



INFORMATION

Blake

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Cover photo: "Oh! Flames of Furious Desires," Plate 3 of *Urizen*, c. 1796. Private collection, Great Britain.

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MINUTE PARTICULARS

Another Rediscovered Small Color Print by William Blake

by Martin Butlin

A small color-printed version of the design at the head of *Urizen* plate 3—usually known as “Oh! Flames of Furious Desires” on the basis of an inscription, not by Blake himself, on the back of the version from the collection of Sir Geoffrey Keynes now in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge (B 261 4)¹—has reappeared in a private collection. This print was acquired at Sotheby's on 17 December 1970, lot 14, when it was catalogued as being merely by “Blake,” at that time a polite way of saying that the work was not thought to be by the artist indicated. However, a recent direct comparison between this work and the version from the first copy of the *Small Book of Designs* in the British Museum (B 260 9) suggests that it is a genuine second pull, similar in the color printing and largely following the British Museum print in the subsequent application of water color and ink, probably from the point of a fine brush, to define the outlines. This would relegate the version in the

Fitzwilliam Museum, which I previously suggested² was a second pull from the original coloring, to third position in the sequence of pulls; the coloring is thinner and the outlining in ink is more extensive, extending to the modeling of the back and limbs, while the hair, unlike the dense, dark hair of the British Museum and newly discovered versions, is looser and fairer.

Unfortunately both the new version and the Fitzwilliam Museum version have been trimmed to the border of the design so that there is no possibility of seeing whether the distinctive framing lines and page numbers found in the second copy of the *Small Book of Designs* can identify whether either of these two designs belonged to that copy. I had presumed that the Fitzwilliam Museum version came from the second copy of the book but the closeness of the new version to that in the first copy in the British Museum suggests that it may have been not only the second to be executed but also the print incorporated in the second book.

One puzzle remains. The figure in the new version is distinguished by a small but quite distinct female breast. No such feature appears in the Fitzwilliam Museum version although close inspection reveals that there is a putative breast in the British Museum version. The possibility that the figure is female can also be read into at least some of the copies of the original book of *Urizen* as well. Up to now the figure has always been identified as a youth, for instance in the detailed analysis by David Erdman,³ but the rediscovered

design introduces a new element of ambiguity.

Suspicious that the new print might be a copy, like that in the Tate Gallery which is a direct copy of the version in the Fitzwilliam Museum,⁴ are dispelled by the presence of a typically undefined pencil sketch on the back of the paper, which is itself discolored, apparently from having been mounted on a wood-based card or board for a considerable period. In style and apparent purpose the drawing is particularly close to that for the title page of *The Song of Los* (B 232 verso) though it is difficult to identify it with any more finished composition. It does, however, bear some resemblance to the skeletal form on plate 8 of *Urizen*.

¹ All references in this form are to Martin Butlin, *The Paintings and Drawings of William Blake*, 1981, where the works are illustrated in the second volume.

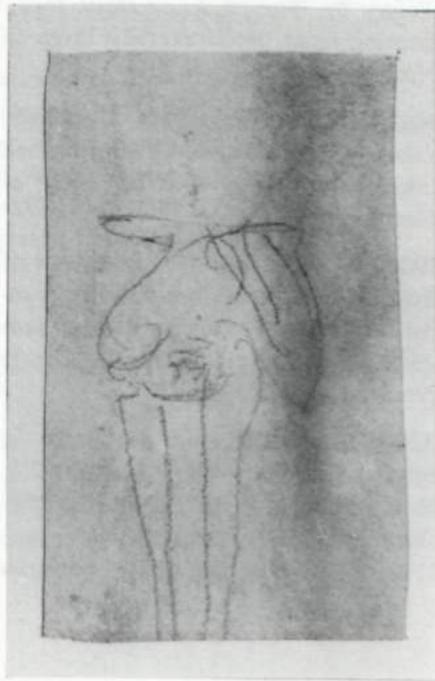
² See Martin Butlin, “A New Color Print from the *Small Book of Designs*,” *Blake* 26 (1992): 19.

³ David V. Erdman, *The Illuminated Blake* (London: Oxford UP, 1975) 185.

⁴ See Martin Butlin, *William Blake 1757-1827* (Tate Gallery Collections: Volume 5, London, 1990) 80-81, no. 24.



1. “Oh! Flames of Furious Desires,” Plate 3 of *Urizen*,” c. 1796. Color-printed relief etching finished in ink and water color, 6.1 x 9.9 cm. Private collection, Great Britain.



2. Reverse of “Oh! Flames of Furious Desires,” pencil on paper, 9.9 x 6.1 cm. Private collection, Great Britain.

Felicia Hemans and the Mythologizing of Blake's Death

Paula R. Feldman

In February 1832, Felicia Hemans, at that time Britain's most popular and widely read poet, published in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* a short poetic drama entitled "The Painter's Last Work.—A Scene," confiding in a conspicuous footnote that the piece was "suggested by the closing scene in the life of the painter Blake; as beautifully related by Allan Cunningham." Though Cunningham's early sketch of Blake in *The Lives of the Most Eminent British Painters, Sculptors and Architects*¹ has received attention from almost all of Blake's biographers, Hemans's poem has been entirely overlooked; though it was frequently reprinted throughout the nineteenth century in dozens of British and American editions of Hemans's *Poetical Works* and was, therefore, a far more widely disseminated account of Blake's death than Cunningham's, modern scholars have been unaware of it, in part because Hemans's complete *Works* have not been reprinted since they last appeared in an Oxford University Press edition in 1914.

Hemans spent most of her life in Wales and is unlikely ever to have met Blake. She visited London only briefly as a child (in the winters of 1804 and 1805), never to return. What she knew of Blake before reading Cunningham is unclear; but her friend William Wordsworth might have mentioned Blake to her on one of their walks together in the Lake District where she vacationed during the summer of 1830, shortly before drafting her poem.² Still, she was probably unaware of the errors, embellishments, and outright fabrications in Cunningham's account.³ Cunningham had written of Blake:



1. Felicia Hemans (1828). Engraved by Edward Scriven after a portrait by William E. West. Harriet Hughes, the poet's sister, used this engraving for the frontispiece to her 7-volume, 1839 edition of Hemans's *Works*.

He had now reached his seventy-first year, and the strength of nature was fast yielding. Yet he was to the last cheerful and contented. "I glory," he said, "in dying, and have no grief but in leaving you, Katharine; we have lived happy, and we have lived long; we have been ever together, but we shall be divided soon. Why should I fear death? Nor do I fear it. I have endeavoured to live as Christ commands, and have sought to worship God truly—in my own house, when I was not seen of men." He grew weaker and weaker—he could no longer sit upright; and was laid in his bed, with no one to watch over him, save his wife, who, feeble and old herself, required help in such a touching duty.

The Ancient of Days was such a favourite with Blake, that three days before his death, he sat bolstered up in bed, and tinted it with his choicest colours and in his happiest style. He touched and retouched it—held it at arm's length, and then threw it from him, exclaiming, "There! that will do! I cannot mend it." He saw his wife in tears—she felt this was to be the last of his works—"Stay, Kate! (cried Blake) keep just as you are—I will draw your portrait—for you have ever been an angel to me"—she obeyed, and the dying artist made a fine likeness.

The very joyfulness with which this singular man welcomed the coming of death, made his dying moments intensely mournful. He lay chanting songs, and the verses and the music were both the offspring of the moment. He lamented that he could no longer commit those inspirations, as he called them, to paper[.] "Kate," he said, "I am a changing man—I always rose and wrote down my thoughts, whether it rained, snowed, or shone, and you arose too and sat beside me—this can be no longer." He died on the 12th of August, 1828,⁴ without any visible pain—his wife, who sat watching him, did not perceive when he ceased breathing.

While Cunningham emphasizes Blake's cheerfulness in approaching death and the technical achievement of his last drawing ("a fine likeness"), Hemans responded to another aspect of this account, one to which she was particularly attuned. Famous for celebrating the "domestic affections," Hemans had only recently published *Records of Woman* (1828), highlighting the nobility and courage of heroines in various difficult and often melancholy circumstances; she was herself still emotionally devastated from having nursed her mother in her last illness. So her attention was drawn to the suggestions in Cunningham's account of Catherine Blake's extraordinary character and the painfulness of her situation; in Hemans's retelling, the focus shifts from the painter and his remarkable skills even at "death's door" to a valorization of his artistic subject—the woman he loves and admires. William's declaration to Catherine in Cunningham's account, "you have ever been an angel to me," forms the subtext to Hemans's retelling.⁵ To foreground this aspect of the drama, she takes her epigraph from Thomas Campbell's "Gertude of Wyoming:"

Clasp me a little longer on the brink
Of life, while I can feel thy dear caress;
And when this heart hath ceased to beat,
oh! think,
And let it mitigate thy woe's excess,
That thou hast been to me all tenderness,
And friend to more than human
friendship just.

Proficient in Italian, Hemans probably set her poetic drama in Italy because of her great admiration for Italian art and literature.⁶ It seems likely that she gives the Italian name "Francesco" to the William Blake character to underline his frankness, sincerity, and openness ("franchezza"), to suggest the spiritual freedom he embodies, and perhaps to point towards the reassurance he gives his wife ("francheggiare"). Similarly, it appears she names the Catherine Blake character "Teresa" to suggest at one and the same time the earthly region ("terra") she must continue to inhabit and her fear ("terrore") of approaching widowhood. Following is the text of Hemans's dramatization of the death of Blake as it was first published in 1832. It is worth quoting in its entirety because all subsequent appearances reprint a substantially revised, inferior text.

Scene—A Room in an Italian Cottage. The Lattice opening upon a Landscape at sunset.

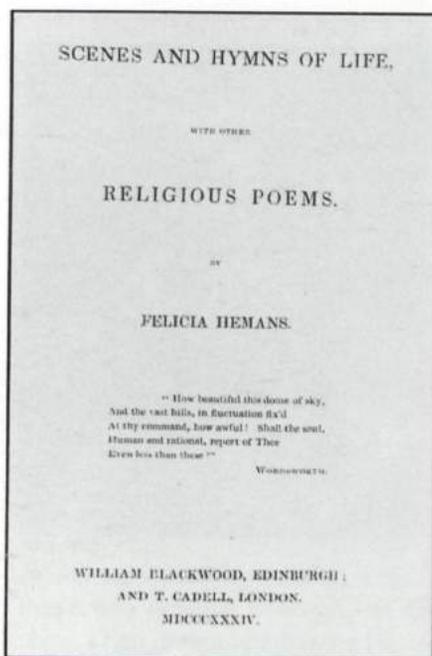
Francesco—Teresa.

