and writing. In such a situation, the work of iconoclasm must also extend itself into the realm of interpretation, often founding a radical hermeneutic of suspicion as well as making use of the literary resources of irony, parody, and revisionary narrative. (30)

Indeed, Gross might well have been speaking of Blake when he concludes in this section, "the strength of the Bible's iconoclastic rhetoric (especially in the prophets) arises from its way of mythologizing idolatry and spiritual error as forms of supernatural entrapment, seduction, and whoredom" (37).

Although to this point I have not spelled out, nor shall I spell out (deeming it superfluous for the attentive Blakean reader of this review or, better, of Gross's entire book), the implications of Gross's illuminating thesis and argument for the understanding of Blake's enterprise, surely Blake's *Los* has already popped into the reader's mind more than once already. Much of the final twenty pages of Gross's first chapter seems uncannily to speak of Blake's conception of *Los*'s, not to say his own, enterprise—even as Gross intends it to underlie his view of Spenser's. More specifically this closing argument speaks to the risks of these several enterprises, especially insofar as all three participate in the allegorical mode. Of that mode Gross writes:

. . . any mode of religious rhetoric which seeks to dramatize a spiritual, conceptual, or political conflict by giving independent mythic existence to a negative term so that it may be symbolically simplified, slandered, and cast out always risks creating a verbal figure suspended between the states of demon and idol. . . . it is the creature of a discourse that seeks to attack what it sees as human illusion but . . . reserves for itself some access to a magical form of speech, a potent form of The Word which must serve the purposes of iconoclasm and revelation. Allegory thus tends to sustain even as it empties out the realm of the demonic and the idolatrous. (56)

The complex interrelationships among Blake's *Los*, *Urizen*, Christ, Albion, even Milton—not to say Blake himself—inhere in such "discourse." What Karl Kraus said of psychoanalysis, Gross notes shrewdly, may well be said of allegory, "that it is itself the disease of which it purports to be the cure" (61). It is what I called, infinitely more crudely and awkwardly in *Blake and Spenser*, *Los*'s inveterately (indeed militantly) anti-allegorical allegory as an "appropriate," perhaps even necessary, prophetic mode.

The differences on this score between Spenser's and Blake's position and practice that I tried to chart in my book are rather neatly formulated by Gross's argument that Spenser is disillusioned enough about the duplici-

ties and slipperiness of allegory—its function as an unveiling mode but also as a mode of mystification, usurpation, and idolatry—to see how these two functional poles may infect one another; but Spenser is “equally aware that he is not quite in a position to offer any other myth or god-term that might dissolve these dilemmas” (69). Thus as allegorist and complex fabulist, he “plays the maddening game” of exposing the liabilities of allegory even as he tries to “reauthenticate it as a viable road to vision” (69). Blake, on the other hand, is shrewdly aware of the duplicities and powerful dangers of the mode but clearly does see himself in a position to offer another myth or “god-term” that does resolve the dilemmas. And, as I have argued, at the core of that “position” is his extraordinary and largely successful attempt to reauthenticate allegory—addressed, of course, to the “intellectual powers”—not merely as a viable road to vision but as vision itself.

I hope it is clear by now that I admire this book; but at the same time, while I wish it were there for me to draw on for my own, I do not think that I would have changed mine much had I read Gross first. For, if through Blake’s eyes I came to see *The Faerie Queene* as he did, in substantial and even remarkable ways Gross does too. Even if Blake didn’t, indeed couldn’t and wouldn’t if he could, think in Gross’s terms, one might still imagine a scholarly Blake scribbling assorted huzzahs in the margins of his copy of *Spenserian Poetics*. At its core it is a book that underwrites Blake’s sense of Spenser’s redeemability (I hope not merely *my* sense of Blake’s sense of Spenser’s redeemability). It is meet, right, and good, then, that of his three specific references to Blake, one of which I quoted earlier, Gross closes with a quotation from the coda to the apocalypse of *The Four Zoas*: “The dark Religions are departed & sweet Science reigns”—and then comments:

Spenser, for whatever reasons, neither attempted nor could he master so extreme a rhetoric. The apocalyptic present tense belongs only to his giants and enchanters. The authoritative rule of order over change is asserted only for a space [in the *Mutabilitie Cantos*], and Book VII closes, though less desperately than Book VI, by leaving the temporal world to its shifting illusions and images, and turning to a projected sight [“that Sabaoths sight”] that, for all the poem knows, is “visionless entire.” (252)



WILLIAM BLAKE'S EPIC: Imagination Unbound



Joanne Witke

Joanne Witke, *William Blake's Epic: Imagination Unbound*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986. ii+231 pp. \$27.50.

Reviewed by Catherine McClenahan

Joanne Witke, who has previously published articles on Blake's connection to Bishop Berkeley and on the synoptic Gospels as a structural model for *Jerusalem*,¹ combines these approaches in her book-length reading of this poem as Blake's creation of a “System” designed to oppose that of Joshua Reynolds. Since Witke sees this system as solving a philosophical problem whose “formal categories are literary,” her aim is to demonstrate the poem's “philosophical nucleus,” its operation as an epic, and Blake's aesthetic principles (prefatory note). She combines philosophical and aesthetic issues to form three arguments: first, that Reynolds' aesthetics are

founded on the natural philosophy of Bacon, Newton, and, especially though tacitly, Locke; second, that "whether or not Blake used Berkeley as a quarry," *Jerusalem's* system "discloses striking similarities to Berkeley's critique of natural philosophy, to the principles of his system, and to his defense of it" (217); third, that these philosophical themes structure a narrative in *Jerusalem* (based on copy D). Hence, in Witke's summary:

Los's labors consist largely of exposing false principles of art based on natural philosophy and their consequences for the nation; denouncing the fallacy of confusing morality with abstract science; liberating human creativity from material forces; unravelling nets of abstract reasonings; opening up the narrowed senses; and, not least, bringing to light the true principles based on the sensuous imagination. (220)

Parts 1 and 2 of the book introduce the philosophical and aesthetic arguments. The prologue covers Blake's philosophical relationships to Berkeley and Plato; "Blake as Artist" examines the influence of Plato and Locke on Reynolds, paralleling Blake's conflict with Reynolds to Berkeley's with Locke. Parts 3 through 5 divide the commentary on *Jerusalem's* first chapter into analyses of Albion's condition, its causes, and Los's efforts to improve it.

Part 3, "Attacks upon *Jerusalem*," adds the argument that *Jerusalem* is a non-classical epic framed by the four-part Gospel structure: a choice that lends the poem an "increased authenticity, sublimity and pathos but also apocalyptic significance," befitting its epic aim to rescue England from a state of ruin "most contributed to" by natural religion and morality (35, 37). Specific explication covers the opening address, the narrator's comments on Lockean principles in plates 5 and 10, and Albion's rejection of Jerusalem for Vala in plates 18-25. Part 4, "The Satanic Triumvirate," interrupts sequential explication in order to sketch the horrors of Bacon, Newton and Locke as Coban, Hand, and Hyle. Part 5, "Defenders of Jerusalem," returns to the poem's first chapter to discuss the conflict of Los and the Spectre as Blake's argument with Reynolds, as well as the nature of Golgonooza, and Los's speech in plate 17. Parts 6 through 8 ("Encounters with the Enemy," "Grim War Continues," and "Jerusalem Restored"), sequentially explicate the poem's remaining three chapters, briefly noting their links to the Gospels of Mark, Luke and John, respectively; chapter 1 is linked to Matthew. Part 9, an epilogue, recapitulates Witke's main arguments. The book includes black and white reproductions: *The Meeting of a Family in Heaven* and twenty plates from *Jerusalem*.

Witke's book addresses relevant questions. Although other scholars have investigated the influence of Berkeley or Reynolds on Blake's art, none has related them to specific works in this kind of detail, and there are few book-length studies of this important poem. The strict parameters of her approach to *Jerusalem* are a

heuristic device often employed to understand something complex. In this case, the method helps us to recognize contexts of the poem that readers may not know, and to see why Blake might have found the ideas of Reynolds and Berkeley to be especially useful focal points. The book shows how specific philosophical and aesthetic principles apply even where the poem's action appears to concern something else. Witke's explications of how Blake also uses biblical analogies to these principles can be clear and helpful, as in the treatment of Los's shaping of Reuben. The philosophical analogies to Berkeley's thought are supported with a wealth of direct quotation. These quotations, like those from Reynolds, Bacon, Newton, and Locke, also provide instances of terms we recognize as significant in Blake (though without comment on possible variants in meaning): e.g., "particulars" (and "particularities," "minute particulars"), "energy," "contraction and expansion," "unfolding," "emanation" and "spectre."

At the same time, however, Blake's actual practice in verbal and visual art tries to make us aware of both the powerful allure and the dangers of such a heuristic. At times Witke's concentration on aesthetics leads only to more confusion about why the text says what it does; at others it may seem to work, but in fact significantly distorts a poem whose particulars resist condensation into one system. Thus while Witke examines legitimate contexts for the poem, the book has puzzling and even troubling aspects.

For one thing, this book does less than one might expect to situate itself within existing scholarship on Blake's attitude toward Reynolds or the philosophers in the footnotes or the opening section; there is no bibliography. In other cases previous work is dismissed in a casual or misleading manner.² Such exclusionary tendencies reflect a more fundamental conceptual problem: *William Blake's Epic* exemplifies a reductive and old-fashioned version of intellectual history, which casts Bacon, Newton, and Locke (and therefore Reynolds) as pure mechanists, the Bad Guys, utterly opposed to the creative Good Guys. Witke acknowledges that Blake sometimes agreed with Reynolds (e.g., 23), but she never shows how Blake's attitude toward the philosophers could be more than simple rejection. Bacon, Newton, and Locke are regarded exclusively from Berkeley's point of view. Elsewhere Witke claims that we may consult not the poem itself but Berkeley "for a straightforward philosophical exposition" of the "essential metaphysical beliefs" (120) Blake shares with him. Similarly, Blake is not shown to disagree with Berkeley about anything. For example, one paragraph summarizes an indeterminate number of preceding ones with the claim that "In all of this, Blake agrees with Berkeley" (against Plato) and promptly cites the first part of Blake's annotation to *Siris*, p. 214: "Knowledge is not by deduction but Immediate by Perception or Sense at once" (Witke, 9). But this

very annotation registers a point of dissent. Berkeley writes:

By experiments of sense we become acquainted with the lower faculties of the soul; and from them, whether by a *gradual evolution or ascent*, we arrive at the highest. These become subjects for fancy to work upon. *Reason considers and judges of the imaginations*. And these acts become new objects to the understanding. (emphasis added)

Thus Blake appears to disagree with Berkeley as well as Plato. He denies knowledge as a sequential process and as deduction, reiterating in the following sentence, which Witke does not include: "Christ addresses himself to the Man not to his Reason."³

This kind of reduction and opposition characterizes the book in other ways as well. Witke carefully acknowledges that her study does not say "everything that needs to be said" about *Jerusalem*. But later statements specifically *exclude* the possibility of other contexts or meanings for given speeches and actions—notably when gender and sexuality are involved. In discussing, for example, the "seemingly absurd" metaphors of "Uncircumcision" and "Chastity," which "refer to corporeal substance and abstract ideas" as applied to Reynolds, Witke asserts that "these two doctrines—generating bodies and purity of conception—account for the remarkable persistence of sexual imagery in *Jerusalem*" (emphasis added). She makes this claim, unnecessarily extreme even given the terms of her argument, in trying to highlight "Reynolds' ideal of 'unadulterated' and simple forms, which he consolidates in the phrase 'simple chaste nature'" (81). But Reynolds is not just highlighted here; he becomes the necessary and sufficient cause for everything in the poem. Similarly, on plate 88, "the issue between Los and Enitharmon concerns power of the artist, not power of the sexes" (196).

In fact, many of the explications involving *Jerusalem's* females raise more questions than they answer, but here the problem may also have another source. In theory, Witke's approach should allow for two kinds of conflict which the poem invites us to see: in Witke's terms, the externalized conflict between "the inspired artist" and critics of Reynolds' persuasion, and the internal conflict of the artist whose imagination has been influenced by an aesthetics based on natural philosophy and morality. The mere conflation or intermixing of these two kinds of conflict, even within a single sentence, frequently produces confusing accounts of the nature and actions of the Spectre and of the emanations or daughters in the poem. For example, glossing the line, "the Feminine / Emanations Create Space. the Masculine Create Time, & plant / The Seeds of beauty in the Space" (*J* 85:7-9), is the following account of the act of creation (which is the same as perception, according to the argument elsewhere):

The impulse to create emanates from within the artist; the divine power of imagination perceives tangible objects in visionary form, presenting to the poet/artist ideas which he shapes according to his genius and artistic purpose into a work of art. The daughters here function as muses, providing Los with sensuous material for embodying eternity in spacetime. . . . (193)

The unified character of perception/creation, as well as the unity of imagination and reality that Witke everywhere argues for on Berkeleyan grounds, suddenly splits with an imagination that "presents" ideas to the artist and with the daughters or emanations read as separate "muses" who "provide" Los with material in the second sentence. (Here Los apparently refers only to the artist, not to imagination: the scenario is only external conflict.)

One extended example might better explain this kind of confusion and reductiveness in relation to the book's third argument, about the narrative of Los's labors to save Albion. I agree with Witke that there is a narrative in the poem (though not that synchronic arguments are "wrong"), but I have deep reservations about the interpretation of Los that she provides in her account. Let me take the turning-point of this narrative. Like Witke, I would locate it specifically at the beginning of plate 92, but also more broadly as the section between 86:50 and 93:27—Los's last confrontations with Enitharmon and the Spectre.

Like most readers, Witke associates the Spectre who is "the author" of Los's and Enitharmon's "divisions & shrinkings" (88:35) with "abstract reasoning." This form of reason, she adds, "has come between the artist's inspirations and his works" (which suggests a conflict within the artist's imagination), "labeling them immoral, licentious, unscientific" (which suggests external judgments on the artist's work; 197). Likewise the divided Enitharmon is "the artist's life-giving substance, his faculty of creativity" (194); and she then is further described as "a disciple of Vala," affected by natural philosophy, and thus as having "joined Albion's daughters" (197, 195). Now both characterizations suggest internal division (though the second is ambiguous); the oddity, however, is that Los remains utterly unfazed by this conflict.

Los now represents only the artist in an external conflict, who holds to "spiritual perception" and so he merely "refuses to submit," "becomes more assertive," and finally "smites the Spectre until he overcomes him" (194-203, *passim*). In this reading, the Spectre whose senses and "every Ratio of his reason" are altered by these blows also becomes an unambiguously external figure or system. Given such attacks on the false system or its representative, it is creditable that "this action signals a visible turning-point in the war" (203). For Witke, the specific signal is Los's vision of "the Briton Saxon Roman Norman amalgamating / . . . into One Nation the En-

glish" (92:1-2; only the last five words are quoted). By sticking to a scenario of divinely inspired artist at war with a system of natural philosophy, morality, and art, Witke can read the situation here as purely positive, "foretoking . . . resurrection, the end of warfare and a state of concord" (203) in England. As a result, Los needs only one last "strong reproof of Reynolds' system" (in 93:18-26) in order for Albion/England to wake and espouse the poet's system (204).