Teresa.

The fever's hue hath left thy cheek,
beloved!
Thine eyes, that make the day-spring in
my heart,
Are clear and still once more. Wilt thou
look forth?
Now, while the sunset with
low-streaming light—
The light thou lov'st—hath made the
chestnut-stems
All burning bronze, the lake one sea of
gold!
Wilt thou be raised upon thy couch, to
meet
The rich air fill'd with wandering scents
and sounds?
Or shall I lay thy dear, dear head once
more
On this true bosom, lulling thee to rest
With vesper hymns?

Francesco.

No, gentlest love! not now:
My soul is wakeful—lingering to look
forth,
Not on the sun, but thee! Doth the light
sleep
So gently on the lake? and are the stems
Of our own chestnuts by that alchemy
So richly changed?—and is the
orange-scent
Floating around?—But I have said
farewell,



2. Title page to the first of Hemans's books to include "The Painter's Last Work," a poem about the death of Blake. This 1834 version differed significantly from the text that appeared two years earlier in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*.

Farewell to earth, Teresa! not to thee,
Nor yet to our deep love, nor yet awhile
Unto the spirit of mine art, which flows
Back on my soul in mastery!—one last
work!
And I will shrine my wealth of glowing
thoughts,
Clinging affection and undying hope,
All that is in me for eternity,
All, all, in that memorial.

Teresa.

Oh! what dream
Is this, mine own Francesco? Waste thou
not
Thy scarce-returning strength; keep thy
rich thoughts
For happier days! they will not melt away
Like passing music from the lute;—dear
friend!
Dearest of friends! thou canst win back
at will
The glorious visions.

Francesco.

Yes! the unseen land
Of glorious visions hath sent forth a voice
To call me hence. Oh! be thou not
deceived!
Bind to thy heart no *earthly* hope, Teresa!
I must, *must* leave thee! Yet be strong,
my love,
As thou hast still been gentle!

Teresa.

Oh, Francesco!
What will this dim world be to me,
Francesco,
When wanting thy bright soul, the life of
all—
My only sunshine!—How can I bear on?
How can we part? We that have loved so
well,
With clasping spirits link'd so long by
grief—
By tears—by prayer?

Francesco.

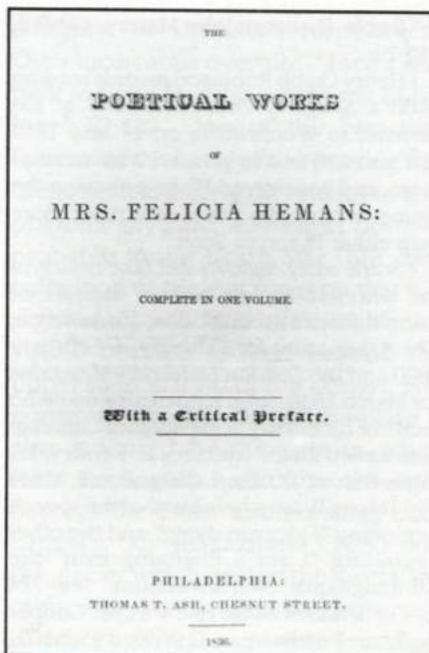
Ev'n *therefore* we can part,
With an immortal trust, that such high
love
Is not of things to perish.

Let me leave

One record still, to prove it strong as
death,
Ev'n in Death's hour of triumph. Once
again,
Stand with thy meek hands folded on thy
breast,
And eyes half veil'd, in thine own soul
absorb'd,
As in thy watchings, ere I sink to sleep;
And I will give the bending flower-like
grace
Of that soft form, and the still sweetness
throned
On that pale brow, and in that quivering
smile
Of voiceless love, a life that shall outlast
Their delicate earthly being. There—thy
head
Bow'd down with beauty, and with
tenderness,
And lowly thought—even thus—my
own Teresa!
Oh! the quick glancing radiance, and
bright bloom
That once around thee hung, have
melted now
Into more solemn light—but holier far,
And dearer, and yet lovelier in mine eyes,
Than all that summer flush! For by my
couch,
In patient and serene devotedness,
Thou hast made those rich hues and
sunny smiles,
Thine offering unto me. Oh! I may give
Those pensive lips, that clear Madonna
brow,
And the sweet earnestness of that dark
eye,
Unto the canvass—I may catch the flow
Of all those drooping locks, and glorify
With a soft halo what is imaged thus—
But how much rests unbreathed! My
faithful one!
What thou hast been to me! This bitter
world,
This cold unanswering world, that hath
no voice

To greet the heavenly spirit—that drives
back
All Birds of Eden, which would sojourn
here
A little while—how have I turn'd away
From its keen soulless air, and in *thy*
heart,
Found ever the sweet fountain of
response,
To quench my thirst for home!
The dear work grows
Beneath my hand—the last! Each faintest
line
With treasured memories fraught. Oh!
weep thou not
Too long, too bitterly, when I depart!
Surely a bright home waits us both—for
I,
In all my dreams, have turn'd me not
from God;
And Thou—oh! best and purest! stand
thou there—
There, in thy hallow'd beauty,
shadowing forth
The loveliness of love!

Francesco's answer to Teresa's fear of impending loss, her apprehension of life's painful mutability, is to create, as his last tangible gift, a portrait of her own face. He offers this declaration of his love and this testament of his admiration and gratitude as a consolation, an immortal remnant of their mutual, enduring love. Hemans's work ends, not like Cunningham's with the focus firmly on William Blake, but instead in a celebration of Catherine Blake, her virtue, strength, and beauty. Transformed into an icon of "the loveliness of love," Teresa/Catherine is deified as the Madonna of the home, halo and all, the sunny solace of Francesco/William in a "cold unanswering world." Together husband and wife become a single emblem of love's perfection and of its eternal character. But the iconography is every bit as much verbal as visual; as Francesco draws, he eloquently describes the qualities he sees in Teresa's face. The poem itself becomes a verbal painting, as Hemans, like Francesco, describes the process of artistic creation in the very act of creating. Though Cunningham tends to dismiss much of Blake's poetry as "utterly wild" and emphasizes Blake's achievement as a visual artist, Hemans clearly reached a different conclusion after reading the poems he quotes; her



3. "The Painter's Last Work" appeared in this 1836 American edition of Hemans's *Poetical Works* and in dozens of other collections published throughout the nineteenth century on both sides of the Atlantic.

Blake character, with his verbal tribute to Teresa, is as much poet as painter. It is hard to escape the implicit parallel between the portrait drawn by the dying Blake and Hemans's own creative act, here and elsewhere, of foregrounding and celebrating the quiet dignity and heroism of women. In fact, Francesco's chief virtue would seem to be his capacity for appreciating Teresa's enormous worth and his skill in immortalizing her in art, even on his deathbed.⁷

Two years after its first publication, Hemans included "The Painter's Last Work," substantially revised, in *Scenes and Hymns of Life, with Other Religious Poems*.⁸ Her own health was by this time seriously deteriorating, and the nature of her poetry was becoming increasingly devotional. Her shifting poetic focus leads her to include three more lines from Campbell in the epigraph:

Oh! by that retrospect of happiness,
And by the hope of an immortal trust,
God shall assuage thy pangs when I am
laid in dust!

Retaining the name "Teresa" for the Catherine Blake character, she alters the name of the William Blake character to "Eugene," an even more forceful statement about his value, for it recalls the Greek terms for "generous" or "noble" (literally "well-born"). While twentieth-century critics have found fault with Blake's view of women, it is worth noting that his contemporary, a poet who championed the female perspective, often in subtly subversive ways, drew an unqualified positive portrayal of him, much more approving in many respects than Cunningham's. Though there are minor revisions throughout this second version, the major alteration is to the conclusion. Hemans deletes the last stanza—the final nine lines of her earlier version—and adds the following:

Teresa.
(falling on his neck in tears.)
Eugene, Eugene!
Break not my heart with thine excess of
love!—
Oh! must I lose thee—thou that hast
been still
The tenderest—best—

Eugene.
Weep, weep not thus, belov'd!
Let my true heart o'er thine retain its
power
Of soothing to the last!—Mine own
Teresa!
Take strength from strong affection!—Let
our souls,
Ere this brief parting, mingle in one strain
Of deep, full thanksgiving, for God's rich
boon—
Our perfect love!—Oh! blessed have we
been
In that high gift! Thousands o'er earth
may pass
With hearts unfreshen'd by the heavenly
dew,
Which hath kept *ours* from
withering.—Kneel, true wife!
And lay thy hands in mine.—
[She kneels beside the couch; he prays.]
O, thus receive
Thy children's thanks, Creator! for the
love
Which thou hast granted, through all
earthly woes,
To spread heaven's peace around them;
which hath bound
Their spirits to each other and to thee,
With links whereon unkindness ne'er
hath breathed,

Nor wandering thought. We thank thee,
 gracious God!
 For all its treasured memories! tender
 cares,
 Fond words, bright, bright sustaining
 looks unchanged
 Through tears and joy. O Father! most of
 all
 We thank, we bless Thee, for the
 priceless trust,
 Through Thy redeeming Son
 vouchsafed, to those
 That love in Thee, of union, in Thy sight,
 And in Thy heavens, immortal!—Hear
 our prayer!
 Take home our fond affections, purified
 To spirit-radiance from all earthly stain;
 Exalted, solemnized, made fit to dwell,
 Father! where all things that are lovely
 meet,
 And all things that are pure—for
 evermore,
 With Thee and Thine!

This melodramatic prayer of thanksgiving changes the final emphasis of the poem from a celebration of Catherine/Teresa to a more conventional celebration of God the Father—from a matriarchal to a patriarchal vision, from the human to the divine. The painter/poet now becomes priest as well. Hemans revises Cunningham's construct this second time to reflect the way in which her own agenda and notion of her poetic role had changed toward the end of her life. But in both of her retellings, Blake is neither the wild eccentric nor the mad painter, but a sensitive, generous, and talented artist/poet with a nobility of spirit and an enormous capacity for love. That Felicia Hemans, a poet who probably sold more books than Byron, identified with Blake and mythologized his death in such a positive way to a large general reading public only four and a half years after the event, suggests that the story of Blake's early posthumous reputation may be far more complex and interesting than biographers have so far acknowledged.

¹ 6 vols. (London: John Murray, 1830) 2: 140-79.

² Henry Crabb Robinson records reading Blake's *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* to Wordsworth on 24 May 1812 and notes, "He was pleased with some of them, and considered Blake as having the elements of poetry a thousand times more than either Byron or Scott."

³ Some early reviews did take notice of the unreliability of certain aspects of Cunningham's account. See, for instance, *The Athenaeum* for Saturday, 6 February 1830 and the *London University Magazine* for March 1830. John Linnell also made no secret of his dismay at the liberties Cunningham took with the truth. [G. E. Bentley, Jr., *Blake Records* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1969) 395.] Mona Wilson believes that the speech beginning "I glory in dying" and the other beginning "I am a changing man" are Cunningham's own inventions. See *The Life of William Blake* (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1969) 191, 301, 370n372.

⁴ Blake died in 1827, and was 69, not 71.

⁵ She also draws on Cunningham's later observation: "The affection and fortitude of this woman [Catherine Blake] entitle her to much respect. She shared her husband's lot without a murmur, set her heart solely upon his fame, and soothed him in those hours of misgiving and despondency which are not unknown to the strongest intellects."

⁶ One of her earliest books was *The Restoration of the Works of Art to Italy: a Poem*, 1816.

⁷ Disconcertingly, life has a way of imitating art. Only three years after the first publication of "The Painter's Last Work," Hemans was herself dying, writing until nearly the end. Biographers and contemporary readers would make much of her last poem, "Sabbath Sonnet," dictated from her deathbed, amid fever and delirium.

⁸ Published in 1834, in Edinburgh, by William Blackwood and in London by T. Cadell.

The Image of Canada in Blake's *America a Prophecy*

Warren Stevenson

The theme of *America a Prophecy*¹ is less the emergence of a new nation—about whose post-revolutionary course, involving as it did the persistence of slavery, Blake had major reservations—than the downfall of tyranny as a prelude to the millennium. More than any of the other English romantics, with the possible exception of Shelley, Blake had a global perspective, reflected in his frequent use of the term "America" and its cognates with reference to a hemisphere comprising two continents. Blake's earliest such reference is the one in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (pl. 13) to the "North American tribes"; in *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* (1:20) Bromion, epitome of British imperialism, exclaims to Oothoon, "Thy soft American plains are mine, and mine thy north & south"; and in *Milton* (35:17) the similar phrase "America north & south" occurs, continuing the continental emphasis. Compare *Jerusalem* (58:43): "Britain is Los' Forge; / America North & South are his baths of living waters."²

In *America a Prophecy*, notwithstanding the poem's revolutionary bias, one notes the continental drift of such lines as, "Then had America been lost, o'erwhelm'd by the Atlantic" (14:17). And in the text of the Preludium, in which the "shadowy daughter of Urthona" confronts Orc, her sibling ravisher, in addition to the former's curious use of the Bromionesque phrase "my American plains" (2:10), there is reference to Canada (twice), Mexico, Peru, and Africa.

The atypical doubling of the Canadian reference is particularly intriguing. In his most pointed overture during the aforementioned verbal exchange, Orc tells the unnamed "Dark virgin," his sister-love, "anon a serpent

folding / Around the pillars of Urthona,
and round thy dark limbs, / On the
Canadian wilds I fold. . ." (1:15-17).
She is not slow to respond: "I see a
serpent in Canada, who courts me to
his love" (2: 12). It will be the conten-
tion of this article that these hints as to
the poem's overall meaning are
developed in the pictorial symbolism
of the final Plate.

II

David V. Erdman, in an influential
article entitled "America: New
Expanses" and in *The Illuminated
Blake*, astutely observes that the hair
of the mysterious bowed, praying fig-
ure on the last Plate (16) of *America a
Prophecy* creates a "Niagara Falls" ef-
fect, which "can be seen as a confla-
tion of the worshipful male of 14 and
the bowed female of 15 (compare the
conflation of persons toward the end
of *Jerusalem*) . . ." ³ That is tantamount
to saying that the bowed figure is
meant to be androgynous, a sugges-
tion with which I find myself in happy
accord. Further, the Niagara Falls ef-
fect to which Erdman refers is created
not only by the bowed figure's hair,
but also by his/her tears. Compare
Urizen's tears as described on the same
Plate: ". . . his tears in deluge piteous /
Falling into the deep sublime!" (16:
4-5). In addition to epitomizing the
androgynous sublime, the bowed fig-
ure may be seen as a conflation of the
"shadowy daughter of Urthona"
referred to in the poem's opening line,
Urizen,⁴ Los-Urthona, and (by prolep-
sis) his emanation Enitharmon as an
aspect of Jerusalem.

Erdman's perception of Blake's
Niagara Falls allusion seems worth ex-
ploring. The bowed figure is pointing
both upward and north, in the direc-
tion of Canada, which as we have seen
is significantly mentioned twice in the
Preludium. Pointing in the same direc-
tion—upward and to the right of the
Falls (which flow north)—is the head-
less, forked tree curving over the back
of the bowed figure, and the serpent
with its flicking tongue at the bottom
of the plate. Compare the shadowy

daughter of Urthona's response to
Orc's incestuous overture: "I see a ser-
pent in Canada, who courts me to his
love" (2:12). One of the two tiny
figures on the back of the praying fig-
ure is both kneeling on one knee and
pointing skyward as well as north—
probably to the North Star (the dark
coloration of the sky suggests that it is
nighttime), which is presumably in-
visible because located beyond the
upper right margin of the design. The
northward momentum of the plate is
also indicated by the curious white
mass sloping up and off to the right
beyond the Falls, adumbrating both
Urizen's "icy magazines" (16:9) and
the glacier which caused the formation
of the Niagara escarpment thousands
of years ago, still as it were receding.
The diagonal inclinations of the tiny
pointing figure's arm (the only one
visible), the praying figure's right fore-
arm (the only one clearly visible), the
slope of the white mass, and the ser-
pent's forked tongue—a possible hint
of ambivalence (compare the tiny buoy-
like woman walking over the thorny
branch away from the phallic rose past
the serpent's mouth)—and the forked,
headless tree arching over the praying
figure, are all approximately the same,
pointing in the "North Star" direction.⁵

North is of course a pivotal direction
in Blake's myth, as well as in Canada's
mythology. Convenient examples of
the latter are the line that runs "the
True North strong and free" from
Canada's national anthem—a line in-
advertently contributed by Tennyson,
who had the new Dominion in mind
when he wrote in *The Idylls of the King*
of "that True North, whereof we lately
heard"—and contemporary poet Al
Purdy's remark that "the North is
Canada's true identity."⁶ In Blake's
myth, as Foster Damon points out, "the
NORTH symbolizes the Imagination. It
is the compass-point of Los-Urthona
. . . Urizen always wants to usurp the
North." Compare Blake's listing in
Jerusalem (72:41) of Canada as the
twenty-fifth of the 32 nations which
shall guard liberty and rule the world.⁷

III

At propos of liberty, the first British
territory to legislate against
slavery was the newly formed (1791)
province of Upper Canada (now On-
tario), which had been settled almost
entirely by those leaving the revolting
Colonies to come to loyal British land:
that is, those who came to be called the
United Empire Loyalists. The Lieuten-
ant-Governor, John Graves Simcoe, a
Loyalist who had fought in the Revolu-
tionary War and was opposed to
slavery, led the attack. Simcoe, who
arrived in Upper Canada in July 1792,
chose Newark (later Niagara, now
Niagara-on-the-Lake) as his capital,
and the province's first elected as-
sembly met there in September of that
year. Simcoe and his Attorney-
General, John White, wanted to
abolish slavery outright; this was bit-
terly opposed among the mercantile
and farming classes, and a com-
promise bill was arranged, which es-
tablished that any slave who came into
the province—whether brought by his
master or fleeing from his master—
would be considered legally free.
There was also provision for the
gradual freeing of slaves born to those
already in the province.⁸

The catalyst appears to have been an
incident involving Chloe Cooley, a
slave who put up such spirited and
vigorous resistance when her owner
had her bound and transported across
the Niagara River to be sold to the
Americans that the matter was
reported in the first meeting of the
Executive council, on 21 March 1793
(Winks 96). On Simcoe's instructions,
Attorney-general White introduced to
the House of Assembly the aforemen-
tioned bill for the gradual abolition of
slavery. White guided the bill through
the lower house against, as he wrote,
"much opposition but little argu-
ment."⁹ This opposition came mainly
from the farmers who had brought
their slaves north with them. "White
was skillful and Simcoe was persistent,
however, and within two weeks [i.e.,
by early April 1793] the bill received

unanimous passage" (Winks 97). It was given royal assent on 9 July 1793.¹⁰

The same year the American Congress passed its first Fugitive Slave Law, which provided for the reclamation of slaves who fled states within the American union, with the result that "virtually from [its] very beginnings. . . Upper Canada. . . existed as a haven for runaway slaves who could not remain with security in the United States."¹¹ Blake's *America a Prophecy* was announced for sale in his prospectus of October 1793, but, according to Erdman, "perhaps the final version. . . was completed a year or two later."¹² Thus Blake would have had time to respond with evident interest and cautious enthusiasm to events in Upper Canada emanating from the Niagara Legislature. One may deduce from all this Blake's low-keyed optimism, focused on what could be called for lack of a better term "the spiritual form of Canada," tending to subvert the surface pessimism of the poem's ending; compare the two versions of the tailpiece design, one with, and one without the word "finis" emblazoned across the fork-tongued serpent.¹³

¹ All references to the design of *America a Prophecy* unless otherwise indicated are to the Blake Trust facsimile of the work (London, 1963).

² All quotations from Blake follow *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, ed. David V. Erdman, New rev. ed. (New York: Anchor-Doubleday, 1988)—subsequently cited as E. Plate numbers followed by line numbers are given in parentheses.