This narrative account raises many questions. For example, if "amalgamating / . . . into One Nation the English" is unequivocally good, what should we make of Los's statement that "this *sinful* Nation Created in our Furnaces & Looms is Albion" (92:6; emphasis added)? Could Los be acknowledging a "sin" (aesthetic or philosophical) which at this point he also knows how to "forgive"? Is "nation" an unquestionably positive term in the poem? Why have earlier "reproofs," "smitings" of the Spectre, or articulations of a counter-system not succeeded in waking Albion before? How has an artist divided "from his creative faculty" continued to operate without making a false step anywhere? Has the Los who spends a great deal of time uttering loud threats or smiting a Spectre really conquered "my Pride & Self-righteousness" (J 8:30) or won "the war" by anything other than successful bullying?

As far as I can tell, the answers to all but the first question about the narrative argument outlined above depend on one more contradictory aspect of this book and on Witke's fundamental argument about "Vision."

First, Witke notes that "the existence and nature of God are related issues" in an artistic system predicated on "a vital creative eternal spirit"; often, and quite rightly, she stresses that Berkeley's *spirit* or Blake's *imagination* is "a substance we share with the Creator, making us one with him" (152, 119). But the relative inattention to internal conflict evident in Witke's reading works in conjunction with a de-emphasis of God as Imagination. Witke's phrasing often suggests a dualistic system of a transcendental divinity who acts on human beings: the combination of the frequently repeated phrase "divinely inspired" (artist, poet, Los) with references to Los as "an agent of God's intervention in the transformation of human history" (173) or to a "revelation . . . imparted by God to prophets" (14-15). The transcendental divinity implied by such phrasing would explain Los's righteous threats, his ability to avoid mistakes, and the timing of his "victory" over his "enemies," but it seems very much at odds with the radical Incarnationalism of "God. the Human Imagination" (J 5:20; not cited), and with Witke's overt argument for immanence elsewhere.

Second, if I am correctly understanding a complex argument scattered through several chapters of explication, Witke's description of Blake's adaptation of Berkeley's theory of "Vision" would help explain why words

like "nation" or Blakean constructs like Beulah are interpreted in only one, positive way—and indeed why *William Blake's Epic* produces a schematic reading of the poem. This argument is too long even to outline fully, but the key point is made in the closing summary. *Jerusalem's* "poetic argument proceeds almost exclusively by bare and naked ideas perceived by imagination"⁴ (as opposed to abstractions constructed by reason): that is, by "a visual quality" that "reflects the language of determinate objects and *directs* the variable meanings of words" (221, emphasis added). This recalls the earlier argument that Blake agreed with Berkeley's idea that "the universal language is . . . not linguistic but visionary: 'objects of Vision constitute the Universal Language of Nature'" (Witke, 123, citing Berkeley's *Theory of Vision*, 147). Therefore, "for both men visual forms are a metaphysical preference" over verbal language and so, for Blake, illustration "avoids indefiniteness" (124). In short, Witke's reliance on Berkeley leads her to the highly debatable positions that verbal language cannot be both multivalent and particularized, and that the illustrations are intended to be univalent.

In the example of plate 92, then, not only does Witke's single positive reading of "nation" fit the context of "Blake's system vs. Reynolds' system," but such a reading also fits a Berkeleyan, and thus supposedly Blakean, concept of *particular forms*. This assumption would then seem to "direct" Witke's own repeated description of Blake's aim in this epic: e.g., "to ensure the nation's greatness and lasting fame" (219-20), presuming a nationalistic bias which some readers will certainly question, and which, in any case, sounds remarkably like the political agenda that informs Reynolds' aesthetic arguments.⁵ In fact, a whole discourse of division and opposition that Witke clearly associates with natural philosophy and morality is unselfconsciously adopted in her constant reliance on words like "nation," "enemies," "defenders," and "war" to characterize the poem's narrative, just as the approach takes on a kind of "mechanistic" rigidity associated with Reynolds and the "Satanic Triumvirate."

Such tendencies are only reinforced by omitting to define a Gospel-based or Christian epic and its differences from classical epic, or *Jerusalem's* difference from the Miltonic form of Christian epic. As a result, the question of how even Christian epic could tend to legitimize concepts of exclusion and enmity—concepts which Witke describes Blake's system as opposing—is not overtly considered, though relevant to arguments about his epic aims. For Blake's "system" does more than "forgive" vanquished enemies (209); it dismantles a system of "enemies" who strive for victory or "dominion." Like Los, the poet strives to persuade himself as well as others to a new kind of seeing/creating: to a recognition that

the work of "enemies" like Bacon, Newton, and Locke, or Milton, Shakespeare, and Chaucer, always have been emanations of Jerusalem, however unconscious or distorted. If we do focus on narrative, it seems no accident that when Albion "wakes," "war" becomes a "conversation" that can begin only with a perceiver who transforms enemies into fellow incarnations of a human form divine.

William Blake's Epic, then, is not the best introduction for newcomers to the poem or to an investigation of Blake's attitudes towards Berkeley and Reynolds. But the benefits it can provide will be most obvious to alert readers who can, as Blake urged, both see and forgive what they do not approve, and honor its author for the energetic exertion of her talent.

¹"Jerusalem: A Synoptic Poem," *Comparative Literature* (summer, 1970): 265-78; and "Blake's Tree of Knowledge Grows Out of The Enlightenment," *Enlightenment Essays* 3 (1972): 71-84.

²For example, the brief comments on Northrop Frye (2, n. 5), or W. J. T. Mitchell (221, n. 2).

³My Blake citations are from David V. Erdman, ed., *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake* (Garden City: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1982), 664. Leopold Damrosch, Jr., also argues for Blake's divergence from Berkeley in this annotation. See *Symbol and Truth in Blake's Myth* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980) 16, 141.

⁴Readers can locate the details of this argument by referring to "Bare and naked forms," "Particulars," and "Vision" in the index.

⁵A quotation from Reynolds' first discourse, that it is "necessary to the security of society, that the mind should be elevated to the idea of general beauty . . ." (38), implies the political dimension of Reynolds' aesthetics that becomes even more pronounced after the French Revolution. (For this connection, I am indebted to John Barrell's lecture on "Reynolds and the Political Theory of Painting" at the 1986 MWASECS Conferences at Northwestern University.) However, Witke's prefatory note warns that it is not her aim to consider political issues, and the reliance on Berkeley restricts England's "crisis" to its metaphysical and aesthetic aspects only.

Bryan Aubrey. *Watchmen of Eternity: Blake's Debt to Jacob Boehme*. Lanham, New York, and London: University Press of America, 1986. xiii+193 pp. \$27.00 cloth/\$13.25 paper.

Reviewed by George Mills Harper

Edition.¹ In his own collected writings Blake referred to Boehme by name only twice (in 1793 and 1800), but many critics have assumed that his influence was considerable if not great. How, we ask ourselves, can we argue with Blake's blunt statement in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*: "Any man of mechanical talents may from the writings of Paracelsus or Jacob Behmen, produce ten thousand volumes of equal value with Swedenborgs, and from those of Dante or Shakespear an infinite number."² To play the devil's advocate, however, I will call attention to still "another plain fact": Blake places Boehme on the same plane as Paracelsus, far above the level of Swedenborg but far below the level of Dante and Shakespeare. Moreover, although little can be proved precisely by Blake's enthusiastic distinctions, the skeptical among us remind ourselves that he annotated three of Swedenborg's books, one with considerable care, whereas he probably annotated none of Boehme's. If in fact Blake owned the Law edition, as Bentley and Nurmi cautiously suggest, the copy has not survived. Perhaps, however, the book was too dear for the penniless Blake.³

But all this is beside the point in one sense: he was excited over Boehme as early as 1793 and still excited, according to Henry Crabb Robinson, as late as 10 December 1825: "Jacob Boehme was spoken of as a divinely inspired man. Blake praised, too, the figures in Law's translation as being very beautiful. Michael Angelo could not have done better."⁴ That too may be beside the point: the question raised by Aubrey is how strong, pervasive, and continuing Boehme's influence on Blake was. For the opinions of others we may begin — as Aubrey does — with William Butler Yeats, who was himself influenced by Boehme and who declared that *The Book of Urizen* "is page by page a transformation, according to Blake's peculiar illumination, of the doctrines set forth in the opening chapters of the 'Mysterium Magnum' of Jacob Boehme." Even so, it should be pointed out that Yeats is trying to "convict commentators" like Garnett, Gilchrist, and Rossetti, who "show [no] evidence of having ever given so much as a day's study to any part of Blake's mystical writing."⁵ Aubrey obviously found a powerful ally in Yeats. However, one of Aubrey's assumptions illustrates the mistakes sometimes induced by over-enthusiastic source studies. Writing about the conflict of opposites leading to the vision of joy in Boehme's system, Aubrey confidently declares that "Yeats captured this vision in his play *The Unicorn from the Stars*, in which the dreamer Martin Hearne (who is based on Boehme), discovers that the life of paradise is like 'a battle where the sword made a sound that was like laughter'" (39). Now the "plain fact" is that *The Unicorn* was inspired by Nietzsche, who was — at one degree removed in the person of Zarathustra — the typical example for Martin Hearne. Moreover, the source of the vision of the

All serious students of Blake know that he read Boehme and approved in general what he found in the famous collection of Boehme's *Works* known as the William Law

clashing swords, one of Yeats's favorite images, was not Boehme but Mrs. Harietta Dorothea Hunter, a member of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. Writing to Mrs. Hunter, in an unpublished letter dated 13 June [1938], Yeats recalled the vivid impression her vision had made: "Yes, of course, I remember. . . . In a vision you described to me the music of heaven you heard as the Clashing of Swords."⁶

At one time or another, to be sure, most of us are guilty of mistaking the tail for the donkey. Although *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* is "full of ideas and symbols" from Boehme, as Martin K. Nurmi pointed out thirty years ago, "Blake borrows ideas from Boehme that he had not really assimilated and that he was never to assimilate."⁷ Extending the suggestion in an article about negative sources, Nurmi warned that "Blake is sometimes illuminated but rarely explained by his sources. . . . It is therefore hazardous to accept prior analogues to his ideas as sources, especially on the basis of mere conceptual analogy. . . ."⁸

Almost certainly, I suppose, Aubrey would agree in general with that cautious warning. But he disagrees with Nurmi and numerous other critics who deny that Blake belongs in the company of mystics: "The argument of this book, however, is that for all Blake's idiosyncracies, the creative way in which he transformed his sources, and his fierce independence of mind, he was nonetheless working within the broad framework of this mystical and metaphysical tradition" (2).

It is not my purpose to debate this issue,⁹ but rather to consider briefly Aubrey's method and relative success in defending his thesis. It is true, as he writes, that "the amount of literature which deals specifically with Boehme remains comparatively small" (ix), and he cites the most significant of these to address the question.¹⁰ His "aim" therefore "is to fill the gap, to show how Boehme's work was a major factor in Blake's intellectual and spiritual life, and how a knowledge of Boehme greatly enriches our understanding of Blake's work" (ix). Unfortunately, "the format of the book" (ix) makes Aubrey's task difficult if not impossible. Beginning with a brief but useful chapter on Boehme's system, he devotes the remaining chapters to five of Blake's poetic works: (2) *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*; (3) *The Book of Urizen*; (4) *The Four Zoas*, *Milton*, and *Jerusalem*.¹¹ Since the study of Blake's three major poems is confined to one chapter and since a great body of his work is considered sparingly, if at all, the reader who expects Aubrey's book "to fill the gap" will surely be disappointed. In fact, most of the "aspects of Boehme's thought" (ix) treated by *Watchmen of Eternity* have already been explored by other critics, especially Kathleen Raine, to whom Aubrey "acknowledg[e]s a lasting debt"

(x). And well he might: her impressive study of Blake's sources cites the same works and traces many of the same ideas as she presents the case of Boehme's influence. More cautiously and from a somewhat different perspective, Paley develops many of the same arguments in his provocative study of Blake's thought.¹² Since the Blake-Boehme relationship represents only a part, however significant, of Raine's and Paley's books, neither of them attempted to justify disregarding the influence of "some elements" of Boehme's thought completely, as Aubrey has (ix).

Although the "element" (or subject) of numerology is not entirely disregarded by Aubrey, it should have been expanded or rejected. Boehme had faith in the symbolic properties of numbers, explaining the meaning of 1 to 65 in *The Answers to Forty Questions Concerning the Soul*,¹³ and Blake was probably impressed. However, 3 and 7, the seminal numbers in Boehme's system, were anathema to Blake. If in fact, as Aubrey suggests, Blake learned from Boehme the value of these symbolic constructs, his borrowing may be a prime illustration of Nurmi's "negative sources." We would, of course, be more certain if we had the evidence of annotations or if we knew how long Blake continued to read Boehme after his first great burst of enthusiasm from about 1790 to 1793. Since numbers are not consistently important in Blake's work until *Milton* and do not bear a heavy symbolic burden until *Jerusalem*, it is likely that some new or renewed interest or source of information excited him to extend the function of the divine numbers.¹⁴ If so, this source (Thomas Taylor, the Cabala, or whatever) emphasized the significance of the number 4 and its extensions (especially 16, 32, and 64). By this time certainly—if not long before—Blake had concluded that 3 and its extensions (especially 6, 7, 9, 12, and 27) were pernicious if not downright evil. It is significant that Blake was not greatly impressed by Boehme's Seven Properties, Three Principles, Threefold Life, and so on.¹⁵

In short, *Watchmen of Eternity* has not filled the gap or settled the great argument. Although Aubrey's brief survey of scholarship and fairly extensive quotations from the rare Law edition are useful, the reader of his persuasion will prefer to consult Damon, Paley, Raine, and others who study Blake's debt to Boehme in the context of his debt to other writers of "the heterodox tradition."¹⁶

¹*The Works of Jacob Behmen*, ed., George Ward and Thomas Langcake (London, 1764-81), 4 vols. See Aubrey's outline and brief comment, pp. xi-xii.

²G.E. Bentley, Jr., ed., *William Blake's Writings* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 1:95. Bentley's conjectured dates of *The Marriage* are "(?1790-3)."

³G. E. Bentley, Jr., and Martin K. Nurmi, *A Blake Bibliography* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1964), p. 199. According to Bentley and Nurmi, the Law edition was offered by Rivington in 1824 for £1.16.0. That, I suppose, was expensive for Blake.

⁴Thomas Sadler, ed., *Diary, Reminiscences, and Correspondence of Henry Crabb Robinson* (London: Macmillan, 1869), 2:305.