³ "America: New Expanses," *Blake's Visionary Forms Dramatic*, ed. David V. Erdman and John E. Grant (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1970) 98; David V. Erdman, annot. *The Illuminated Blake* (Garden City: Anchor-Doubleday, 1974) 155.

⁴ A full discussion of Urizen's role in *America a Prophecy* would require a separate paper. Erdman's aforementioned analysis of the bowed figure is useful, but his remark in "America: New Expanses" (98) that "[Joel] Barlow's focus on the December hailstorm which prevented the revolutionists' capture of Quebec evident-

ly prompted [Urizen's] 'snows poured forth, and. . . icy magazines' [16:9]" fails to take into account the possibility of a providential reading of this passage according to which "Urizen is necessary." (Northrop Frye, in conversation with the author at the International Blake Exhibition and Conference in Toronto, Feb. 1983. Frye's remark was about the role of Urizen in Blake's myth, and was not apropos of any one work or critic.) The concept of Manifest Destiny would not have appealed to Blake.

⁵ "headless tree": a probably androgynous (cf. the breasts) allusion to the guillotining of the French King (Jan. 1793) and Queen (Oct. 1793), as it were pointing the way to something better. Cf. *The Book of Abania*, Pl. 5, showing severed heads and decapitated trunks, and Erdman's commentary in *The Illuminated Blake* (213). Cf. also Erdman's remark in "America: New Expanses" (108) that "January 1793 is at the center of the prophecy." For the probable period of composition of *America* see note 12, below, and text.

⁶ Epilogue "To the Queen," from *Idylls of the King*, 1.14 and note, *Tennyson's Poetry*, ed. Robert W. Hill, Jr. (New York: Norton, 1971) 430. Cf. Alfred Purdy, *North of Summer: Poems from Baffin Island* (Toronto/Montreal: McLelland and Stewart, 1967), Preface *et passim*. "O Canada" was originally composed with words in French by Alphonse Routhier and music by Callixa Lavallée in 1880; the first English version was written by R. Stanley Weir for Quebec's tercentenary in 1908. A modified form of this translation was approved by Canada's Parliament in 1980, the French version having been approved in 1967. Laureate Tennyson had the Dominion of Canada (as it was then known) in mind when he wrote the above-quoted line. Impressed with the sound and sense of it, Stanley Weir improved on the phrase when he penned the line that still runs "the True North, strong and free" in "O Canada." (From *The Globe and Mail*, 1 July 1991, A15.)

⁷ See S. Foster Damon, *A Blake Dictionary* (Providence, RI: Brown UP, 1965) s.v. "North" and "Canada."

⁸ W. R. Riddell, "An Official Record of Slavery in Upper Canada," *Ontario History* 25 (1929): 393-97; Robin W. Winks, *The Blacks in Canada: A History* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's UP; New Haven and London: Yale UP, 1971) 96-98—subsequently cited as "Winks."

⁹ William Renwick Riddell, *The Life of John Graves Simcoe, first Lieutenant-*

Governor of Upper Canada, 1792-96 (Toronto, 1926) 193, quoting from White's diary for 14 March—subsequently cited as "Riddell."

¹⁰ The unpopularity of the Antislavery Bill can be gauged from the tone of a contemporary letter by Mrs. Hannah Jarvis from Newark (Niagara) to her father, Rev. Dr. Samuel Peters: "[Simcoe] has by a piece of chicanery freed all the negroes." This piece of indignant inaccuracy is followed by the more accurate prediction that "the Attorney-General . . . will never come in again as a representative" (quoted by Riddell 202). White never won a seat in any subsequent parliament. When Simcoe, who had earlier (1790) voted against slavery in the British House of Commons, died in 1806, his grateful county, Devon, commissioned Blake's sometime friend Flaxman to sculpt a memorial for him, which stands in Exeter Cathedral. There is also a statue of him in Queen's Park, Toronto—where Simcoe had moved the provincial capital prior to his departure in 1796—with no Blakean associations. Is it too fanciful to suggest that the curious white mass slanting upward in front of the bowed figure on the last plate of *America* is Blake's passionate, eponymous tribute to John White's sacrifice of political expediency on the altar of principle—a conflation of Urizenic (colonial) ice and principled fire? Cf. the bowed figures—particularly Job's wife—kneeling before the triangular pyre in Blake's *Illustrations to the Book of Job*, Pl 18, and the white rectangle of light toward which she is looking immediately in front of her right knee.

¹¹ James W. St. G. Walker, *A History of Blacks in Canada* (Hull, Quebec: Canadian Government Publishing Center, 1980) 47. The courts in Lower Canada (Quebec) effectively abolished slavery when Chief Justice James Monk in 1800 gave the opinion that slavery was illegal and refused to use state power to return runaways. Similar developments took place in the Maritime provinces "by about 1800," with the result that "slavery had virtually died out in what is now Canada by the time slavery was legally abolished [throughout the British Empire in 1834: legislation, 1833]" (Walker 24-25).

¹² Erdman 802.

¹³ A serpent also of course appears on the revolutionary flag of Vermont, which borders on Canada, with the motto: "Do not tread on me." Vermont was the first state in America to abolish slavery (July 1777).

DISCUSSION

with intellectual spears & long winged arrows
of thought

William Blake: A Man without Marx . . . ?

by Chris Rubinstein

"William Blake: A Man Without Marx" . . . surely an untoward headline for the absorbing and informative review by John Vice (*Blake* 26 [1993]: 162) of Bronowski's famous book. A close reading of *Milton* and *Jerusalem*, along with a bit more of his work, makes it clear enough that Blake's and Marx's living faiths significantly overlapped, though Blake died when Marx was a child, and Marx apparently never knew of Blake.

There is a problem of elaboration because of the sheer intensity of the two thought systems, but nonetheless some basic principles are shared—against the mores of their times as each was aware. It would be totally uncharacteristic of admiration of Blake's verbal and visual art form to let any political bias impede a just comparison. Ideally, two memo books, each of excerpts from their writings, would assist. In the case of Marx's works, the famous 11 theses on Feuerbach dating from 1845 make a good start.¹

The sweep of Marxism in a monist context is consistent with Blake's emphasis on monism and on translucence having no limit—the closing plates of *Jerusalem* and plates 20 to 28 of *Milton* provide a good example. Mastery of dialectics is mutual property, and Blake's linguistic ability may have the edge—e.g., compare Blake's "minute particulars" with the Marxist "concrete," or the daring concept of "the covering cherub" with the ponderous "a revolutionary situation." Each of them postulated an eventual near millennial transformation of human society, and dealt in his own way with a notional transitional period, partly in the future—accepting as the duty of a

philosopher not only to interpret the world but also to change it.

While the contrast between Marx's materialism and Blake's idealism cannot be absent from any evaluation, Blake's own comment (*Europe* iii: 13-18) carries conviction:

Then tell me, what is the material world,
and is it dead?
He laughingly answer'd: I will write a
book on leaves of flowers
If you will feed me on love-thoughts, &
give me now and then
A cup of sparkling poetic fancies; so
when I am tipsie,
I'll sing to you this soft lute; and shew
you all alive
The world, when every particle of dust
breathes forth its joy.

So what is the significance of the ideological gap or gulf between the materialism and idealism? There may be no simple decisive answer to this question. It is clear that both Blake and Marx were aware of the consideration and refused to be deterred by it. Blake's utilization of phenomena, social inter alia, was in keeping with his realization, that whatever the ultimate assessment should be, the World is a material one. We can refer to Bronowski's major theme: Blake as an insightful commentator on the pre-steam locomotive era of the industrial revolution based in England.

An outstanding example is to be found in *Jerusalem* 59: 26-55, with a powerful description of the stream of consciousness of women at work in the new industrial system—their energy. The fact that the image of their agonies may be interpreted as deriving from a neo-Platonist view of human souls about to be born does not obviate the reference to infestation by vermin of a textile workshop and parts of creatures, living or dead, identifiable as commodities for production for the market. The women work to the point of exhaustion.

Nor should Blake's castigation of the Sons of Albion be overlooked (*Jerusalem* 10: 7-16). The liberal-minded and Whig-orientated section of the intelligentsia, led by Leigh Hunt and his brother with *The Examiner* (the Hand of Jerusalem) fell, as Blake saw it, for an erroneous ideology—one not

dialectical. Los drives the point home (*Jerusalem* 17: 33-35 and 38: 67-68) and Albion, with a sign of Blake's sense of humor, peevishly complains of "Two bleeding Contraries equally true" (*Jerusalem* 24: 3)! It would be tedious here to cite excerpts at length but *Milton* certainly undergoes a remarkably intense learning process with a commitment typical of the real Milton and later Marxists (*Milton* 32: 8-38).

Why should we be surprised that similar cultural movements influenced Blake and Hegel (1770-1832)?

If Blake had survived to a ripe old age unimpaired, what would have been his opinion of *The Communist Manifesto* of 1848? Would he have seen it as a sequel to *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* or as a significant contribution to the Bible of Hell or as a new vision of Albion's or perhaps Los's?

My own conclusion is that whereas Marxism encapsulates for the human mind phenomena as essentially social phenomena, objectively and scientifically ascertainable, Blake at the other polarity emphasizes the vehicle of human consciousness as primary. That each added significantly to our understanding of the human condition, and that their systems complement rather than contradict each other, seems to me to be beyond doubt.

Bronowski, when he wrote his book in or about 1942, almost certainly firmly believed that the post-war world would see a form of socialism or communism, likeable or otherwise, in the ascendant, and that the culture of Blake could act as a humanizing influence on the apparently scientific claims of Marxism.

¹ The full text of the 11 theses on Feuerbach may be found in the English translation (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1950) of volume 1 of the *Selected Works of Marx and Engels* (365-67). The Manifesto of the Communist Party (sic) is in the same volume.

In addition to the references to *Milton* and *Jerusalem* above, the following may provide examples of Blake's ideology compared with Marxism: *Milton* 38: 28-32, 40: 9-11; *Jerusalem* 9: 17-27, 29: 33-40, 31: 13-18, 33: 17-34, 42: 25-28, 49: 65-76, 55: 55-66, 63: 26-31, 89 (the covering cherub), and 91: 21-29.

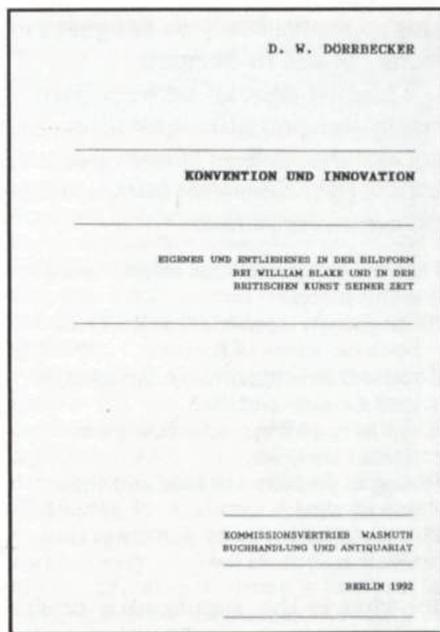
 REVIEWS

D. W. Dörrbecker, *Konvention und Innovation: Eigenes und Entliehenes in der Bildform bei William Blake und in der britischen Kunst seiner Zeit*. Berlin: Wasmuth, 1992. 423 pp. 53 b/w plates. DM 89.00.

Reviewed by
Angela Esterhammer

D. W. Dörrbecker's book is an interesting, detailed, methodical, and persuasive study of formal aspects of Blake's visual art in relation to the artistic practices of his contemporaries. The book is divided into two main sections, which constitute extended essays on "Plane" and "Line" as structural elements in the various media with which Blake experimented. The second half of the volume, for instance, begins with a survey of Blake's well-known pronouncements on outline, proceeds to the slightly less familiar argument that these are commonplaces of late-eighteenth-century artistic theory (if not actually rehashes of lectures given at the Royal Academy during Blake's lifetime), and then embarks on an original and purposeful analysis of the actual uses of line in Blake's draft sketches, watercolors, tempera paintings, color prints, reproductive engravings, and illuminated books.

This approach exposes and complicates the easy assumptions about outline that Blake's aesthetic theory invites us to make. Dörrbecker calls attention to Blake's pencil drawings, which he feels have been unduly



neglected, to demonstrate that his rapid, spare, often uncertain drafts and sketches show much less evidence of the "distinct, sharp, and wirey" bounding line than the sketches of an artist like Flaxman. Flaxman, he argues, would have a greater need for definitive sketches for purposes of advertising and reproducibility within his workshop, while Blake's sense of line is determined instead by his training as an engraver. Thus the effects of the engraver's techniques for portraying outline, motion, and light become evident in Blake's other media, even his watercolors. Dörrbecker's study of line culminates with the 1825-26 engravings to the Book of Job, with which he convincingly illustrates Blake's development of a style in which hatching reflects and complements the compositional outlines of the drawing in such a way that technique becomes a component and intensifier of meaning.

Meaning and method dovetail in Blake's Job engravings, and in the concluding chapters of this book, in a way that seems characteristic of Dörrbecker's critical approach. The avowed, and sustained, aim of the author is to undertake a formal study,

using the concepts and vocabulary of art criticism, which neither binds the significance of Blake's visual art to his verbal expression nor concentrates purely on iconographical aspects. However, Dörrbecker's formal perspective meets up with both iconography and poetry at appropriate points, and his bibliographical expertise contributes a rich context for this study in Blake criticism of various kinds.

Though I found the book most valuable as a detailed study of Blake's artistic practice over the course of his career and across his various media, Dörrbecker's study is equally strongly oriented toward the historical context in which Blake was working. The context of work by contemporaries such as Flaxman, Cumberland, Barry, Fuseli, and Stothard is wide and well informed. Dörrbecker cautiously but deliberately opposes the emphasis of Bindman and others on the common practices shared by Blake and his contemporaries, arguing that it is time for a renewed focus on the idiosyncrasies of Blake's artistic methods and conceptions. Dörrbecker's decision to use the style of Blake's time primarily as a foil for his individual characteristics leads to a reiteration of the important, if not earth-shaking, conclusion that Blake's artistic practice represents a personal adaptation of techniques he learned or imitated from his professional colleagues. The comparison of Blake to his contemporaries is necessarily restricted in some senses by the limitations on reliable knowledge of Blake's biography and his relationships with other artists. After appropriate cautionary remarks, Dörrbecker's analysis proceeds on the empirical evidence of resemblances and contrasts between Blake's work and theirs.

Dörrbecker's systematic study aims at comprehensiveness, and from the available range of Blake's works he often chooses to make his point with reference to lesser-known and/or unfinished examples of Blake's art and

that of his contemporaries. These examples are represented reasonably well in the 53 black-and-white plates appended to the volume, though the analysis assumes that the reader will have at least the Butlin catalogue at hand for reference. The list of necessary supplements might also be extended to include David Bindman's publications on the iconographical aspects of Blake's art and Robert Essick's on the methods and materials; in his focus on formal elements, Dörrbecker assumes a knowledge of the work others have done on the art-historical context of the late eighteenth century and the practices of commercial engraving in that period.

Dörrbecker's overview and quasi-statistical handling of Blake's oeuvre lead to two types of observations that are intriguing for scholars with a non-specialist knowledge of visual art. First, it organizes, substantiates, accounts for, and sets in contemporary context aspects of Blake's art that we tend to intuit or take for granted. We all know that human figures are the primary subject matter of Blake's paintings, but Dörrbecker reevaluates this commonplace in terms of form rather than content, demonstrating that the number and orientation of human figures are the main compositional elements of Blake's drawings, and that the human figure typically marks what is by far the most commonly emphasized axis in Blake's compositions, the middle vertical. Drawing attention to the center of the painting, this structure asks us to interpret by reflecting or comparing the two vertical halves. Because bilateral symmetry, which sends the eye in both directions about a center, is more suited to an "epiphanic" than a narrative presentation, this formal characteristic of Blake's paintings constitutes one significant contrast to the work of his contemporaries, who (Dörrbecker maintains) use bilateral symmetry much less fre-

quently and narrative/historical presentation more often. Similarly, Dörrbecker informs us that compositions with one, three, five, or many figures, in which one figure occupies the central vertical, are a distinctive feature of Blake's style, while compositions with two, four or more figures arranged around an "empty" axis are seldom encountered. The analysis of figure and composition follows logically from a discussion of the most basic elements of Blake's art, beginning with standard paper formats and moving on to the main axes and symmetries available to an artist. Realizing the extent to which the vertical axis predominates throughout Blake's art may make us look differently at, for example, the two paintings in the Butts series of biblical subjects which are both titled "The Great Red Dragon and the Woman Clothed with the Sun," one of which shows the familiar, vertically-oriented central figure (Butlin #519), while the other uses a less common horizontal division of space (Butlin #520).

This latter point indicates the other revealing aspect of Dörrbecker's study: he is concerned not only with elucidating the norms and standards of Blake's art against the background of contemporary practice, but also with enumerating the exceptions to these norms. The exceptions are sometimes identified as Blake's experiments in imitation of other artists, as is the case with his few uses of the oval-format painting adopted by some of his older contemporaries, including John Hamilton Mortimer and Angelica Kauffmann. More attention is given, however, to Blake's use of unusual formats as a challenge to other artists. One of the most detailed studies in this book is of *Chaucer's Canterbury Pilgrims*, one of the very few occasions on which Blake used a long, horizontal frieze-format. Dörrbecker argues that Blake adapts his compositional

techniques to this format so as to revise the characterization and moral worldview of Chaucer, as well as of other Chaucer illustrators like Stothard, whose similarly-shaped *Pilgrimage to Canterbury* occupies the facing plate in this volume.

Some readers might find this book almost *too* systematic, in that it proceeds according to the logic of the general subject (i.e., formal elements and practices in visual art around 1800) as much as it follows the logic of Blake's work in particular. This seems appropriate enough, but at times the result is a peculiar emphasis on what Blake's work is *not* (e.g., his illuminated books are determined, in turn, to be *not* really comparable to medieval illuminated manuscripts, emblem books, or conventional late eighteenth-century book illustration).

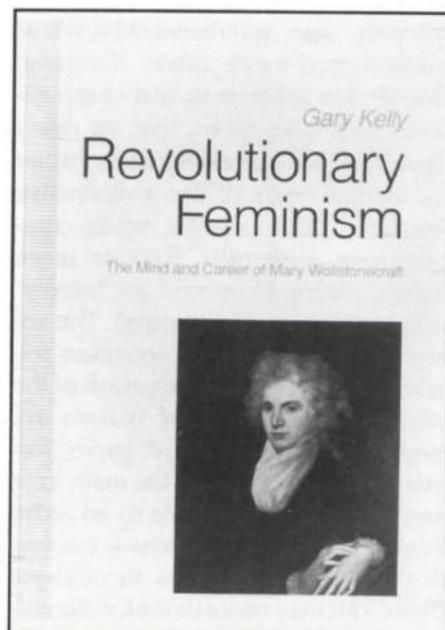
Also, despite (or because of) the detailed attention to the full scope of Blake's work, to contemporary contexts, and to other criticism, readers will not find many extended close analyses of individual works in this book. Chapter headings and subheadings are logically organized and fairly precise, so that a reader wanting to look up a comparison of Blake's and Flaxman's practices of draughtsmanship, for instance, would know where to turn from the table of contents. The same is not necessarily true for readers interested in a particular work or period in Blake's career. There is, unfortunately, no index; the appendix giving bibliographical information about individual artworks discussed in the text might also have included page references so as to provide a way of looking up Dörrbecker's commentary on specific works by Blake and his circle. However, the main aim of this book is to make an argument about Blake's individualism with respect to formal composition, based on a wide range of evidence, and in these terms it is a sound success.

Gary Kelly, *Revolutionary Feminism: The Mind and Career of Mary Wollstonecraft*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992. 249 pages. \$39.95.

Reviewed by Anne Mellor

As opposed to the earlier studies of Wollstonecraft that focus primarily on her biography or on her role in the development of liberal (or equality) feminist theory, Gary Kelly's *Revolutionary Feminism* situates Wollstonecraft's thought within the context of a cultural revolution that witnessed the emergence of the values of the middle class as the foundation of the modern state in England in the nineteenth century. Central to this revolution was a capitalist print culture that enabled women writers to emerge as the active producers, as well as the consumers, of a newly professionalized practice of literature as a verbal art. Sensitive to both the gender and the class distinctions encoded in this professionalization of writing, Kelly provides an illuminating account of the way that Wollstonecraft manipulated her verbal style to create a new discourse and a new definition of Woman, one who avoided "feminine display" in order to manifest "feminine mind."