⁵John P. Frayne, ed., *Uncollected Prose by W. B. Yeats* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), 1:402. From a review in the *Bookman* (April 1896) of Richard Garnett's *William Blake*. Yeats's library included six volumes of Boehme's works by various translators. Five were published by John M. Watkins, Madame Blavatsky's publisher and bookseller, and one by Joseph Richardson which contains four items from the Law edition (see Edward O'Shea, *A Descriptive Catalog of W. B. Yeats's Library* [New York and London: Garland, 1985], pp. 37-39).

⁶I quote from a xerox copy of a typescript in the library of Michael B. Yeats.

⁷*Blake's Marriage of Heaven and Hell: A Critical Study* (Kent: Kent State University, 1957), p. 28. Nurmi refers to Bentley's unpublished dissertation (Oxford, 1954) as "the only study of Blake's connections with Boehme that approaches thoroughness." I agree, having read it many years ago; but much has been done since, as Aubrey points out.

⁸"Negative Sources in Blake," *Essays for S. Foster Damon*, ed. Alvin H. Rosenfeld (Providence: Brown University Press, 1969), p. 303.

⁹The opposing viewpoints are most strongly supported by Kathleen Raine in *Blake and Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968) and Helen C. White in *The Mysticism of William Blake* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Studies in Language and Literature 23, 1927).

¹⁰Damon, *William Blake: His Philosophy and Symbols*; Percival, *William Blake's Circle of Destiny*; Bentley, "William Blake and the Alchemical Philosophers"; Raine, *Blake and Tradition*; and Paley, *Energy and the Imagination*. Aubrey's review of the scholarship is generally sound but not comprehensive.

¹¹Occasional reference is made to other poems, especially *The Book of Ahania* and *The Song of Los* in chapter 2.

¹²Like Raine, Paley explores many possible sources. See especially his chapter on "The Lambeth Books" in *Energy and the Imagination: A Study of the Development of Blake's Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), pp. 61-88.

¹³Law, 2: 24-31.

¹⁴See especially George Mills Harper, "The Divine Tetrad in Blake's *Jerusalem*," *Essays for S. Foster Damon*, pp. 235-55; see also Harper and Jane McClellan, "Blake's Demonic Triad," *The Wordsworth Circle* 8 (spring 1977), 172-82.

¹⁵Vol. 1 of the Law edition contains *The Three Principles of the Divine Essence*; Vol. 2 *The Threefold Life of Man and The Answers to Forty Questions Concerning the Soul*. For Aubrey's discussion of numbers, especially 7, see pp. 20-23, and 125. Although he comments briefly on the "fourfold nature" of Freher's designs, Aubrey concludes that "the similar fourfold nature of Blake's universe needs little elaboration" (102). Students of the later Blake should keep in mind that "The Sexual is Threefold: the Human is Fourfold" (*Milton*, Bentley, p. 322).

¹⁶*Blake and Tradition*, I, 1. Besides Boehme, Raine has read widely in and quotes from such esoteric sources as the Cabala, Agrippa, Hermes Trismegistus, Fludd, Paracelsus, Swedenborg, Jacob Bryant, and Thomas Taylor the Platonist. More modest in their claims, Damon and Paley have considered most of these.

BLAKE'S INNOCENCE & EXPERIENCE RETRACED

STANLEY GARDNER

Stanley Gardner. *Blake's Innocence and Experience Retraced*. London and New York: Athlone Press and St. Martin's Press, 1986. xviii + 211 pp. illus. \$27.50.

Reviewed by Nelson Hilton

Attempting to trace the *Songs* back to some origin or source, this book offers a Blake who first acclaim's "the work of enlightened charity" undertaken by his parish in the 1780s but who subsequently, owing to the failure of that experiment in welfare, turns with "cold fury" to epitomize "the desolation" in *Songs of Experience*. Along the way we have a provocative revisionist account of "Holy Thursday" (*SI*) and become well acquainted with how things sound "to [Gardner's] ear" and look "to [Gardner's] eye." Working our way back to "the groundwork of a vision" (14), "the visionary groundbase" (47),

we can even find ourselves "As we read, sitting beneath the chimney newly swept in Golden Square" (65).

For Gardner, the "geographical and social matrix" for most of *Songs of Innocence* is to be located in two new forms of charity established by the parish of St. James. The first was the practice of transferring pauper children and infants out of the city to be nursed by cottagers at then rural Wimbledon:

The effect of the policy . . . was dramatic. *The Annual Registers of the Parish Poor for 1783* tell us that twenty-four of the fifty infants nursed by their mothers in St James's workhouse died before the year was out; and that in the same year the nurses at Wimbledon took care of seventy-seven children from the workhouse, with such 'skill and attention' that only two died. A year or two later, Blake had written the first draft of 'Nurses Song,' and then slipped it into *An Island in the Moon*. (7)

Still more important for Gardner's account is the school for pauper children which "the Governors of the Poor" for St. James established on King Street in 1782. Blake can be strikingly associated with the school through surviving records of payment to "Mr. Blake Haberdasher" — first the poet's father, James, and then his elder brother, also James, who evidently took over the business on the father's death in 1784. In the last weeks of 1784, Gardner reminds us, Blake and James Parker opened their printshop at 27 Broad St., next door to the Blake family home and haberdashery. Gardner reports that "no other London parish even remotely approached St. James's in the vigour and consistency with which it took practical care of its pauper children" (14) and finds in this communal expression of "brief and untarnished charity" the genesis of *Songs of Innocence*. In these poems Blake gives "a conclusively social rather than matrimonial emphasis" to the nurture of children, and "It seems to be an insistence we must respect" (24).

The consequences of Gardner's reading surface most dramatically in the account of "Holy Thursday" in *Innocence*. While "our persistent misreading of the nature of charity schools" (30) has made us uncomfortable with the poem's place in *Innocence*, it is clear to Gardner that Blake "added the illustration to insist that we take 'Holy Thursday' . . . straight, without benefit of our own brand of retrospective enlightenment . . ." (35). One piece of evidence in this view is the poem's reference to "wise guardians of the poor," which Gardner can associate with an actual parish office (re-)instituted in 1782: "Blake's reference to this renewed and repeatedly recorded office of Guardian of the Poor seems to me too topical and too immediately recollective of an enlightened reform to be ironic or accidental" (41). Gardner corrects a common misapprehension in pointing out that the anniversary meeting of the charity-school children ("clearly an occasion Blake had shared") took place "neither on Ascension Day or on Maundy Thursday, the two possible holy Thursdays of the church calendar" (35) but on some

other late-Spring Thursday—or, once, Wednesday. This leads Gardner to suggest that the name "Holy Thursday" had been "used ironically as a gibe by some of the circle of friends Blake caricatured in *An Island in the Moon*" (where the first draft of the poem appears), but that Blake took over the term for his own purposes. (Perhaps the formula that "Thursday's child has far to go" may be lurking around?)

The poem is at the center of Gardner's conception of *Innocence*, and the book's penultimate page argues again that "the lamb first entered Blake's creative imagination when he heard the expectant murmur of the charity-school children in St. Paul's. He went on to give the destitute child angelic status, and his neighbours the admonition, 'cherish pity'" (157). But the complete admonition reads, "Then cherish pity, lest you drive an angel from your door" (contra Keynes, Erdman, and Bentley, Gardner reads "Then cherish pity; . . ."), and the fact that these messengers ("angels," etymologically) are being walked away from our individual doors reflects eerily on the nature of that "human abstract" pity the speaker would have us "cherish." Such various voices and possibilities are not for Gardner, and, asserting themselves, they leave "an odd sense of contradiction and unease": "'The Little Black Boy' is a profoundly ambiguous poem, and the ambiguity is deepened, not resolved, by the illustrations. Its relation to the rest of *Songs of Innocence* is uneasy, and yet it provides Blake with the only means to hand by which a necessary dimension is added to the book" (63). While that "necessary dimension" is never clarified, the accompanying argument suggests that if "contemporary circumstances behind the poem" (62) could be identified, ambiguity might be lessened, if not resolved. The difficulty ("profound ambivalence," 64) is that, instead, here Blake writes of "the imagined state, which both generates the poem and is expressed in the poetry itself" (62). That "the imagined state" should prove so problematic will seem to some an apt comment on the entire enterprise of "retracing" *Innocence* and *Experience*.

Gardner's research in the Westminster archives adds some useful information about Blake's milieu; but one can regret that such an ambitious project did not extend further into the wide range of secondary material. Particularly striking for a book which argues that "the primary motivation" of the *Songs* lies "in the assumptions which hung in the air [Blake] breathed" (144) is the lack of any reference to Heather Glen's quite different version of those assumptions in *Vision and Disenchantment* (1983). One may have reservations as well about an argument which inserts "universally" before quoting the *OED*'s comment that "willow" is "taken as a symbol of grief" (100), or baldly states "The essence of *Innocence*" (107), or hears Blake speaking *in propria persona* "for the only time" — in two separate poems ("London,"

118; "On Another's Sorrow," 76)—or characterizes "deep" as "that most sinister of all words" (98). But in its relentless contextualization Gardner offers a salutary antidote to any who would seal Blake up in mere "textuality": "A year before Blake issued *Songs of Experience* a chapel was built 'on the green' in South Lambeth" (139). It cost £3000, "financed by the issue of sixty shares of £50 each, every shareholder being entitled to four seats," and Gardner even reproduces a 1793 watercolor of it, complete with cattle fenced off in the foreground pasture.



Section of *Survey of London* (1786) by J. Cary, showing area of Golden Square, King Street, Oxford Street and Poland Street (Oxford Street is the main road running east-west at the north of the map and Swallow Street is now Regent Street).

Harold Bloom, ed. *William Blake: Modern Critical Views*. New York: Chelsea House, 1985. 209 pp. \$24.50.

Nelson Hilton, ed. *Essential Articles for the Study of William Blake, 1970-1984*. Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1986. 333 pp. \$35.00.

Reviewed by Peter Otto

One need only measure the articles which open Bloom's *William Blake* with the work of their immediate predecessors to marvel once again at the quantum leap in Blake studies that was effected by the work of critics such as Erdman, Gleckner, Frye and, more recently, Mitchell. Articles such as "Blake: The Historical Approach," "Point of View and Context in Blake's Songs," "The Keys to the Gates," and "Blake's Composite Art" clearly deserve their place at the beginning of a collection of "modern critical views" on Blake.

Yet it would be wrong to view these articles solely in their original context. The temporal gap between production in one generation and transmission to the next, and the resulting change of context, significantly changes any article's meaning. In their original context these articles announced that they were engaged in the task of hollowing out "the cave" of Blake criticism. As a collection of "modern critical views," however, what is foregrounded is the contrary task of keeping open the space of a particular kind of Blake criticism. In the new context—that of "transmitting knowledge from generation to generation"—they now present the smooth surface of "books . . . arranged in libraries" (*MHH* 15, E40), which must be "opened" once again. It is perhaps emblematic of this change of stature that these articles have been reprinted without footnotes. Apparently a "modern critical view" is self-standing and requires no temporal referents. Needless to say, this omission severely qualifies the usefulness of these articles for students, who are presumably the target audience for this book.

Just how dramatic an alteration this change of context can have on meaning can be seen in Bloom's introduction (excerpted from *Poetry and Repression*) which, we are told in the editor's note, is "intended to provoke all settled readings of Blake." This is apparently to be done by pointing out how Blake "in mocking a canonical kind of poem, nevertheless is subsumed by the canonical traditions of misreading" (17). As an introduction to a book which proposes a canon of modern Blake criticism and which assures us that the opening essays "do set forth approaches to Blake that are not altogether unset-

tled or problematic" (ed. note), this argument clearly transfers a major part of its irony from the book it introduces to any "belated" attempt to constitute a different canon. Spoken in the voice of the editor of a canon, it is (in this context) itself a defense rather than an opening.

The Blake criticism represented by *Modern Critical Views* is identified as belonging to "the school of the late Foster Damon" (ed. note). What these articles have in common with Damon is, on the one hand, the belief that Blake's poetry is organized, systematic, and coherent and, on the other hand, the assumption that such virtues are apparent only when the correct method, system, or set of contexts is applied to his *oeuvre*. The book therefore has no space for Neo-Platonic and Gnostic Blake, the enthusiastic Blake represented by *Sparks of Fire*, poststructuralist Blake or "Dangerous Blake";¹ there is in fact little space even for formalist Blake. This is for me the most unfortunate omission: a student approaching Blake through this book would have little idea of the work done in the last twenty years on the form of poems such as *Europe*, *Jerusalem*, *Milton*, *The Four Zoas* or even *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*.

At times the magnitude of these repressions produces a palpable anxiety. Bloom writes, for example, that the "gathering movement in recent feminist critiques of Blake" (ed. note) is "intimated" by eleven pages from Susan Fox's book on *Milton*. There is no doubt that Fox's account of the first section of the second book of *Milton* deserves a place in this book, but exactly how it is meant to give an intimation of this gathering movement is not at all clear. The volume is closed by Diana Hume George's chapter on "The Feminine in Blake" from *Blake and Freud*, which according to Bloom offers us "a spirited defense of Blake against some recent feminist critiques." It seems that we have the defense against a point of view which is (apart from George's own analysis of the Female Will) not allowed to appear.

One of the strengths of this collection is that its practice with regard to "other Blakes" is not repeated in relation to the tradition that it does represent. There is at least some suggestion of the numerous and at times conflicting frameworks in which Blake "makes sense" (cf. 27 and 46, for example). Moreover, while *Modern Critical Views* gives a good idea of where Frye's systematization of Blake (particularly in relation to the imagination) has led, it also includes selections which imply at least some of the ways in which "organized" Blake has been transformed in recent years. For example, David Wagenknecht's "Transformations" from *Blake's Night*, both makes more complex and, in a certain sense, brings us to the end of the search for contexts and sources begun by critics as diverse as Bloom, Raine, and Erdman. Nevertheless, although these selections imply a very different Blake, they do not break with the tradition in

which they have been placed. Such changes remain on the far side of this book's horizon.

In stressing the "closure" effected by *Modern Critical Views* I am not making a completely negative judgment. Canonization, the always only partially successful transformation of the strongest devils into angels, seems to be inevitable. The "transmission of knowledge from generation to generation" would fail if it did not enlist the services of the angels. It is this process which creates the "ground" or the "surface" which allows the next "opening" to be found. Just how successful this school of Blake criticism has been in establishing this ground can be seen in the very different articles gathered together in *Essential Articles for the Study of William Blake*.

This second volume takes a position contrary to that of Bloom's angels. Although the foreword heralds a book which will bring together those essays which, for the study of Blake, are "genuinely essential" (vii), the preface quickly disclaims any such pretensions, for "To presume 'essentiality' would entail assuming a knowledge of universal attributes" and to make such an assumption would be to identify oneself with "the Blasphemous Selfhoods" who "must be broken asunder" (ix). The preface does claim that the collection of articles reflects "the essential trajectory of literary-critical thought for the years it covers," but at the same time it suggests that for Blake criticism these articles may represent a "revolutionary force" about which there may be some level of consternation (x). Rather than offering a systematization of Blake or emphasizing a series of contexts in which Blake "makes sense," *Essential Articles* lays stress on Blake's transformation of his sources and the nature of his own vision. There is, therefore, much greater emphasis placed on what could loosely be called textuality: on what is happening within the verbal and graphic dimensions of Blake's texts. *Essential Articles* is indeed essential reading for any student who wants to understand the pre-history of much of the most exciting work that is currently being produced in Blake studies.

Essential Articles is itself arranged in such a way as to tell the "story" of the "discovery" of Blake's textuality. The volume begins with "Blake and the Philosophy of Literary Symbolism" in which Hazard Adams distinguishes between myth and anti-myth. The former implies a power to create reality in and through language, while the latter implies a view of language which is able only to point to a pre-existing external world. Within the context of *Essential Articles*, this implies that if Blake's poetry celebrates myth rather than anti-myth, and clearly not many Blake critics would disagree, then it follows that to read Blake through a series of codes, conventions, sources, or contexts, which are external to the poem, is to "choose forms of externality from poetic tales" (5). The next two articles in the volume — "Blake

and the Gnostic Hyle: A Double Negative" by Stuart Curran and "The Iconoclastic Enterprise: Blake's Critique of 'Milton's Religion'" by Florence Sandler—implicitly underline this point by describing how Blake disagrees with and transforms two of his major sources. The implicit contention of these articles, namely that Blake's poems form a unique "grammar" that transforms the "language stereo-types" out of which they are made, is made explicit in "The Self-sufficient Text" by Michael Riffaterre. Riffaterre argues that there is no need to treat Blake's poems as if they were "a condensed and therefore cryptic allusion to a complex mythological tradition" or system of symbolism (59). Such methods of reading are in fact a disguised form of the referential fallacy. Instead, Riffaterre argues, motifs and themes from external sources are present within the text, but only as words "that point to . . . a significance determined by the rules of a grammar valid only for this text" (73).

With these premises articulated, Hilton then assembles an impressive series of articles which delineate aspects of the "grammar" of Blake's texts. These are of three major kinds: first, there are articles which outline an aspect of Blake's art by explicating his practices in relation to an external context (Donald Ault's article on Newton and *The Four Zoas*, "Incommensurability and Interconnection in Blake's Anti-Newtonian Text," and Morris Eaves' account of Blake's quarrel with the printing technologies of his time, "Blake and the Artistic Machine: An Essay in Decorum and Technology," fit into this class). Next, "The Female as Metaphor in William Blake's Poetry" by Susan Fox and "Desire Gratified and Ungratified: William Blake and Sexuality" by Alicia Ostriker trace the vicissitudes of a particular set of metaphors in Blake's poetry. Third, "Proper Names in the Structural Design of Blake's Myth-Making" by V. A. De Luca and "Semantic Structures and the Temporal Modes of Blake's Prophetic Verse" by Ronald Clayton Taylor concentrate exclusively on minute particulars of the "grammar" of Blake's poems. Although its focus is much broader, Robert F. Gleckner's "Most Holy Forms of Thought: Some Observations on Blake and Language" belongs to this class. *Essential Articles* closes with "'Striving with Systems': Blake and the Politics of Difference" by Steven Shavero and "What Type of Blake?" by the Santa Cruz Blake Study Group. The first is offered as an example of a close reading that does not sidestep the aporias opened up by *écriture*. The second measures the distance between textual and edited Blake. It raises, as conclusion to this volume, the very real question of the kind of Blake that should be the object of Blake criticism.

What is remarkable about this turn to Blake's texts, particularly when it is compared to the articles in *Modern Critical Views*, is the resulting recovery of a sense of

Blake's "strangeness" and of the vigor and unruliness of his texts. De Luca writes, to cite only an obvious example, of "the palpable strangeness of [Blake's] poetic surfaces" (119). Similarly, rather than smoothing over the surface of Blake's relationship to women and assimilating it to an overriding system, Ostriker discovers in Blake's poems both a "proto-feminist sensibility" and "its opposite, a homocentric gynophobia"; instead of being disedified by this contradiction, she observes that "One of the idols of our tribe is System, a Blakean term signifying a set of ideas bounded by an adhesive inflexible consistency" (233). The climax of this "unbounded" Blake is, in this volume at least, the article by the Santa Cruz Blake Study Group. By attending to the graphic particulars of Blake's text, the Santa Cruz group observes the extent to which Blake's poems resist any attempt to reduce them to univocality or uniformity. The Blake who finally emerges at the end of this volume is remarkably different from the more austere Blake who was delineated in *Modern Critical Views*.

Yet perhaps the opposition between these two Blakes is not complete. In providing us with a series of contexts, systems, and sources to "frame" Blake, the tradition represented by *Modern Critical Views* makes possible the work of *Essential Articles*. The devils could not exist without the angels, and vice-versa. Moreover, strangeness and unruliness can themselves become an orthodoxy, and then it is the angels who perform the work of the devils. If (in relation to Wicksteed, and Sloss and Wallis, et al.) Erdman, Frye, and Bloom were once devils, it is not inconceivable that Riffaterre, Ault, and even the Santa Cruz Blake Study Group could one day become angels. *Essential Articles* is after all itself an attempt to uncover a tradition, "to gather together some now maturing orphans" (x): even in Blake criticism Urizen and Orc are in endless and cyclical struggle.

¹W. J. T. Mitchell, "Dangerous Blake," *Studies in Romanticism*, 21 (1982): 410-16.

Desmond King-Hele. *Erasmus Darwin and The Romantic Poets*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986. vii + 294 pp. \$29.95.

Reviewed by David Worrall

Students of Romanticism have always been well served by Desmond King-Hele. Quite apart from his earlier pioneering studies of Erasmus Darwin (which include a

biography, a collection of letters, and a selection of writings), King-Hele's *Shelley: His Thought and Work* is now in its third edition. The special character of King-Hele's substantial contribution to the scholarship of the period has derived from his position beyond the academy of literature teachers (he is a Fellow of the Royal Society and a professional aerospace scientist), a situation which has afforded him some degree of detachment from the relentless institutionalization of "English" and its late "crises" of theory (I write from laggardly England). Unfortunately, it is the absence of an adequately worked out theory of critical practice and procedure that limits the usefulness of *Erasmus Darwin and The Romantic Poets*.

The scope of the book is extremely ambitious in attempting to cover both the names one would expect to meet (Blake, Byron, Coleridge, Keats, Shelley, and Wordsworth) and those one has probably only passed by en route to other things (Joel Barlow, Brooke Boothby, Thomas Campbell, Leigh Hunt, Eleanor Porden, Anna Seward, Mary Tighe, and others). The reading of this extensive body of primary literature in the hunt for verbal parallels must have been a considerable undertaking. And therein lies the problem. King-Hele states his critical procedure at the beginning: ". . . I have concentrated more on apparent verbal echoes than on resemblances in ideas" (p. 1). In other words, his standard practice throughout the book is to compare passages from Darwin with passages from other writers and then to trace the verbal similarities. The results are highly variable and the author's commentary too often lacking in development. For example, a "close" parallel might be given as a phrase drawn from Coleridge's lecture on *The Tempest*: "sleep, which consists in a suspension of the voluntary . . . power" compared with one from Darwin's *Zoonomia* "sleep; which consists in a suspension of all voluntary power" (p. 131). A "not-so-close" parallel would be admitted as Keats' description of Madeline "And on her hair a glory, like a saint" compared with Darwin's "A saint-like glory trembles round her head" from *The Loves of the Plants* (p. 241).

The above examples are, I think, an accurate representation of the book's procedures although King-Hele is good humored enough to allow himself an occasional diversion from "the tedious business of tracing resemblances" (p. 132). However, it is difficult to be wholeheartedly generous with a critic who says such things as "Fire is the ruling motif of 'The Tyger,' so there are bound to be parallels with Canto I of *The Economy of Vegetation* which is all about Fire" (p. 47), or, on a more breathtaking level of generalization, "With *The Loves of the Plants* Darwin also succeeded in winning warm applause from the literary world for a long poem largely devoted to detailed descriptions of Nature, and particularly flowers. This success gave Wordsworth the inner

confidence that he could do the same . . ." (p. 64).

So, what remains? Can we bypass King-Hele's book pronouncing it theoretically outmoded and primitive in its literary judgments? Not just yet, I think. At the end of *Erasmus Darwin and The Romantic Poets*, King-Hele tells us that his book has been "an exercise in probability" (p. 274), and a footnote away is an equation for working out the probability of linguistic parallels (which he very unguardedly calls "influence"): "The overall probability of influence with n parallels, each of probability p , is $\{1 - (1-p)^n\}$ ". Thus, if $p=0.2$ (i.e. 20 per cent) and $n=6$, the overall probability is $1 - 0.8^6 = 0.74$." It is easy to scoff at this ready-reckoner for working out as complex a matter as intertextuality but it doesn't quite get the rest of us off the hook of coming up with a definition of what constitutes a boundary or parameter of even the simplest type of intertextuality. It might be rewarding to examine King-Hele's "exercise in probability" in the light of quite a different theory of literary probability such as the one presented in Douglas Lane Patey's *Probability and Literary Form: Philosophic Theory and Literary Practice in the Augustan Age* (Cambridge University Press, 1984). In that book Patey says that Augustan authors "quite consciously demand of their readers certain procedures of probable inference; these procedures not only reflect contemporary thinking about the probable, but are embodied and dramatized in literary form; and the procedures of interpretation required, if these works are to be understood, are precisely the habits of thought which their authors mean explicitly to teach" (p. xii). Although Patey doesn't discuss the issue, related to a theory of literary probability must be the question of imitation, plagiarism or just "good" old-fashioned "influence," all of which could, strictly, be seen as devices (legitimate or otherwise) for developing consensual appeals to the reader. For example, Coleridge (or someone else) might be imitating Darwin in order to increase the probable inferences of the reader. As Derrida points out, all "origins" are traces unacknowledged and perhaps we should consider many of the Romantic writers from the perspective of Augustan literary probability theory; in any event, the metaphysics of Romantic originality have long been amenable to deconstruction. Whatever one thinks about all this, King-Hele's own practice of counting "parallels" is too subjective to have scientific value and too theoretically backward to satisfy current critical scholarship.

While many of King-Hele's literary judgments are open to question (such as the one that "Coleridge wrote little verse after 1800, and that little is not highly regarded," p. 119), Darwin's works do seem to have been regarded by the Romantic writers as significant repositories of attractively presented science. Drawing on the work of James Averill and Mary Jacobus, King-Hele is able to demonstrate convincingly that case histories re-

corded in *Zoonomia* received much imaginative reworking by Wordsworth. Indeed, *Erasmus Darwin and The Romantic Poets* sent me back again to read *Zoonomia*, where one is certainly struck by the frequency with which Darwin makes reference to patient case histories or to the observation of social behavior, either at first hand or by report. It could be that in dealing with Wordsworth and Coleridge in particular we need the mediation of *Zoonomia* before reaching for our Lacan *Écrits*. Darwin's period is the wonderful world of pre-Freudian psychological explanation. The following incident is classed by Darwin as a minor "disease of volition": "A little boy, who was tired with walking, begged of his papa to carry him. 'Here,' says the reverend doctor, 'ride upon my gold-headed cane;' and the pleased child, putting it between his legs, galloped away with delight, and complained no more of his fatigue" (*Zoonomia*, 1: 434-35). King-Hele is suggestive too in pointing out, with reference to "Kubla Khan," an incident Darwin had read about in the "Lausanne Transactions" concerning a "somnambulist" who "sometimes opened his eyes for a short time to examine, where he was, or where his ink pot stood, and then shut them again, dipping his pen into the pot every now and then, and writing on, but never opening his eyes afterwards, although he wrote on from line to line regularly, and corrected some errors of the pen, or in spelling . . ." (*Zoonomia*, 1: 228-29).

The issues raised by feminist literary criticism over the last ten years also seem to have left King-Hele untouched, but his account of the provincially claustrophobic tutor-pupil relationship of Erasmus Darwin and the poet Anna Seward might repay further investigation. At the moment it is difficult to see who has been "writing" the other amidst mutual charges of plagiarism. One would also want to qualify the page and a bit devoted to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. Mary Shelley's preface is an elusive testament to emergent, lateral feminine writing and repays close reading: "They talked of the experiments of Dr. Darwin (I speak not of what the Doctor really did, or said that he did, but, as more to my purpose, of what was then spoken of as having been done by him) . . ." King-Hele comments that "The clumsy sentence in brackets suggests that Mary searched for an account of this experiment in Darwin's works, but failed to find anything" (p. 260). I would imagine that most readers today would be prepared to see the parenthetical sentence as deliberately disruptive, casting the primacy of Mary Shelley's "purpose" against the second-hand reportage of Byron and her husband.

I have tried to indicate the types of limitation readers might find on the usefulness of *Erasmus Darwin and The Romantic Poets*. Most of the material on Blake is derived from the work of Nelson Hilton and the present writer and, while scrupulously acknowledged, only goes tentatively beyond them. The main problems are

brought about by the ambitious nature of the project, but I don't think King-Hele has anything to worry about. We already have every reason to be grateful to him for almost singlehandedly ensuring that no one could now overlook the importance of Erasmus Darwin's contribution to the thought and writings of the period.

A Catalogue of the Lawrence Lande William Blake Collection in the Department of Rare Books and Special Collections of the McGill University Libraries. Montreal: McLennan Library, McGill University, 1983. xv + 172 pp. \$50.00 Canadian.

Reviewed by G. E. Bentley, Jr.

This is a collaborative work, with a foreword by the donor of the nucleus of the collection Lawrence Lande, a preface by the Blake scholar Christopher Heppner, whose "role . . . has been that of writing or verifying the annotation" (p. x), and an introduction by the Rare Books Librarian Elizabeth Lewis, who "organized the cataloguing, most of which was done by Mrs. Rosemary Haddad" (p. x). It is a large, handsome, oblong work¹ in double columns of admirable Baskerville type, generously leaded, with display pages in red and black, on Japan paper with deckled edges, with eight sharp reproductions, twenty-four blank pages within the text, and a "special binding" in an edition limited to five hundred copies signed by the collector, the Director of the McGill Libraries, the cataloguer, the Rare Book Librarian, the book designer, and the annotator. The greatest care devoted to the book seems to have been concentrated, successfully, upon the book's appearance² rather than its function as a work of scholarship.

A few of the lacunae here are easy to identify. There is no index, which makes it surprisingly difficult to use, nor is there a list of the reproductions, and the unnumbered reproductions themselves are so enigmatically titled—e.g., "Venus Anadyomene 5.1. B8V4 1805"—as to leave one puzzled about the artist (Thomas Butts), the medium (water color and ink), and where it is described in the book (p. 129). One may well wonder who is in charge here.

The catalogue entries are in standard Library of Congress style (repeated in their entirety for two or more copies of the same work), without italics or reference to Blake scholarship (though the "classification [is] based on *A Blake Bibliography*" of 1964 [pp. xi-xii]) or cross-references within the text, and they are serviceable and unambitious. They serve chiefly as a handlist of the collection.