Wollstonecraft's *thought* has by now been thoroughly analyzed, by Virginia Sapiro, Mitzi Myers, Janet Todd, and a host of others, and readers will find few new insights into the content of Wollstonecraft's ideas here. What they do find, however, is an exceptionally sensitive attention to Wollstonecraft's verbal style, to the ways in which she used specific rhetorical tropes and strategies to demonstrate just how a woman can think differently from a man. Wollstonecraft was acutely aware that she must avoid being labeled a



"masculine" female, a monstrous hermaphrodite; at the same time, she must avoid the feminine "sensibility" so easily dismissed as affected and irrational by her male peers. Her solution, as Kelly brilliantly demonstrates, was to develop a new verbal discourse that directly responded to but at the same time turned the tables on the masculine philosophical discourse of her day.

Further, by reading Wollstonecraft's works in the context of the books to which they either alluded or parodied, Kelly reveals how carefully Wollstonecraft shaped her verbal art for maximum rhetorical effect. Her first novel, *Mary, A Fiction* (1787), read against Mrs. Cartwright's *The Platonic Marriage* (1787) and *The History of Eliza Warwick* (1778) to which it alludes, becomes a powerful critique of false female sensibility as well as a more sweeping social criticism of forced, loveless marriages. From the perspective provided by the didactic children's literature written by Anna Barbauld, Dorothy Kilner, and Sarah Trimmer, Kelly shows how Wollstonecraft's *Original Stories* provides a new model of female education, one that suggests that the rational woman need not marry in order to find contentment. Kelly's emphasis on the positive portrayal of the unmarried Mrs. Mason as the builder of a more egalitarian and

benevolent culture in Wollstonecraft's stories should intensify our awareness of the degree to which Blake's designs for *Original Stories* repressed and distorted this image of the *rational* female, as Marc Kaplan has shown in his dissertation on *Blake and Gender* (UCLA, 1993). By setting Wollstonecraft's conduct book for girls, *The Female Reader*, against William Enfield's popular conduct book for boys, *The Speaker*, Kelly can reveal the way Wollstonecraft participates in an "elocution movement" that defined correct speech as the basis of a middle-class cultural nationalism in which women could participate equally.

Kelly's emphasis on style as cultural critique produces exceptionally rewarding studies of both of Wollstonecraft's *Vindications*. He shows that in *A Vindication of the Rights of Man*, Wollstonecraft calculatedly represents the eloquent Edmund Burke as the Tacitean *delator*, the "man who uses his rhetorical skill in extravagant denunciation of innocent citizens in order to share their property as a reward from a grateful ruler" (87), while she becomes the *vir bonus dicendi peritus*, the honest (wo)man who speaks directly and sincerely. Focusing on the style of *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, Kelly argues convincingly that it is not the hasty production previous commentators have assumed, but rather a carefully crafted mediation between two competing discourses: an overly masculine "philosophical" discourse of abstract rationality and an overly feminine "sentimental" discourse of emotional subjectivity. *A Vindication* writes a "revolution in discourse" in which a personal voice is combined with sociological analysis to construct a New Woman, a female philosopher whose "woman's way of reasoning and arguing" (117) vindicates her claim to intellectual and moral and legal equality. Kelly's detailed analyses of generic bricolage, novelized polemic, rhapsody and paradox in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* should be required reading for anyone interested in this

all-important cultural text, the more so since it acknowledges that in the eyes of current academic feminists, this style failed to achieve the revolution in female discourse that Wollstonecraft attempted.

Kelly concludes with an interesting analysis of Wollstonecraft's *Historical and Moral View of the Origin and Progress of the French Revolution*, which he reads as an attempt to reclaim a "feminized" French Revolution (170), a controversial reading of her *Letters* from Scandinavia as the self-destructive representation of the female philosopher as merely a woman (193), and a familiar reading of *Maria, or the Wrongs of Woman*, which usefully focuses on the trial scene as staging the thematic concerns of the book as a whole.

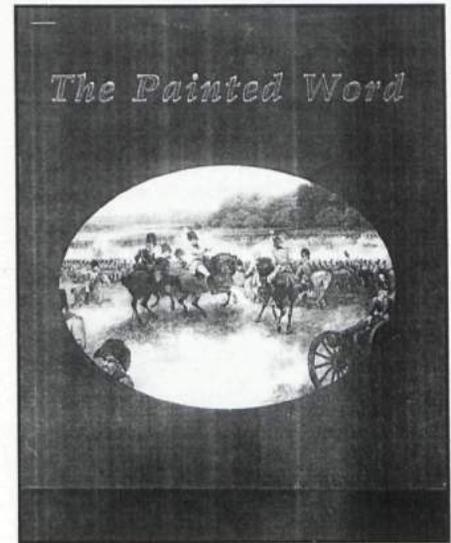
Readers will continue to turn to Eleanor Flexner, Emily Sunstein, and especially Claire Tomalin for more engaging accounts of Wollstonecraft's personality and the development of her thought, and to Mary Poovey, Cora Kaplan, and the contributors to the second Norton Critical Edition of *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* for more perceptive accounts of the ambivalences and contradictions in Wollstonecraft's life, thought, and writings. But Gary Kelly's *Revolutionary Feminism* provides the best account we have of how Wollstonecraft's literary style and rhetorical engagement with specific texts worked to construct a "revolution in discourse" that verbally embodied the rights of women to participate equally in the bourgeois cultural revolution of the romantic period.

The Painted Word: British History Painting, 1750-1830. Ed. Peter Canon-Brookes. Woodbridge, Suffolk and Rochester NY: The Boydell Press, 1991. 139 pp. 156 plates. \$70.00.

Reviewed by
G. E. Bentley, Jr.

This impressive little book on *The Painted Word* has nothing to do with William Blake (who is mentioned only in an aside to Stothard's "Pilgrimage to Canterbury" engraving). However, it has everything to do with his context, for history painting was what Blake practiced (in water colors) all his life, giving visible form to heroic and dramatic events from literature and history, including religion and myth. Here is set out verbally and, more important, visually, a record of what Blake and his leading contemporaries from Barry and Fuseli to Reynolds and West thought was the noblest form of visual art, the equivalent of the epic in poetry and of the opera and symphony in music. We can scarcely appreciate the consistent sense in Blake's art without understanding what he and his contemporaries meant by history painting, and here the context as it developed in his time is set out more completely than I have found elsewhere.¹

But there is a paradox here, for most of those who devoted their lives to history painting, such as Barry and Blake and Haydon, starved for their pains, and many of the painters who spoke most eloquently of the dignity of history painting, such as Reynolds and Romney, made their handsome livings by painting portraits. The noblest history paintings were heroic in size, and the only walls appropriate for such



heroism were in great houses and churches and munificent institutions, such as the Royal Society of Arts which commissioned (but did not pay) James Barry to cover the walls of its Great Room with his series of paintings illustrating "The Progress of Human Culture." However, the noblemen and bishops and magnates with suitable walls to decorate preferred pictures of their dogs and horses and wives, rather than Culture or Il Penseroso or The Prodigal Son. Of the devotees of history painting, only the Americans Benjamin West and John Singleton Copley were commercially successful; for West, success was guaranteed by the personal patronage of George III, and for both West and Copley it was prints rather than paintings which established their popularity and secured their incomes in old age.

One might like to think our own time more enlightened about painting than Blake's, for family portraits and race horses no longer dominate the walls of the best galleries and homes. However, fashionable ladies and noble sportsmen have not been displaced in public favor by goddesses and prophets, for this exhibition of "The Painted Word" was the last to be held at the distinguished Heim Gallery, which has now gone out of business. The noble and the heroic apparently have no more appeal to our age than to Blake's.

The Painted Word consists of:

- 1 Michael Bellamy, Foreword 5
- 2 Martin Butlin, Introduction 7-8
- 3 Martin Postle, "Narrative Painting: Hogarth to Reynolds" 9-13
- 4 Peter Canon-Brookes, "From the 'Death of General Wolfe' to the 'Death of Lord Nelson': Benjamin West and the Epic Composition" 15-22
- 5 David Alexander, "Print Makers and Print Sellers in England, 1770-1830" 23-29
- 6 David Alexander, "Patriotism and Contemporary History, 1770-1830" 31-35
- 7 Geoffrey Ashton, "The Boydell Shakespeare Gallery: Before and After" 37-43
- 8 Catalogue by Martin Butlin, Michael Bellamy, Martin Postle, and Peter Canon-Brookes 45-132
- 9 Bibliography 133-35
- 10 Index of Artists, Engravers and Publishers 137-39
- 11 Reproductions of each of the 142 works exhibited, including color plates of each of the paintings

The reproductions are, of course, the most important part of the work. Many are small (c. 3.8 x 6.4 cm.), but the most important ones, such as West's "Death of General Wolfe" (1776) and Copley's "Death of Major Peirson" (1796) and De Louthembourg's "Battle of Maida" (1807) occupy the whole page (21.6 x 22.9 cm.) or more, though of course still a great reduction from the original dimensions (De Louthembourg's painting is 152 x 215 cm.). Considering that what was available for exhibition was merely what the Heim Gallery could offer for sale, the range, quality, and importance of what was shown is, to me, astonishing. Prints such as Wilson's "Destruction of the Children of Niobe" (1761) and Reynolds's "Nativity" (1785) and West's "Death of Lord Nelson" (1811) may be acquired readily enough by the affluent and the assiduous, but the Heim Gallery also exhibited the paintings behind some of the these famous engravings. Doubtless the most famous and influential attempts to commercialize history painting were John Boydell's Shakspeare Gallery (1786 ff.), Thomas

Macklin's Poet's Gallery (1789 ff. — including the Bible), and Robert Bowyer's Historic Gallery (1793 ff.), combining fashionable annual exhibitions and multi-volume folio publications.² Indeed, Boydell was "the most important patron of the arts in England in the late eighteenth century" (39). The paintings shown at their annual exhibitions to which fashionable London flocked are, of course, unique, but a surprising number were in the Heim Gallery exhibition:

- 1 James Northcote, "A Monument Belonging to the Capulets, Romeo and Paris dead; Juliet and Friar Lawrence" (*Romeo and Juliet*) for Boydell's Shakspeare (#66);
- 2 Francis Wheatley, "Ferdinand and Miranda Playing at Chess" (*The Tempest*, V, 1) (1790) for Boydell (#92);
- 3 Richard Westall, "Portia and Bassanio" (*The Merchant of Venice*) (1795) for Boydell (#108);
- 4 John Opie, "The Death of Archbishop Sharpe" (1797) for Bowyer (#103);
- 5 Northcote, "The Murder of the Princes in the Tower" signed "James Northcote pinxt 1805" "Commissioned by Samuel Whitbread" (the previous version [1786] inspired Boydell's Shakspeare Gallery) (#49);
- 6 James Durno, "Shallow, Silence, Falstaff, Bardolph . . ." (*II Henry IV*, III, ii), "reduced version" of the painting for Boydell (#117);
- 7 James Durno, "Falstaff (as the Old Woman of Brentford) and others" (*Merry Wives of Windsor*, IV, ii), "reduced version" of the painting for Boydell (#118).