What then is in the collection? The vast majority consists of secondary works about Blake, reprints of his writings and pictures, some of it is strikingly ephemeral, such as section 7 on "Prospectuses, Book Jackets, Postcards," and some of it has nothing to do with Blake at all (see, e.g., pp. 47, 50-51, 60-61). It is organized as reprints of Blake's writings (pp. 3-35), book illustrations (pp. 39-68), editions of books Blake read or owned (pp. 71-74), catalogues, biographies, criticism, and scholarship (pp. 77-126), separate drawings and engravings (pp. 129-47), manuscripts [none by Blake] (pp. 151-53), miscellanea (pp. 157-59), slides and microfilms (pp. 163-66), and an appendix of books with Blake illustrations elsewhere in the McGill University Libraries (pp. 169-72).

There is, of course, a great deal of Blake scholarship and ephemera here, a testimony to much patient effort and devotion. But the books of scholarship are not very difficult to locate elsewhere, and the ephemera will interest few besides myself.³ For the Blake student, it is of course convenient to have so much gathered in one place.

One of the chief values of the collection to the scholar is probably in the section of books with Blake's illustrations to the works of others, though even here some fifty of the works are modern reprints. Some of the originals are in duplicate copies, such as Blair's *Grave of 1808* (3 copies), Ritson's *Select Collection of English Songs of 1783* (3 sets), Young's *Night Thoughts of 1797* (2 copies), *Job of 1874* (2 copies), and some are genuinely uncommon, such as Mora's *Meditaciones Poeticas of 1826*, one of three copies traced in *Blake Books* (1977), and a unique set of Richardson's *Sir Charles Grandison*, originally published in *The Novelist's Magazine* in 1783.⁴ The section of original drawings lists four minor but interesting Blake drawings, and the section called "Blake 6 Manuscripts" has no manuscript by Blake at all but does have interesting contemporary manuscripts (unrelated to him) by Fuseli, Joseph Johnson, and others, as well as some by modern scholars such as Sir Geoffrey Keynes, Foster Damon, and Martin Butlin — it must make one feel monumental to have one's correspondence recorded in public institutions during one's lifetime. The most interesting such manuscripts are those of Anne Gilchrist, the biographer's widow. Among the loose prints are rare and important ones of Lavater, Edmund Pitts, proofs of *Job* pls. 17 and 19 — but the cop-

perplates for an unidentified facsimile of *Job*⁵ are only referred to glancingly through the proofs pulled from them in 1969.

In sum, this is an extensive reference collection with a few quite unusual items in it. It is useful to have a catalogue of the collection, but the items it records and the manner in which it records them will rarely much concern scholars who are not actually working with the McGill Collections.

But I must conclude by saying that the work of Christopher Heppner here seems to be solid and valuable and that I have repeatedly worked in the Lande Collection with profit and gratitude. The staff is extremely eager to help, and the environment is warm and agreeable. There are great profits to be found at McGill if one is not led to expect too much.

¹Well, yes, I know, all books are oblong. I mean this one is wider than it is high.

²On the other hand, there is a curious variation in the length of the columns on a page, differing by as much as six inches (e.g., p. 170).

³See Christopher Heppner, "Notes on Some Items in the Blake Collection at McGill," *Blake Newsletter*, 10 (1977), 100-108.

⁴Vol. 1 was published for T. Kelly in 1818, vol. 2 for C. Cooke probably about 1811. I have a set of the 1811 edition but have not seen a complete set of that of 1818.

⁵See "Blake's *Job* Copperplates," *Library*, 5S., 26 (1976), 234-41.

Robert Gleckner. *Blake and Spenser*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985. pp. 384. \$29.50

Reviewed by George Anthony Rosso, Jr.

A larger human brain will be developed by Man when the whole of human life is seen and understood as a single mental form. This single mental form is a drama of creation, struggle, redemption and restoration. . . . the archetype of all prophecy and art, the universal form which art reveals in pieces, and it is also the Word of God. (Northrop Frye, *Fearful Symmetry*)

Northrop Frye, the unacknowledged legislator of *Blake and Spenser*, built archetypal literary theory on the idea that a single universal mental form, derived from the Bible, establishes the "ultimate context for all works of literature whatever" ("The Road of Excess," in *Romanticism and Consciousness*, ed. Harold Bloom [New York, 1970], 129). Frye elaborated the theory following his book on Blake, when a study of *The Faerie Queene* even-

tually was absorbed into the more ambitious *Anatomy of Criticism*. Blake's work led Frye into literature at large because it became coherent when seen in the context of the "line of vision" formed by Milton, Spenser, and Dante among others. Blake's poetry thus holds the keys to poetic thought, for individual works attain meaning only in relation to literature, "or what we may call its archetypal framework," a framework revealed by the contextual strategy of allusion. And since in Blake "nineteenths of the allusions are to the Bible," the Bible is the total order of words or the Word within which all works inhere, providing the poet with both a mythic structure and a prophetic purpose. That purpose is identifying the non-human and human worlds, linking creative activity with an awareness of its social function: "It is this unity of energy and consciousness that Blake attempts to express by the word 'vision'" ("The Road of Excess," 132).

Robert Gleckner seeks to determine just how much vision Blake found in Spenser. And since he adheres to the basic Frye postulate of using Blake's entire canon in his analysis, the synoptic prose description of *A Vision of the Last Judgment* is one of his primary texts. "Vision or Imagination is a Representation of what Eternally Exists. Really & Unchangeably" and is distinguished from "allegory," although Blake concedes that "Allgory [sic] is Seldom without some Vision" (E [1982] 554). The phrase "some Vision" occupies Gleckner throughout the book. It refers to temporal fragmentation of what really and unchangeably exists in Blake's Eternity or Eden, the highest mode of consciousness that Albion ("Man") can enter and that identifies or marries the contrary subjective and objective poles of reality. In effect, Gleckner's focus is epistemological. On the one hand, he attributes to the passive Lockean subject the mental division that produces external reality. The passive subject, rather than identifying reality with mental form, classifies it according to similitudes and analogies, veering from the concrete or sensuous poetic image to the reified idea, from minute particularity to generality. When an idea is abstracted from its sensory ground it loses its identity, its fundamental metaphoricality, and becomes a substitute image or metonymy, what Gleckner calls "allegory." In Blake's epistemology, on the other hand, reality and vision are one: and this unity appears when the subject perceives as part of the "single eternal and infinite God-Man" that Frye finds in Blake's Albion, who in his unfallen or undivided form is guided by Los-Jesus: "All Things are comprehended in their Eternal Forms in the Divine body of the Saviour . . . the Human Imagination" (VLJ, E 555). Spenser's fundamental error is relying on the allegorical trappings of Arthurian romance; for in fragmenting Albion into the temporal acts of Arthur, he reduces the eternal into an historical personage and thereby achieves only "some Vision."

Gleckner's other primary text is plate 11 of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (MHH), which illustrates the process of allegorization at the center of Blake's critique of Spenser. "In addition to Blake's fundamental purpose of exposing the self-serving power play that is the origin of priesthood," Gleckner writes, "the passage is also a thumbnail sketch of how poetic vision is narrowed to allegorical constructs" (324). Although the plate informs the commentary on Blake's tempera painting of *The Characters in Spenser's "Faerie Queene,"* the central section of Gleckner's book, it also anchors Blake's "mini-commentary" on Spenser in works from 1780 up to the Spenser painting in 1825 (Gleckner refers to plate 11 ten times before page 130). Plate 11 underlies Blake's use of the rhetorical strategy called *abusio* or catechresis, terms that describe the borrowing of contexts from precursors in order to invert, subvert, or comment on them. *Abusio* underlies the "de-allegorizing" project that Gleckner locates not only in MHH but in Los's "Striving with Systems to deliver Individuals from those Systems" (*Jerusalem* 11:5) and in Los's printing press: "and here he lays his words in order above the mortal brain / As cogs are formd in a wheel to turn the cogs of the adverse wheel" (*Milton* 27 [29]:9-10). Blake's critique of such contexts as Arthurian and Petrarchan "systems" amounts to a "reversed rethinking" that produces a "new figuration." Gleckner examines Blake's use of *abusio*, particularly in regard to Petrarchism, in four texts: *The Book of Thel*, two Pickering manuscript poems—"The Golden Net" and "The Crystal Cabinet"—selected passages from the epic prophecies that subsume Petrarchism, and MHH.

Since MHH is so crucial to *Blake and Spenser*, and since Gleckner's insights into the poem are cogent and suggestive, let us turn to chapter 3, "Roads of Excess." Gleckner finds all previous interpretations hindered by the lack of a "guiding principle of interpretation . . . that will account for the apparent shifts in the authoritativeness of the several speakers" (71). Because no one speaker is privileged, when is Blake speaking in his own voice? Gleckner's answer hinges on the epistemological issues discussed in the first two chapters: imagination sees life whole, which means that neither demonic voices of excess nor angelic voices of restraint speak the whole truth. The truth lies in experiencing a marriage of contraries: the reader must redeem the diabolic excesses of angelic correction by experiencing the "errors" of reason and energy divided. The point is to not evade experience, as Thel does, for "You never know what is enough until you know what is more than enough." That proverb, Gleckner argues, demonstrates Blake's use of *abusio*, his inversion of the Legend of Temperance in Book II of *The Faerie Queene*. In particular, Blake exposes the error of the "golden mean" morality underlying the Legend, for in reality temperance is an *excess* of restraint. At the end of Book II Guyon destroys the

Bower of Bliss in a rage of excessive zeal that prompts Gleckner to identify Spenser's personification of Excesse as "the presiding allegorical power of the entire book" (79). This ambiguous figure, says Gleckner, should restrain us from embracing "Blakean excess" as desideratum. Hence the "allusionary context" of Book II indicates the proper interpretive stance toward the speakers in *MHH*.

Chapter 4, "Calling and Naming," further substantiates Blake's "de-allegorical" project, relates it to the archetypal Word, and prepares for the central portion of the book on Blake's Spenser painting. Gleckner shows that part of Spenser's redeemability lies in his insight into human character and mental process. The "some Vision" that Blake discerns inheres in Spenser's minute articulation of character and "in the sort of shifting identities of those characters," Gleckner writes, "which I explore as functioning in Blake's painting" (120). The guide here, as acknowledged in the last chapter, is Kathleen Williams ("a Blake critic aborning if I ever saw one"), who in *Spenser's World of Glass* (1966) contends that the personified virtues and vices issue from the poem's action, not vice versa, and who champions Spenser as an acute psychologist, a master of mental space in which characters merge identities and functions not unlike the activity of Blake's zoas and emanations. Unfortunately, Spenser's "naming" the mental energies amounts to the reification deplored on plate 11 of *MHH*. Personification abstracts the energies from the "Divine body" into a system of analogies: character is thus reduced from identity to mere resemblance subject to the ravages of time and mutability in a way that the "eternal attributes" of the human form divine are not (132). In other words—and we are at the cutting edge of recent debates on romantic allegory—Blake presents the "naked passions themselves" rather than allegorical substitutes. Urizen, for example, is not "named" reason nor does he represent reason, argues Gleckner; he is one of "the vinous eternal realities of intellect" pressed from Los's printing press "out of the husk of words" (154). Spenserian virtues and vices, despite Spenser's subtle insights into human character, become "surrogates" that never integrate into the single mental form in which "All Human Forms [are] identified" (*Jerusalem* 99:1).

Armed with his "verbal and conceptual imitation-criticism" culled from years of rethinking Spenser, Blake embarks on a pictorial critique of *The Faerie Queene's* moral-allegorical system. Gleckner arranges this most informative section of the book into three chapters: the first, chapter 5, concentrates on critical methodology and the upper half of the painting, the "supernal realm." The two critical principles Gleckner adduces are interwoven: that the painting is structured by a "double horizontal focus" between the upper "supernal" and

lower "mundane" worlds, and that Blake critiques Spenser by using but disrupting *The Faerie Queene's* book-by-book narration, primarily by placing the lower half of the painting within a "tripartite scheme" that exposes the movement toward allegory in Spenser's sequential conception. The supernal realm, moving from the city of Babylon on the right to the New Jerusalem on the left, counteracts the processional movement below, which follows Spenser's narrative "progression" from Holiness (the New Jerusalem of Book I) to Courtesy (the pastoral allegory of Book VI). Thus Blake's double horizontal perspective visualizes the strategy of significant allusion or *abusio*, which enables him to reverse the mundane procession and collapse the rhetoric of temporality into a visionary "tableau" that "forces us to perceive the entire 'procession' coinstantaneously" (169). Gleckner sees in this reversal of the narrative movement of *The Faerie Queene* Blake's recuperation of Spenser, or Spenser's apotheosis into the visionary company, the select "Chaucer & Shakespeare & Milton" pantheon, for Spenser is "the only poet aside from Chaucer to be granted a non-sequential 'illustration'" (283).

But Spenser cannot be redeemed without Blake, as chapters 6 and 7 demonstrate in detail. Because it is "paradigmatic" of Blake's critical method, the front or Dwarf-Una-Redcrosse panel gets a chapter of its own. Blake not only places the neglected Spenserian Dwarf at the head of the procession (Gleckner sees him as a version of the Christ child), but he ignores the warrior Redcrosse and moves Duessa and Archimago to the rear or "Calidore" panel, where they are identified with the Blatant Beast and so serve as "iconographic signals" of Blake's critical reading of the poem. Chapter 7 treats the "middle" and "Calidore" panels of the tripartite frame as allegorical "traps" that the reader-viewer must dismantle. To summarize crudely, Blake disrupts Spenser's book-by-book narrative sequence by placing Arthur between the middle and rear panels, omitting Book IV on Friendship (the only positive Spenserian "virtue" to Blake) and identifying Arthur with Britomart (Book III) and Artegall (Book V), whom Arthur introduces center stage, and with Calidore (Book VI): that is, with chastity, justice, and courtesy, the linchpins of the moral system supporting Spenser's allegory. Because Arthur subsumes but does not integrate the separate virtues, Blake depicts him as the consolidation of Moral Virtue he so abhors and figures in his Rahab-Satan, religion hid in war, which is what Britomart and Artegall (or Britomartegall) represent. In effect, the reader-viewer must see Spenser "not with, but through" Blake's eyes, see that the Britomartegall hermaphroditic union parodies the androgynous union of Albion-Jerusalem, the single mental form in which virtues and vices are supplanted by "Vision." But as Gleckner contends, Blake can only go so far: "The ultimate deliverers, of course, are Blake's

readers, for it is we who must recognize Blake's imaginative deallegorizing" (111), his abuse of contexts to deliver us from the encrusted orthodoxies embedded in those contexts and clogging the visionary line.

Blake and Spenser is a subtle and highly unified example of contextual criticism at its best. But of course the contexts have not been exhausted. As with Frye's *Fearful Symmetry*, whose presuppositions guide Gleckner throughout, the book's thoroughgoing unity hides certain fissures. What, for example, keeps Blake's use of allegory from becoming allegory? Gleckner would respond that Los's "system" self-destructs into a "systematic antisystemizing" that questions its own need of language: "Los's 'system,' I submit, is the allegorical antiallegory" (111). But what do we make of the names Urizen, Luvah, Los and the rest? Are they not "named"? Again, Gleckner would come back with the Romantic distinction between allegory and symbol ("Vision"), but this unresolved point brings us to another quibble. Despite his denial of "system" — which would distance him from Frye — Gleckner relies on the founding assumption of archetypal theory: that of a "total order of words" or of the word within the Word (see 157). Yet this "transcendental signified" situates Gleckner's critical method firmly within the tradition (system) of philosophical idealism. Whether this tradition best illuminates Blake's work — it certainly offers one important context — is not the point. Rather, Gleckner's privileging of method over theory, his rejection of system, reveals his affiliation with the older New Criticism and its built-in suspicion of history and temporality. Ultimately Gleckner's methodology contains Blake within the categories of formalism, even if it is the cosmic formalism of Frye's verbal universe.

True to the value of the New Critical enterprise, however, Gleckner's anti-system rhetoric does not negate the often brilliant readings in the book. And he certainly breaks new ground in his treatment of the Spenser painting, combining a thorough understanding of Blake's poetry with a sure grasp of the mechanics of his art. As an application of the best that has been thought and said about Blake, *Blake and Spenser* is without blame. If Gleckner had acknowledged the philosophical underpinnings of his work, and the essential but partial understanding it affords, *Blake and Spenser* would be so tightly woven of insight and self-critical awareness that neither praise nor blame could mar it.

Abby Robinson. *The Dick and Jane*. New York: Dell, 1985. 237 pp. Hard cover, \$14.95/Paper, \$3.50.

Reviewed by Morris Eaves

Standard histories of the subject maintain that detective fiction begins in 1841 — before the word "detective" is in use — with Poe's adventures of C. Auguste Dupin as narrated by his sidekick. Later in the century, Doyle successfully imitated Poe's formula, replacing Dupin and the narrator with Holmes and Watson. In the early 1920s, even before Doyle had quite finished with Holmes, a virtual school of British "mystery" writing, of which Agatha Christie and Dorothy Sayers are central instances, engendered the Poirot-at-the-manor, Sellers-at-the-vicarage kind of story sometimes known as classical or golden-age detective fiction. At nearly the same moment, out of American pulp magazines like the legendary *Black Mask* came Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler, central writers of the so-called hardboiled school, which used violence, sex, and tough talk to charge up the old elements. The development of the form, or forms, from Poe to the present has been cumulative. All the main branches are still alive and well, though the Holmes line has for the most part become a branch of children's literature — appropriately enough, since it began as a refinement of the Victorian boy's adventure story.

As critics like George Grella have shown ("Murder and Manners: The Formal Detective Novel," *Novel* 4 [1970]: 30–48, and "Murder and the Mean Streets: The Hard-Boiled Detective Novel," *Contemporaria* 1 [1970], 6–15), the plot structure of detective fiction has always roamed up and down a spectrum between quest romance, for the adventure, and comedy, for the love interest. The Poe-Doyle formula is usually romance, with comic elements, if present, present merely to ratify a successful quest, as when Holmes's successful battle against man and serpent at Stoke Moran liberates the stepdaughter from the bestial stepfather so she can marry the wimp who had suspected that her fears were all hysterical. In the classical English-style mystery associated with Agatha Christie, structural priorities are more often reversed to favor comedy. Christie's stories frequently leave one with the feeling that her detectives and sidekicks are knights and squires trapped in comedies of manners, while the process of eliminating suspects one by one almost replaces the episodic confrontations one expects in a romance — and gets, in the running battle between Holmes and Moriarty, for instance. The pro-

tracted *j'accuse* drawing-room scenes that often end Christie's novels, like the mannered love-debate into which Sayers guides Peter Wimsey and Harriet Vane for the conclusion of *Gaudy Night*, thus seem structurally closer to something out of Congreve or Wilde than to the after-the-fact explanations by Holmes to Watson back at 221B Baker Street, which have more the flavor of ritual heroic bragging after great deeds.

Hardboiled detective fiction returns to romance structures with a vengeance and with irony. Not that irony is missing in the classical formula, which after all uses a corpse to signal the need for a detective, who is by definition tardy. But this irony is often not as ironic as it sounds, since the deceased is frequently guilty anyway, of nasty vices if not of crimes. In any case, hardboiled detection makes the most of the ironic possibilities to create (mainly) subverted romances. The reliable digit with which Hercule Poirot could point out *the* culprit turns into the fickle finger of a markedly lower-case fate.

Perhaps the most pungent irony turns up in the use of language. Holmes can turn a phrase now and then, and the crafty dialogue through which Christie samples the English class system is a major factor in pushing her plots away from romantic toward satiric comedy. Even more generally, in detective fiction a "red herring" is as often a misleading way with words as a misleading object or event. But it is the role of intellection in detective fiction, both inside, through the thematic emphasis on the mental processes epitomized in the detective's methods (Poe's "ratiocination," Doyle's "deduction"), and outside, in the reader's hypothetical participation in these processes, that makes language a focus of attention from the start. The vindication of the hero often amounts to a vindication of someone's language. The intellectual fantasies through which creative intellection is identified with ruling-class language helped to maintain the deeply conservative bias of early and classical detective fiction.

Scratch intellectual fantasy and you may find intellectual satire. Now, elements of satire had always been present in the language of detective fiction, and at least one recent writer, Rick Eden ("Detective Fiction as Satire," *Genre* 16 [1983]: 279-95), has gone so far as to propose that the fundamental structure of the detective story is not romantic or comic but ironic-satiric (in Frye's sense of the term). The verbal humiliation of police inspectors by detectives like Dupin and Holmes borders on intellectual satire. There is elementary satire in the cogitations and counter-cogitations of Holmes and Moriarty, and, if Doyle had seen fit to explore the implications of "Professor" in "Professor Moriarty," there would have been a great deal more. It is easy to forget how thoroughly at home intellectual satire is in romance. The battle of wits between Moses and the sorcerers of Pharaoh, for the

purposes of determining who is the true philosopher, as it were, is a familiar early instance.

All this is by way of providing some context for one of the trademarks of hardboiled detective fiction, tough talk, and its compressed form, the wisecrack. The classical formula of Agatha Christie had evolved quietly out of the materials passed along by Poe and Doyle. But the American hardboiled novel evolves adolescent-fashion, by a series of noisy self-declared reactions, one of the noisiest of which is linguistic. By energizing the linguistic surface of detective fiction as never before, Hammett, Chandler, and followers create an extraordinary amalgam of quest romance with intellectual satire. Predictably, one target of the satire is the language of its own competitor, classical detective fiction, which is by implication the phony language of an effete social order.

The satirical norm characteristic of much hardboiled detection is concocted from a number of already available oppositions, such as the foreign snob versus the American plain dealer, that were long-exploited American literary formulas for relocating true wit in (some version of) the language of the unprivileged: not Lord Peter's but Sam Spade's and Philip Marlowe's. In his essay "The Simple Art of Murder," which sets some kind of record for naive and contradictory theorizing, Chandler was no doubt speaking for many more than himself in claiming that changing the language was part of a sweeping change that writers of his kind of detective story were making from the ideal to the real.

From this vantage point, the easiest satire for hardboiled fiction to offer is the anti-aristocratic sort, where hot air always seems to come from folks with upperclass pretensions: if they grow orchids and read Latin, they're dangerous. Only a sucker would fail to hear the danger signals in the courtly lingo of Mr. Gutman in Hammett's *Maltese Falcon*, and Sam Spade is no sucker. To the extent that upperclass pretensions are intellectual pretensions, the satire offered up in hardboiled detection tends to become anti-intellectual. Which brings us to the ostensible subject of this review, *The Dick and Jane*, in which, according to Cynthia Heimel, author of *Sex Tips for Girls*, Abby Robinson "has invented a furiously funny hard-boiled genre of her own." Brett Harvey, writing for *The Village Voice*, labels *The Dick and Jane* "erotic fantasy." Fair enough, if we don't overlook the interesting twist that the fantasy here, in the hardboiled tradition, represents itself as reality while characterizing the enemy as fantastical. The enemy, to anticipate in a word, is Blake — not the Blake of *An Island in the Moon* or the nasty notebook jingles, or even the metaphysical Blake who wants people to change their intellectual lives, but the Kahlil Gibran Blake.

Since, as the blurbs that I quoted indicate, there seems to be some question about what Abby Robinson's

book is, let's try to define *The Dick and Jane* in relation to the history of its form. It is not hardboiled detective fiction in the manner of Hammett or Chandler, but it extracts elements, especially linguistic elements, from hardboiled detective romance (thus "a . . . hard-boiled genre of her own") and injects them into a comic plot (thus "erotic fantasy"). Robinson manages this through a series of displacements, more or less as follows. First, she sticks with the convention by which the detective's sidekick narrates the story, but disregards the conventional reason—controlling the flow of information about the detective—for doing so. At the same time she moves the center of the action away from the detective to the sidekick, whose narration becomes a confessional. The main subject of the confession is not crime and detection but what Chandler called the "love interest," which he said "nearly always weakens a mystery because it introduces a type of suspense that is antagonistic to the detective's struggle to solve the problem." But in *The Dick and Jane* "the problem" is love and what passes for mystery channels it.

This move has ample precedent. *The Dick and Jane* is distantly related to *The Sign of the Four*, in which Doyle wove the love interest of Holmes's narrator-sidekick into the problem, such that Watson's courting of Mary Morstan is complicated by crime and investigation until a solution is found, at which point a marriage occurs. A closer relative is *Gaudy Night*, where Sayers uses a feeble bit of detective interest (the "crime" is persistent vandalism at a women's college) to motivate her heroine, Harriet Vane, to think about feminist issues, which, at least in the form in which they first occur to her, stand between her and the hero, Peter Wimsey. Sayers uses the hierarchical relationship between detective and sidekick to mirror the hierarchy of conventional marriage.

In the hardboiled mode, the nearest relatives of *The Dick and Jane* may be the novels of Robert B. Parker, which often move away from romance and detection toward comedy (as in *Early Autumn*), a shift that makes Parker's stories eminently adaptable to the requirements of network TV, which long ago began fusing hardboiled romance (with the emphasis on romance) and comedy for double wish fulfillment. The trademark of Parker's detective, Spenser, is his wisecracking way with words, which is derived from but quite distinct from the wisecracking of Chandler's Marlowe. In the mainstream hardboiled mystery, the chief purpose of wisecracking is morale building, and as such is related to the cynical wit that soldiers trade at the front line and surgeons exchange over anesthetized patients. Parker turns wisecracking into a virtuoso comic art, much less urgent, not compelled by the situation so much as by the hero's compulsion to talk. Abby Robinson makes her heroine's language in this mold. Most of the effect derives from the

displacement involved in transferring macho lingo to a female speaker: "The guy was manic-impressive with charisma to burn. He raked me with his beams. Under heavy brows that hung like awnings were laser blues that turned me to Silly Putty. He was harder to face down than a headwaiter" (146).

The wisecracking narrator-sidekick of *The Dick and Jane* is Jane Meyers, artsy photographer, drawn reluctantly into the mean streets of Manhattan by Nick the dick Palladino, a veteran P.I. (private investigator to you) who occasionally needs a candid camera along to document something or other for their lawyer-boss, Marv Rosenblatt. Their distinctly minor adventures provide the elements of romance. The plot is true to the hardboiled formula, however, in ironizing the romance: the lawyer, no Perry Mason, is as often on the side of the scumbags as not—just doing a job. Jane, likewise, is a suitably ironic heroine, in fear of life and limb, whose photographic heroism tends to be accidental if any.

The irony, while enough to give a hint of the hardboiled kind, is played lightly to establish the irreverent, racy mood of contemporary comedy ("A hand slithered into my underpants. Whoever said it was better to give than to receive?" [236]) without any serious downers. If in the romance side of the plot Jane is only an assistant, in the comedy she is the heroine, and the chief conflicts come from her love life, which is centered on her relationship with Hank Gallagher, another photographer, with whom she lives in a Manhattan apartment. According to Jane, their relationship was perfect and "there was nuclear fission to harness in bed" until Hank started reading: "The fishy stuff started when Gallagher got laid off in June. . . . That's when he took up with Blake. . . . Hank thought he was the berries. He started talking Art—big A—instead of making it. . . . He became Serious. Worse yet, he started critting my photos with highfalutin' lingo. He said they lacked 'Fearful Symmetry' and 'Radiance.' Who needed to hear that kind of crapola?" (18). *The Dick and Jane* gets most of its mileage out of Blake by using him to create what Frye calls the "humorous" characters of comedy whose fixed obsessions blind them to their own motivations and to real life as the comedy envisions it. Hank Gallagher, Blake maniac, is of course the classic comic pedant whose rules for living come entirely out of books, or so he chooses to think, whereas in fact Blake is an intellectual smokescreen for Hank's sexual doubledealing with Winny, one of those Blakaliens from the G-spot in Ohio, through whom Hank discovers Blake.*

The outward expression of Hank's inward obsession with Blake is in Ohio, at Golgonooza, sort of a commune

*Part of this sentence stolen from Patricia Neill, 13 November 1986.



An outhouse at Golgonooza, the "William Blake Oratory," Millfield, Ohio. "By the time I reached the privy, my sphincters were screaming and my pores were oozing fear. Down the beaten path a sound and light show went on full swing. I heard high-pitched, animallike noises and saw brights" (155-56).

for a bunch of sort of leftover hippies whose sacred scriptures are provided by Blake. Veteran readers of *Blake* will have no trouble recognizing Balthazar ("a poetic Charles Manson" [146], according to Jane) and Helena ("the backseat type and capable" [146]) Boucher (as in Catherine Blake) as derivatives of Aethelred and Alexandra Eldridge of (the real) Golgonooza-on-the-Ohio, near the university town of Athens (Sparta in *The Dick*)—"Lincoln Log territory," by Jane's NYC standards. Jane, demonstrating true grit and the spirit of accommodation associated with romantic comedy, decides that the way to fight Hank's obsession is to join it. Thus she tries valiantly to wade through some Blake—"I took out *The Book of Los*. That worked like a charm. I was out for the count in no time flat" (105)—and eventually she joins Hank on a pilgrimage to Golgonooza, Jerusalem or the heart of

darkness depending on your point of view, where Hank has volunteered his services as photographer for one of Balthazar Boucher's projects.