Virtually all serious English painters of the time made history paintings, and "it is important . . . to dispel the popular myth . . . that narrative painting was the beleaguered activity of a handful of individuals"; "indeed this is one of the aims of the present exhibition" (11). English "narrative painting"³ came of age in the 1760s, when

native artists such as John Hamilton Mortimer, Robert Edge Pine, Nathaniel Dance, and Joseph Wright (of Derby), carved out their careers, and foreigners, notably Giovanni Battista Cipriani, Angelica Kauffmann and Johann Zoffany, brought a new sophistication to figurative art, in England. (10)

But it was the American Benjamin West who transformed the genre of history painting in the public consciousness:

the fundamental changes in the relationship between painters and their public, the rise of exhibitions charging for entry (directly or indirectly), the vast increase in the dissemination of reproductive prints . . . , and the evolution of modern marketing techniques, all owe their greatest impetus to [West's] *The Death of General Wolfe* [1776] and the inspiration provided by its example. (18)

The Painted Word is both an important document and a valuable study of history painting of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. As such it has a great deal to offer any serious student of William Blake.

¹ Michael Bellamy writes

Considering the great amount of ink which was spilled over the subject of History painting in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, it is amazing how little has been written about it since . . . no attempt at an overall survey of what exactly was meant by the frequently incanted phrase 'History Painting', covering both the paintings and the engravings made from them, appears to have been undertaken. (5)

² (1) *The Dramatic Works of Shakspeare*, Revised by George Steevens, 9 folio volumes with 99 plates (c. 43 x 29 cm.) plus two elephant-folio volumes (c. 68 x 51 cm.) with 93 different plates (London: John and Josiah Boydell, 1791-1805); (2) *The Old [and The New] Testament*, Embellished with Engravings, from Pictures and Designs by the Most Eminent English Artists, 6 folio vols. with 70 engravings (c. 28.5 x 37.0 cm.) -34s 113 vignettes (London: Thomas Macklin, ?1791-1800) plus *The Apocrypha* . . . , 1 vol. with 6 full-page plates and 23 extraordinary, large vignettes by De Louthembourg (London: Cadell & Davies, 1815-16); (3) David Hume, *The History of England*, from the Invasion of Julius Caesar to the Revolution in 1688, 5 folio vols. in 9 with 195 plates (London: Robert Bowyer, 1793-1806).

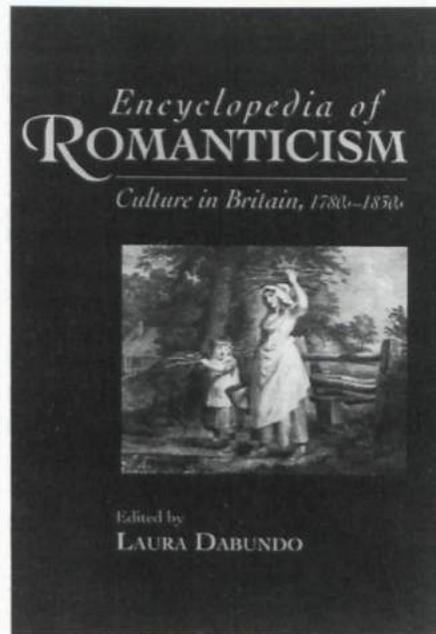
³ The use of "narrative painting" as a synonym for history painting seems to me unfortunate, for it includes works such as Hogarth's very popular suites of designs for "The Rake's Progress" and "Marriage à la Mode," which are certainly "narrative paintings" and equally certainly not history paintings.

Laura Dabundo, ed. *Encyclopedia of Romanticism*. New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1992. xviii + 662. \$95.
 Jean Raimond and J. R. Watson, eds. *A Handbook to English Romanticism*. New York: St. Martin's Press and London: Macmillan Press, 1992. xix + 326. \$59.95.

Reviewed By Nelson Hilton

What do the following have in common: the aeolian harp, Jacobinism, *The Anti-Jacobin Review*, the London Corresponding Society, Nature, costume and fashion, divorce, Herbert Croft (*Love and Madness*, 1780), Charles Lloyd (*Edmund Oliver*, 1798), C. F. Volney (*The Ruins*, 1791, trans. 1792, 12th ed. 1804), Edward Williams (a.k.a. Iolo Morganwg), Rousseau, and John Thelwall? Answer: none is entered in the *Encyclopedia of Romanticism*, or even—with the exception of the last two—listed in the volume's index. While "one of the delights" for the editor was the including of "novel topics volunteered by their discoverers [sic], such as hymnody, puns, satanism, vegetarianism, to name a few," some readers will regret to find less novel topics unconsidered. There is an entry for "Middle Classes," but not "Class," or "Working [or, Lower] Class," or "Aristocracy"; Castle-reagh rates a column, but with no mention of his haunting death; "Opium and Laudanum" says nothing about dosages or prices; the Diorama and the Panorama get several pages each, the Phantasmagoria not a word.

In keeping with its intention to be "for everyone," beginning with "undergraduate English majors," the work



includes a fair number of entries on such clichés as "Camelion Poet," "Egotistical, or Wordsworthian, Sublime," "Emotion Recollected in Tranquillity," "Negative Capability," "Organic Form," "Real Language of Men," "Spontaneous Overflow of Powerful Feelings," "Spots of Time," "Willing Suspension of Disbelief," and "Wise Passiveness." The over 4,000 words on Blake (as poet) by Patricia Elizabeth Davis are harmless enough for undergraduates, though *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* goes unmentioned and Felpham is placed on "the eastern coast of England." In this article, as elsewhere (with the exception of Angela Esterhammer's entry on "Natural Supernaturalism and 20th Century Critics"), Blake's best-known work is retitled "*Songs of Innocence and Experience*." Jeffrey D. Parker offers an additional 1,200 words on Blake as an engraver.

Undergraduates are not likely to be troubled with various errors in the book, which has Fuseli going to Rome "in 1800" (212), *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* published "[i]n 1783" (271), *The Monk* in "1795" (558), *Thalaba the Destroyer* in "1797" (593); which has Erasmus Darwin (d. 1802) as "a personal friend" of Sara Coleridge (b. 1802) (113); which suggests that "a considerable impact of Kantian and

Edited by Jean Raimond and J. R. Watson

A Handbook to English Romanticism



other German thought can be seen . . . in Burke's *Enquiry*" (278) and that James Mackintosh's *Vindiciae Gallicae* was "along with Paine's *Rights of Man* . . . the only liberal defense of the French Revolution" in the face of Burke (357); or, which, in an article on "Sabbatarianism" states that "[t]he controversy reached its height in 1677, when the Puritan Parliament passed the Sunday Observance Act" and that "[b]y 1780, various Sabbatarian societies sought legislation that would . . . halt rail service" (506; the same contributor's 200-odd words on "The Bible and Biblican Criticism" forebear any mention of Bishop Lowth, Alexander Geddes, or J. G. Eichhorn). Even undergraduates, though, might wonder at the logic governing "lumbering stage-coaches that rarely exceeded three miles per hour: in 1770, the 176-mile trip from London to Exeter took at least two days" (359). Perhaps if the volume had been "virtually a companion" to the editor for more than "several months," some of these would have been caught—but when she herself can write that Paine "segued into journalism" (432), one can hardly expect editorial strictures on "to hero worship" as a verb (464) or the use of "boss" to characterize James Mill's professional relation to Peacock at the East India Co. (448).

The *Encyclopedia of Romanticism* is then, not one of those books three copies of which "No gentleman can be without . . . one for show, one for use, and one for borrowers"—to appropriate the formulation of the "important collector" Richard Heber reported by Beverly Schneller on "Publishing" (475). But for those who borrow a copy, there is gold to be found. Among others might be mentioned strong entries by Sheila Spector ("Berkeley's Idealism," "Commonsense Philosophy," "Joseph Johnson," "Milton," "Skepticism"), Alexander S. Gourlay ("Richard Cosway," "Lord Egremont," "Thomas Girtin," "Edwin Landseer," "William Hayley"), Esterhammer ("Chatterton," "Insanity and Eccentric Genius," "Kant and Theories of German Idealism"), Frederick Burwick ("Coleridge," "Influence of German Idealism"), Alan Richardson ("Education," "Literacy"), and Jenijoy La Belle ("George Morland"—a discussion memorable not least for the account of the artist's composing, shortly before his death at 41, "his own unvarnished epitaph: 'Here lies a drunken dog'"). The articles on "Children's Literature" (Susan N. Maher), "Ballad" (Robert O'Connor), "Metrical Theory and Versification" (Brennan O'Donnell), "Satire" (Gary R. Dyer), and "Medievalism" (Joseph Rosenblum) stand out with some others—from the last we learn that Christie's first recorded auction of armor occurred in 1789. Fanny Burney may go unmentioned, but the volume recovers a number of women writers, including Agnes Bennett (1750?-1808), who "[t]hrough immensely popular in her own day, . . . is now one of the most obscure of her time."