Of course the project also brings Hank closer to Winny, on her home turf, and forces Jane to abandon her photographic duties (which, in comic terms, can't be good). Blake and the Blake groupies of Golgonooza are associated in various ways not only with asceticism, religious cults, and insanity but also with human sacrifice ("I tried not to think about the Blakeans, so I thought about the Manson gang" [177])—but Abby Robinson shows no sign of knowing that "Boucher" was probably pronounced "butcher"), orgiastic sex ("Trust us and Blake's teachings. Gratify Desire. Share in our Creativity and Love.' Roughly translated: Spread your legs and bop till you drop" [149]; "It was group grope full tilt boogie" [176]), drugs ("Smoke was the Ohio equivalent of chicken soup" [117]; "he drifted over to the couch, lit up a J, and got comfy with *Blake's Apocalypse*, some prof's magnum opus jammed with footnotes" [88]), bad art ("the murals—painted in the only style going" [146]), bad food ("more soybean dishes than Arabian nights" [142]), and, especially, tyranny.

There are various tried-and-true ways out of this comic dilemma: Jane's fears of Golgonooza life turn out to be illusions derived from the real insanity of life in Manhattan; Jane and Hank distinguish a true Blakeanity from the false uses that the Golgonooza heretics make of it; the horrors of Golgonooza make Hank realize that Blake is for shit and Jane was right all along; Hank and Jane convince the denizens of Golgonooza of the error of their ways and they all get together in a reformed community. Etc.

The Dick and Jane chooses instead the somewhat more extreme solution of giving up on Blake and Blakeans, which means giving up on Hank. The comic excuse for getting rid of the old squeeze is Jane's late, incredibly late, discovery—back in Manhattan, her territory, doing photography again—of Hank's hankypanky with Winny. Kiss and make up remains a possibility, but no: "There's no choice, Hank. We have to make a break. . . . I can't live your kind of life and you can't live mine. . . . It's just the way the cards are stacked. . . . I love you and you love me. What of it? . . . If I put up with this arrangement, I'd be playing the sap for you. . . . Part of me wants to say to hell with the consequences, just go along with this Blakean drek. . . . But I'm no Blakette, though I tried. I'll miss you and I'll have some rotten nights, but that'll pass" (220-21).

It's not for nothing that Jane guides us through these bits of parting dialogue with literary signposts: "I copped some of the tough guy talk from pulpster David Goodis. . . . It was lucky Hank wasn't familiar with *The Maltese Falcon* since I lifted most of my lines from Sam Spade's windup with Brigit [sic] O'Shaughnessy. Ham-

mett's dialogue got me over the rocky spots" (221). Jane's erotic conflict coincides with an intellectual conflict. On the horns of her dilemma are two originary texts, Blake and *Black Mask*, and the comic conflict is resolved in terms of that textual conflict: "Saturday, 8:49-9:34 A.M.: Attempt to read *The Visions of the Daughters of Albion*. Saturday, 9:35-10:39 A.M.: Sneak copy of Horace McCoy's *No Pockets in a Shroud* out of suitcase" (170).

Hank speaks "Blake-speak" (100), Jane speaks hardboiled. A comedy written in the most tolerant spirit would find some way of reconciling them, and in her most accommodating moments Jane can sling some Blake herself:

"Listen, Jane." He sounded serious. "Are you sure you still want to go [to Golgonooza] tomorrow?"

"The apple tree never asks the beech how he shall grow; nor the lion, the horse, how he shall take his prey.' Winny's visit convinced me." Boy did it.

"It did?" Golden Boy seemed startled.

"The thankful receiver bears a plentiful harvest.' Right? So now I have a better idea about what Golgonooza's all about." . . . I felt guilty and horny. "Expect poison from the standing water," old Willy Boy warned. Better to act. I did. On Gallagher. Most of the night. (131-32)

But Blake and hardboiled aren't to be reconciled:

"Hank, we can't stay here."

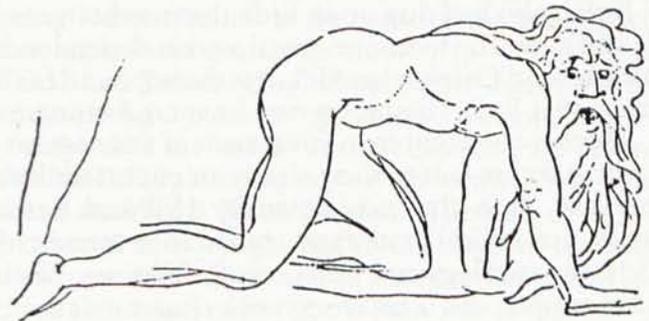
"Listen to the fool's reproach.'"

"Fuck you." (165)

In a world where women are frails and skirts, nobody's likely to get away with calling them daughters of Albion. The opposition is kept from being quite absolute by the double capability of photography for documentation and art, which allows it, and Jane, to occupy some middle ground of art-in-life. Nonetheless, the P.I., Palladino, who has no truck with fancypants art photogs but a real need for some real photography, turns out to be the only one with enough insight to see through the intellectual pretenses of Jane's Blake-nut boyfriend. I'll honor the conventions of mystery reviewing enough to keep quiet about the ending, but clearly the answer to Jane's problems must come from the pages of the hardboiled text. Sure enough, at a climactic feast in the comic tradition . . . presided over by Palladino's earthy wife Gina . . . with a mystery guest at the dinner table in the tradition of golden-age detection. . . .

Who might read *The Dick and Jane*? Some reviewers have said they found it engaging, and no serious historian of the wisecrack can afford to miss it. What modest strength *The Dick and Jane* can claim is in the playful rhythms and diction that give the heroine a certain winning charm. Even that pleasure subsides once you've adjusted to the idea of hardboiled yammer gushing out of the frail's softboiled gash. The satire on the Blakeans of Golgonooza, which would be pretty deadly for anyone coming in cold, may be readable for students of the uses

of Blake in modern culture. If they swear they won't blame me when they find out that *The Dick and Jane* has no puzzle, local color, violence, or titillation worth the name, I would recommend it to Blake scholars and mystery buffs looking for something to get them through a long layover in the People Express terminal at Newark, or through a summer vacation at a certain spiritual community in America's heartland. But no guarantees.



Michael Ferber. *The Social Vision of William Blake*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985. xvi + 254 pp. \$29.50.

Reviewed by Edward Larrissy

Jung's law of synchronicity would seem at first glance to have been startlingly confirmed by the appearance within the space of one year (1985) of three books which give importance to Blake's ideological position and its historical determinants. And all three agree about the crucial nature of Blake's radical Protestant inheritance. They are Terence Hoagwood's *Prophecy and the Philosophy of Mind*; my own *William Blake* in Terry Eagleton's Rereading Literature series; and the book under review. There are various precursors of this approach: A. L. Morton, David Erdman, E. P. Thompson, G. R. Sabri-Tabrizi, Morton Paley, David Punter. But none so far that fastens on the complexity of Blake's ideological position and its textual expressions in the thorough way that is now proposed (whatever the practice) especially in this book and my own.

It is interesting to record a modicum of agreement between Ferber and myself. On antinomianism, for instance. We agree that, although Blake is a complex amalgam, the antinomian strain is the dominant and organizing one, and that once this is understood one has found a vital key to Blake's use of other traditions. Ferber

gives Gerrard Winstanley as an example of the kind of seventeenth-century figure who can be seen as an ancestor of Blake. But in a book of this size it might have been well to quote more fully from other writers, say the Ranter Abiezer Coppe (who receives one mention) even at the risk of seeming to repeat material used by A. L. Morton. My own approach has been to grub around looking for evidence of a line of descent from the seventeenth-century radical Christians to the time of Blake. It is not especially easy to discover, but I was sorry to find that Ferber also had dug up so little that was both concrete and new. The footnotes reveal a great dependence on Morton and Christopher Hill. It is the hope and faith of many that E. P. Thompson may be more fortunate.

There is one point in his treatment of antinomianism where Ferber fails to show clearly an important link with Blake. It is the fact, noted by Hill and Keith Thomas, that radical Protestants tended to be interested in alchemy, astrology and other occult doctrines. Once one has grasped this it becomes much clearer that there is no need to choose between two Blakes, one radical, the other arcane: there is one tradition and one Blake. Ferber adduces the interesting case of John Everard, the Hermetist and translator of *The Divine Pymander of Hermes Trismegistus*. He was, as Ferber notes, "a radical Protestant troublemaker, frequently in jail for heresy . . . who preached to the lowest classes that God was immanent in man and nature" (p. 93). Ferber has a few vague words to say about this in his chapter on "Nature and the Female," but the whole phenomenon of Protestant occultism surely merited more extended discussion in his section on antinomianism.

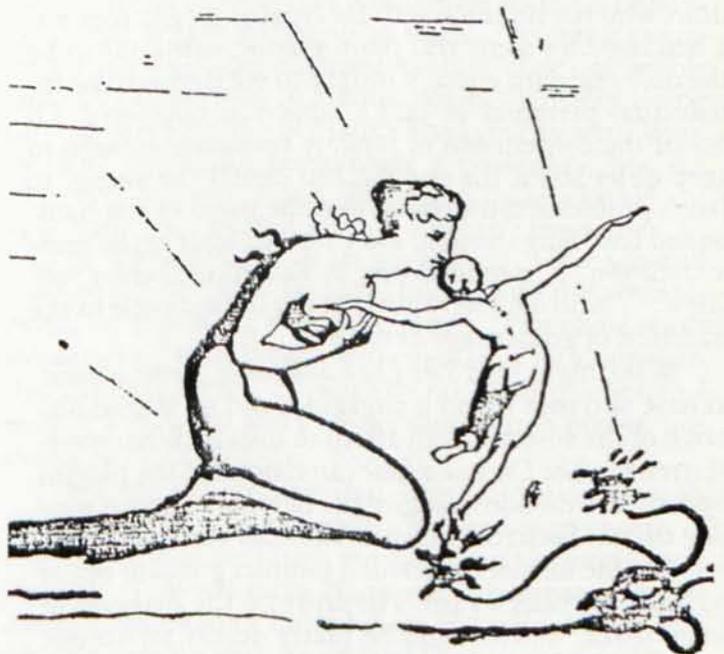
Seen in this perspective, the Behmenists look not so much like a Teutonic excrescence amid the radical Christians, rather a happy transplant into congenial soil. Ferber has some useful things to say about how the "backwardness" of Germany meant that the tradition of artisanal piety out of which Boehme came was still alive in the 1790s, so that Behmenism lived on quite strongly and was able to exert a significant influence on the German Romantics. Hence, perhaps, some of the similarities between them and Blake. I should add that Fuseli might have transmitted the revived excitement about Boehme; but as Ferber well says, Blake also belonged to a tradition of artisanal piety, one which in England had been undermined by rationalism and was now threatened by the Industrial Revolution (pp. 33-34).

Ferber and I also agree that Blake's "enthusiastic" inheritance makes his relationship with the mainstream tradition of Dissent—so influenced by Locke—a complex and ambivalent one. He is particularly good on the complexity, showing that both innatism and empiricism can point either way politically (p. 23). Ambivalence, however, is not Ferber's strong point, wherever he finds it; while I should have to confess that I perhaps use the

word too often. What is so interesting, though, is still the modicum of agreement. It seems that when one considers Blake's ideological position one is forced to consider the question of "the extent to which Blake became a prisoner of his own system or saw his way clear of it, and the contamination of his system by the one he was fighting" (p. 43). "Contamination" crops up again (pp. 100, 113), but is not given the full treatment it deserves, and deserves precisely in this context most of all. A less snooty attitude towards deconstruction (p. 100) might have helped. It might also have helped towards a fuller consideration of textual forms rather than a concentration on themes.

But this is an engaging, clear and very useful book. It is also a full one: the components of Blake's social vision are treated with the thoroughness they deserve. They are, nevertheless, treated somewhat episodically. A good example is to be found in the very useful chapter on "Blake's Ideology." Ferber is very firm in his introduction about the desirability of retaining a strict Marxist meaning for the word ideology: "Language may breed illusions, but it is better not to call these illusions ideological unless we find a different term for the particular illusions that arise from and ratify the unequal divisions of society" (p. 12). But in the chapter on Blake's ideology, central aspects (according to the strict definition) such as "Artisanal Dissent" are treated on all fours with what should surely be derivatives: "Closure," or even "Blake's Difficulty." As the book progresses it becomes even more sporadic in character.

Nevertheless, this book, by what it succeeds in doing, has filled a real gap. It will be indispensable. And how often can one say that?



Mark Bracher. *Being Form'd: Thinking Through Blake's "Milton."*

Barrytown, N.Y.: Station Hill Press, 1985.

xvi + 288 pp. hardcover \$22.50/paper \$9.95.

Reviewed by Brian Wilkie

Mark Bracher's *Being Form'd* is an intrepid book in some ways. To begin with, this reading of *Milton* fulfills a promise the author makes at the outset: that he will face up to the entire text of the poem (the pictures receive no attention), without finessing the difficult passages. He also focuses on what he considers the metaphysical dimension of the poem's meaning, as distinguished from the psychological dimension investigated by most interpreters, and this ontological approach denies him one escape-hatch familiar in Blake criticism: the relegation of the events to a merely mental landscape where, in effect, anything can be allowed to happen. In some important ways, then, this book takes Blake more literally than is usual. Bracher believes that when Milton goes to "eternal death" he dies in the ordinary sense of the word, and that this death means the loss of personal consciousness. (Bracher wobbles a little on this point, however; compare pp. 77, 81, 82-83.) We are also to understand that "finitude," death, and various kinds of suffering—including corporal suffering, though not all kinds of suffering based on cruelty and injustice—are part of the ineluctable structure of reality, a fact that Christianity, for example, obfuscates. In light of all this, Bracher attempts the formidable task of justifying Blake's revision of Milton's justifying of "God's" ways, most urgently Blake's claim that in some real sense Milton and humankind can attain infinitude of being.

Bracher's conception of Blake's solution to the last of these problems is that the cessation of existence does not involve the cessation of being. Rather than the maintenance or restoration of our conscious presence, infinity entails for Blake a "mediated presence." This means, for example, that every person (and every thing, even) has an absolutely unique identity, the "Satanic" being, in this context, the belief that individuals are interchangeable, mere borrowers of being from some ultimate source to whom they must, like customers of a bank, pay it back—God, for example. (This is what Bracher calls the "*quid pro quo*," or "feudalistic," metaphysics.) But this individual identity is not fulfilled in immediate presence but rather in "mediated presence" (the influence of Derrida's sense of "presence" is acknowledged but also, largely, disclaimed—p. xiv). Mediated pres-

ence involves interaction between unique identities, a process that does not diminish their being but enhances and expands it. Such unique individuals obviously include human beings, who in dying achieve fuller being through mediated, posthumous presence in other individuals with whom they, in various ways, interact—by being read, say, or revived in the mind.

In the course of making this argument, Bracher establishes a rather elaborate set of allegorical equations—Los, for example, being "entelechy" (*passim*), Ololon being "lamentation" in the sense of the dissatisfaction that makes one search for infinity (p. 7 and *passim*), Rahab and Tirzah being, respectively, "false fulfillment and superficial pleasure" (p. 101 and *passim*), and so on. (Except that the values in the equations are different, this kind of explanatory exposition seems to take us back to the world of S. Foster Damon.) The bulk of the book consists of a thorough, not to say dogged, tracking of these personifications, and of the aforementioned ideas, through exegesis of just about every line of *Milton*. After the first few chapters, there is not much more news to report.

What there is to report, however, is often arresting. The Satanic is generally deplored by Bracher, but several times he insists that the Satanic has its legitimate place in the scheme of things (e.g., pp. 22, 28-29, 38). We discover a Blake who not only opposed orthodox Christianity but also (p. 50) the New Testament (along with the Old, of course). We discover too a Blake who is strangely tolerant of, almost complacent about, suffering, largely because, if one takes the long view, everything is harmonious, or could be if human beings understood the interrelations of mediated presence or "preservation through supersession" (p. 127). The following makes me severely uncomfortable: "From another perspective, however, this violence and destructiveness of the process of actualization is seen to be pleasing and comforting. . . . By themselves these events are horrible, but in relation to each other they are seen to constitute a larger whole which is pleasant and reassuring" (pp. 140-41). This sounds Panglossian, and although Bracher recognizes Blake's exposition of the errors of natural religion in 40:9-13 (pp. 258-59), he can suggest a Blake who is pretty soft on it: "This view of destruction as the prerequisite for generation has affinities with the views of natural religion, and Blake employs images of Bacchic revelry and ceremony to evoke the connection and reveal the valid aspect of the Dionysian mysteries. . . ." (p. 159).

I am being a little unfair here; the passage just quoted refers to the wine-press scene that also figures in *The Four Zoas*, and admittedly this scene of gleeful violence is very hard to take, much less explain. Bracher could conceivably have made a good case here, as with the somewhat lesser heresies mentioned above, if he seemed to appreciate better the hardness of some of his

sayings, and particularly if he showed a greater awareness of the critical consensus about Blake and the context provided by Blake's other works. We would then know which of his points he intends as aggressive iconoclasm. But, except at the beginning and end of the book, Bracher has tunnel vision, providing few such glances outside *Milton*.

As might be expected, so close a reading of the poem as Bracher gives us yields some perceptive insights, on a number of particular matters: the various ways in which implicit meanings are introduced into the poem (p. 8), the Sons of Los (pp. 153-54), their creation of units of time (p. 171), and other passages too. As might also be expected in light of his general premises, some other readings are hard to swallow. Bracher himself seems to feel once or twice that he has painted himself into a corner, as when, after explaining that the Elect, Redeemed, and Reprobate classes apply to things as well as people, he admits the difficulty of imagining "the difference between . . . an Elect bar of iron and a Reprobate bar" (p. 147). Still, there is Blake's text to account for somehow: "in every Nation & every Family the Three Classes are born / And in every Species of Earth, Metal, Tree, Fish, Bird & Beast" (25:40-41). (Bracher does better with oak trees.)

There we have the dilemma; if we must believe the text, and if we also want to consider Blake's landscape and characters as more than an exposition of faculty-psychology, what do we make of such passages, or the one about the wine-press? To humanize the question further, how are people to regard the experience of having lost someone to death while feeling a strong sense that, somehow, their existence is real and enduring—which, as Bracher points out (p. 5), is how Blake thought about his brother? Bracher's attempt to read *Milton* ontologically is not, for this reviewer, the answer, but there is a need for books that, like his, nag us about the questions.

The writing is serviceable, sometimes quite good, but at times cumbersome in vocabulary ("absolutization," "substitutability," "immediatizing"—pp. 99, 102, 103), and very repetitious; characters seem to be glossed just about every time they appear, a stylistic fault perhaps necessarily entailed by Bracher's method. There is a good deal of wobbling in this book: "although such sacrifice is evil, it also seems to be redemptive at times" (p. 28); "desires can now be seen as inadequate and perverted but nonetheless valid attempts to overthrow and transcend the merely immediate, actual state of identity" (p. 212).

I also make a point in book reviews of evaluating the index: this book has none.

Sven Bruntjen. *John Boydell, A Study of Art Patronage and Printselling in Georgian London*. New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1985. 302 pp. \$50.

Reviewed by Louise Lippincott

The patronage of art in Georgian England has been controversial ever since Hogarth and Jean Rouquet lamented its absence in the middle of the eighteenth century. The role of printselling in the development of taste and the distribution of patronage in the same period is a relatively new topic which has received intense scrutiny only in the last ten years. Both issues are central to the life and career of John Boydell, the printseller who dominated the English and continental markets in the second half of the century.

Boydell was the subject of two doctoral dissertations completed in 1974 and both have now been published by Garland. Winifred Friedman's *Boydell's Shakespeare Gallery* was issued in 1976; Bruntjen's biography, the subject of this review, has just appeared with the promise that it complements the earlier book. Each expands and develops material briefly summarized by the other, and Friedman acknowledges Bruntjen in her introduction. Moreover, both concentrate on the second half of the alderman's career in the print trade, reflecting the biases inherent in the Boydell legend. The legend is well known: Boydell's beginning as an apprentice under W.H. Toms, his early career as a mediocre landscape engraver vending his prints in toyshop windows, his rise to wealth and fame with the publication of Woollett's *Niobe* after Wilson and his *Death of Wolfe* after West, the launch of the Shakespeare Gallery in 1787 and other ambitious publications in the 1790s. His greatest achievement was the reversal of the balance of trade in reproductive prints to favor England over France; it was matched by his political career which culminated in his election as Lord Mayor of London in 1791. By then Boydell was a famous figure in London, visited by foreign tourists, satirized in prints, and eulogized in the press. Hogarth's Industrious Apprentice incarnate, he promoted his own reputation with prints of his portrait, the gift of his *Bridge Book* to the British Museum ("The only book that ever made a Lord Mayor"), the gift of paintings to the Corporation of London, and authorship of an autobiography, never completed. When bad management, war and revolution on the continent

forced the lottery of the Shakespeare Gallery in 1803, Boydell already had made his name as one of the foremost patrons of history painting of his generation. Did he deserve it?

Bruntjen argues that he did. He documents Boydell's thirty year climb up the ladder of the print trade, then focuses on his last twenty years of activity, the era of the Shakespeare Gallery, the *British Rivers*, and the Guildhall paintings. These were years of heavy investment in the output of contemporary artists and engravers and of Boydell's heyday as a patron of the arts. Bruntjen states that Boydell's desire to promote the growth of a national school of history and landscape painting motivated his publication of these elaborate money losers. As a result, British artists freed themselves from the restrictions of aristocratic patronage and reached a sympathetic audience of eager consumers.

That a modern scholar could come to such a conclusion is a tribute to Boydell's salesmanship. As Bruntjen's own documentation shows, Boydell acted primarily in his own interests well into the 1780s and probably throughout his career. The substantial and often fascinating footnotes as well as miscellaneous facts in the text reveal that Boydell specialized in imported prints in the 1750s and 1760s, that he also sold imported French paper to other engravers and publishers, and that his own publications were usually based on drawings (20,000 guineas worth in 1786, presumably many by old masters or Boydell himself) not paintings. In 1787, he invited J.L. David to England. These are not the activities of a devotee of British arts exclusively concerned with reproductive prints, as Boydell and Bruntjen would lead us to believe. Even the later projects put commerce equal to if not above the public interest. Winifred Friedman's article "Some Commercial Aspects of the Boydell Shakespeare Gallery" which appeared in the *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 36 (1973) possibly too late to be cited by Bruntjen, makes this clear. Boydell's gift of paintings to the Corporation of London also merits skeptical examination; most were old pictures from stock, and one wonders if Boydell reissued the prints after the paintings went up on display. To treat the gift as an enlightened and influential act of patronage seems to be stretching the point.

The more we know about the eighteenth-century business of book and printselling—and much has been learned since 1974—the less credibility Boydell's claims to disinterestedness seem to deserve. Of particular importance in the recent literature are Richard Godfrey's *Printmaking in Britain* (1978) and the exhibition of reproductive prints at the Yale British Art Center in 1980 organized by David Alexander and Richard Godfrey.

Godfrey shows that Boydell's landmark decision to publish the print after Wilson's *Niobe* was influenced by the royal ownership of the painting (always a selling point with the general public) and the critical excitement it caused at the time of its exhibition. Rather than dreaming of a native school of landscapists (except perhaps as it might enhance his repertory of artists), Boydell was sharply appraising the commercial potential of the year's most successful picture. Moreover, he did not take the full risk of the project in spite of his £125 investment, for Woollett and Ryland retained two shares between them. Boydell did not gain control of the plate until 1785 when he bought one of the outstanding shares. On the Shakespeare Gallery, Alexander and Godfrey note the mediocrity of many of the commissioned paintings and the low quality of the prints after them. Their failure to satisfy the English public, patriotic but not blindly so, matched the collapse of the continental market as a major cause of the scheme's failure. The depressing response to the prints did nothing to promote Shakespearean history painting in England and may even have discouraged it. Alexander and Godfrey conclude that Benjamin West's collaborations with engravers were ultimately more important in the development of the market for prints after history paintings and the spread of the taste for history painting itself.

Patronage studies also provide a new perspective on the alderman's activities and motives. The role of aristocratic patronage and middle class consumers in the formation of taste has been a central issue in the history of British art, and if little has been resolved, the complexities of the problem are more familiar. Bruntjen addresses only one aspect of a complicated situation when he describes the liberating effects of Boydell's patronage of painters, presumably freed from the vagaries of aristocrats. Alas, he ignores the fact that from most Georgian artists' point of view, this was falling out of the frying pan and landing in the fire. Throughout the century, painters found working for aristocrats infinitely preferable to working for the book- and printsellers, and it is significant that Boydell had difficulty patronizing those artists with secure upper-class clienteles. Most of these painters—Reynolds, Gainsborough, Stubbs, West, and Wright—sold their paintings for more than Boydell was willing to pay. The truly "liberated" artist (forgive the term) exhibited his paintings at the Royal Academy or one of the exhibition societies, sold them to the gentry and wealthy tradesmen, and published the prints after them himself.

As a patron and connoisseur of contemporary British painting, Boydell can usefully be compared to Richard Payne Knight and Samuel Whitbread, both subjects

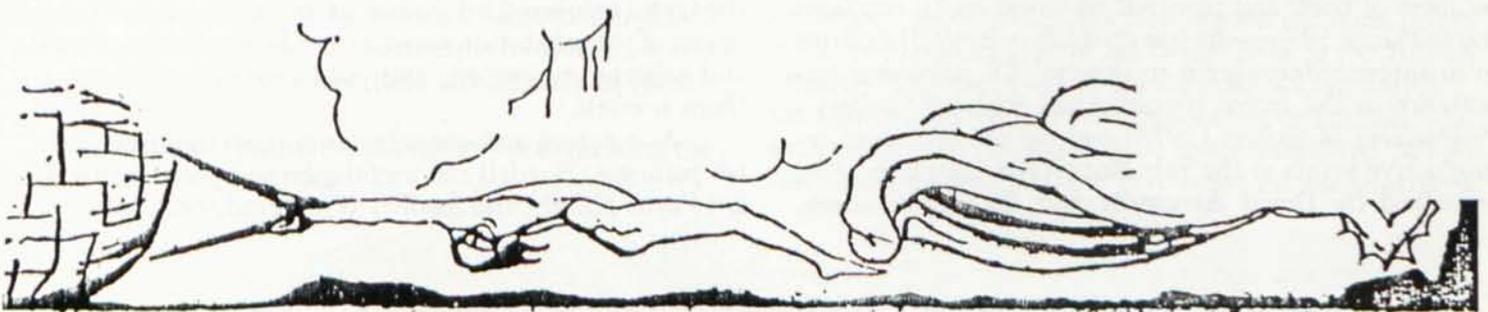
of recent exhibitions ("The Arrogant Connoisseur: Richard Payne Knight 1751-1824," Manchester, Whitworth Art Gallery, 1982; "Paintings Politics & Porter, Samuel Whitbread II and British Art," Museum of London, 1984). Whitbread's decision to collect contemporary art owed much to his political convictions and his desire to establish a public reputation for morality, patriotism, and social responsibility. Richard Payne Knight sought works which recreated ancient styles and compositions. All three dictated subjects to their painters, demanded high moral content in the treatment of these subjects, and preferred Westall and Smirke as the vehicles for their projects. Not only did all three behave like the paternalistic, dictatorial aristocrats of tradition, but they also sponsored dispiriting numbers of tedious mediocrities. They patronized history painting in its lowest, most trivial form.

One cannot fault Bruntjen for failing to consider literature which had not appeared at the time he was writing, although Garland's decision to publish his biography without additions or revisions might be questioned. It appears to this reviewer that in light of the recent developments in the history of British art a definitive biography of the man is still to be attempted. The Boydell legend constructed around the ambitious Shakespeare Gallery and its failure has received more than enough attention, while important questions remain to be answered.

One would like to know more about Boydell's beginnings in the print trade. The source of his fame and fortune was the *Bridge Book* and like publications. What did they look like, how were they sold, who else was involved in their production? Surely these humble images provide the key to understanding Boydell's role in the art market, as mirror and maker of public taste. The prints themselves, Boydell's catalogues, and his newspaper advertisements, ideal sources for this kind of study, have not yet been systematically tracked down or analyzed. Secondly, Boydell's inventory and methods require close comparison with those of his predecessors and contemporaries, not only printsellers but also painters and especially booksellers. He did not operate in a vacuum; his choice of projects, his rhetoric, and his working methods had numerous parallels and prece-

dents. Yet for some reason or combination of reasons he was astoundingly successful, and these might be divined through comparison with others. If he was a commercial genius with a talent for art, he might also be considered with Josiah Wedgwood and other entrepreneurs who made fortunes in manufactures and commerce for the growing ranks of British domestic consumers.

Boydell the capitalist or Boydell the patron? This is not simply a matter of definition, but of motivation. Judging from the epithet "Commercial Maecenas" so often applied to him, not even his contemporaries knew for sure where Boydell's commercial interests ended and his public benefactions began. Quite possibly the man did not know himself. Early in his career it seems clear that commerce dominated and the benefits obtained by others were incidental. Artists and engravers profited from his example or the "trickle down" of his profits. Later, as Boydell's ambitions broadened to include politics and public life, he withdrew from the daily management of his business and on occasion pursued projects ostensibly inimical to the firm's—the gift of paintings to the Corporation, for example. But, to what extent did this new position evolve in response to that of the Royal Academy, equally ambitious and even more vocal on the subject of British art, patriotism, patronage, and prints? By excluding engravers from its membership, the academy consigned them to subordinate status if it did not exile them to the outer realms of trade and commerce. Boydell used his fortune, his business, and his political position to mobilize the City, creating (or hoping to create) a public forum for presentation of an alternative position, where the relation between artist and market were mediated by the entrepreneur rather than an institution. Unable to marshal London's leading artists, all academicians, into his projects, was he challenging their positions as tastemakers and centers of influence, just as they threatened his control of the trade in reproductive prints? The legend of John Boydell, the heroic, public spirited printseller, grew out of this complicated and murky situation. Created to meet the needs of a specific moment, it no longer does justice to the man's very real and important achievements. What they were remains to be understood and appreciated.



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