The discussion of "Music" (Doris A. Clatanoff) will interest anyone thinking about the "glee" of the "Introduction" to *Songs of Innocence*, and it lends a note on which to part with a volume which offers pleasant gleaning:

The glee, a native vocal music form generally written entirely for male voices, was common in England from 1780 to 1860. Set to the lyrics of writers such as

Shakespeare, Jonson, Sidney, John Lily, Nicholas Breton, Dryden, William Shenstone, and Burns, the glee depended on an expressive delivery of its words for successful presentation. Samuel Webbe (1740-1816), a popular and typical glee composer, wrote about 300 glees and published nine volumes of them. . . . From 1787 to 1858, the Glee Club worked zealously to promote glee writing. (395, 396)

Though less than half the length of the volume just noticed, and nearly a hundred words fewer per page, Jean Raimond and J. R. Watson's *A Handbook to English Romanticism* does include entries for some of the items mentioned at the beginning: *The Anti-Jacobin Review*, the Jacobin novel, Nature, and Rousseau. While it omits the "novel topics," lesser-known figures, touchstones, and—unfortunately—such brief bibliographies as the *Encyclopedia* offers, the contributions by an experienced team of Anglo-French scholars combine for a less ambitious but sound and professional overview. Like its competitor, the *Handbook* has its share of howlers and typos (e.g., that Mary Shelley "published a second novel, *Mathilda*, in 1819: [247], "*Sofie*" for "*Safie*" as the name of Keats's friend Reynolds' eastern tale [193]—though the 1814 date listed for its publication does correct the *Encyclopedia's* 1813), and it says nothing whatsoever concerning engraving. Surprising too is a discussion of Coleridge's biography which passes over his sibling situation and the death of his father.

But worth seeking out are Christian La Cassagnère's relatively lengthy articles on the meta-topics of "Dreams" (though Fuseli's 1782 *Nightmare* is "painted around 1790" [102]) and "The Self"; the latter studies the genealogy of "psycho-cosmic space" and the "plurivocal speech fit to give utterance to the plural subject . . . [a] supreme form of lyricism . . . no longer . . . a lyricism of the first person" (240). And David Jasper, most pertinently for Blake though too briefly, discusses "Religious Thought: Wesley, Swedenborg"; he reports that "there were six

communicants in St Paul's Cathedral, London, on Easter Day 1800" (219) and observes that the ideas of Swedenborg and Kant "are often uncannily alike" (220). Bernard Beatty reminds us that "except as the occasion of Shelley's brilliant poem, Peterloo has had more resonance as a political myth in the twentieth century than it had in the nineteenth" (213).

At the price listed, the *Handbook* is another reference whose absence from desks won't be regretted; but if libraries shelve it next to the *Encyclopedia*, one might think of assigning compare-and-contrasts to students just opening new topics.

George Cumberland, *The Captive of the Castle of Sennaar: An African Tale in Two Parts*. Ed. G. E. Bentley, Jr., Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991. 361 pp.

Reviewed by Robert Kiely

HAD George Cumberland (1754-1842) lived in the sixteenth century he might have qualified as a "Renaissance man." Since, instead, he was an eighteenth-century man of parts and of leisure, heir to a modest but sufficient income, neither a courtier nor a soldier, he is thought of as a gifted amateur, a dabbler in many arts and sciences, a dilettante. His interest and talents ranged from poetry to physics, travel writing to geology, political and social reform to painting and engraving. He was an inventor, a collector of natural and artificial objects, a gentleman farmer, and, most of all, a prodigious writer of essays, poems, journals, and narratives. He and Blake were evidently friends as early as 1780, and Blake's last engraving, left un-

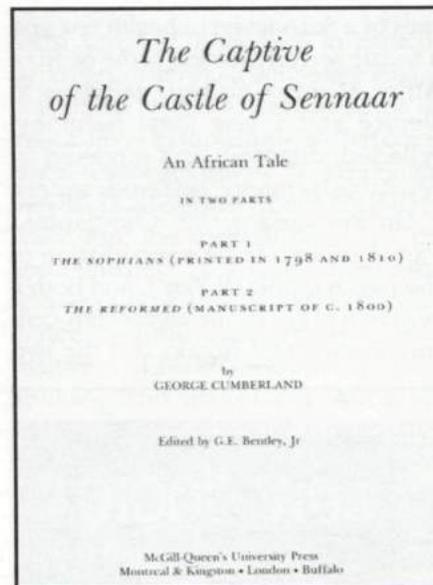
ing, left unfinished at his death, was a message card to Cumberland.

The Captive of the Castle of Sennaar, as G. E. Bentley, Jr. shows in his admirable edition of the text, has had a peculiar printing and publishing history. Part I was printed in 1798, but withheld from publication by the author until 1810. Cumberland feared stirring up controversy and risking prosecution for his radical ideas, yet when the text was finally published it aroused no controversy and little interest. Part II, like much of Cumberland's writing, remained in manuscript form until the appearance of the present edition.

The first problem facing a reader of Cumberland's narrative, once past the fascinating distractions of the author's life and the odd history of the manuscripts, is to figure out what it is. Bentley appropriately calls attention to its affinities with the utopian novel, the romance, and the romantic novel. It is true that the subject matter and the narrator's tone of voice can shift abruptly from Sir Thomas More to Shelley and back again. Like Beckford's *Vathek* and Godwin's *Caleb Williams*, Cumberland's narrative also contains touches of gothic and surreal fantasy.

Without the devastating clarity of Swift or the rich abundance of observed detail of Dickens, *The Captive of the Castle of Sennaar* seems not simply heterogeneous but undecided. The reader is less likely to feel like the observer of a Bakhtinian dialogic than like a traveler following a guide who cannot make up his mind about where to go or how to get there. For this reason, the postmodern reader—especially a reader of Borges or Eco—may be just the audience that Cumberland's mysterious manuscripts were waiting for.

In Part I, "The Sophians," a rich young Venetian named Memmo (a pun Pynchon or Barth might envy) finds himself imprisoned in a stone castle somewhere in a kingdom resembling Egypt. His sole fellow prisoner is Lycus (Like us?), an elderly



Greek, who has filled his years of captivity by decorating the walls, ceilings, and floors of the castle's interior with ingenious and elaborate architectural designs, "three dimensional sculptures," and vistas. Lycus is a master of trompe l'oeil. Indeed, everything about the castle, like everything about the narrative, strains eerily for verisimilitude while showing itself to be hopelessly sealed off from reality.

In a further stage of removal, Lycus narrates for the benefit of Memmo (who later remembers and records it) the story of his journey into the heart of Africa where he discovered the land of the Sophians. Though the travel through jungles and encounters with African tribes anticipates H. Rider Haggard, the descriptions of life among the Sophians mixes familiar eighteenth-century utopian dreams of peaceful communal living and "natural religion" with fantasies of untroubled and unrepressed sexuality, union without marriage, an exchange of partners without divorce, and a liberal, unembarrassed attitude toward the body.

If the reader is led or misled into looking for a "center" in this many-layered invention, he or she will not encounter the empty horror of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, nor a simple rationalistic moral. While "calmness," "order," and "tranquillity"

have been attained by the apparently ideal Sophian society, the agitations and unfulfilled desires of the Greek narrator and his Venetian cellmate are never far from the surface of the text. In admiring the wholesome and unselfconscious nudity of the Sophians, for example, Lycus cannot help leering. His preoccupation with "every fleshy protuberance," "the red, porous, and . . . warm points of the body," and the perfect shapes worthy of Phidias verges on soft porn because, for the storyteller, the objectified and dehumanized figures are occasions of curiosity, longing, and forbidden pleasure. Insofar as the "perfect" society is described and interpreted by an imperfect narrator, it floats in a Borgesian realm in which philosophical idealism, delight, and frustration are permanently entangled.

In Part II, "The Reformed," Cumberland literally attempts to clean up his act. Lycus dies and Memmo, the Venetian, escapes imprisonment and embarks on his own journey into the heart of Africa. The even more "perfect" society that he encounters is composed of descendants of Italian followers of the fourth-century monk Jovinian who attempted to reform the early Church, was declared a heretic, and escaped to Africa with a band of disciples. The Jovinians do not drink wine, they have no fine arts, they spend long hours at prayer in church, and they definitely do not practice nudity. Everyone lives simply, contributes to the common well-being, and has a voice within a benevolent patriarchal "democracy." In short, they sound like eighteenth-century reformed Protestants, tranquilized Methodists, or talkative Quakers.

The word most frequently repeated in "The Reformed" is "clean." Houses, streets, clothing, nature itself seem "cleaner" in the land of the Jovinians than elsewhere. It is understandable, then, on one level, even if inconsistent with the apparent moral of the social allegory, that the Venetian narrator grows homesick for his beautiful but tainted city. Memmo returns to Venice,

immerses himself in its enchanting, melancholy, dank atmosphere and discovers to no one's surprise that his beloved has taken the veil. He retires to a family castle, committing himself to a life of celibacy and good works—far enough from the Jovinians to idealize them, but close enough to the sullied Rialto for an occasional visit. Though Cumberland has tried alternately to reproduce the scoured vir-

tues of a Scandinavian health spa and a sedate revival meeting in the heart of Africa, Memmo, his hero, recalls us to Venice and a less ideal harmony, reflected, distorted, and rendered irresistible by murky, odiferous waters.

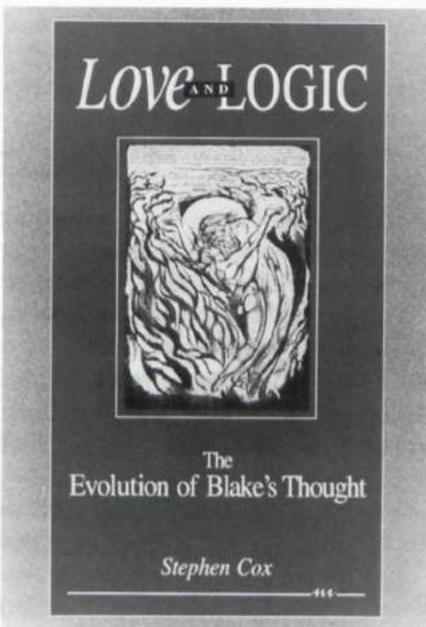
On the surface, the Christianized Part II appears to be a repudiation of the pagan utopia of Part I, and both a rejection of life in late eighteenth-century Europe and Britain. Yet the two

parts of Cumberland's odd and entertaining narrative do, in the end, make a kind of sense together. They are not so much the fantasies of a mad genius nor the visions of a political radical as the dreams of a man who frequently wishes his times were different (freer, healthier, more rational, more peaceful, more fun), but who, at the end of the day, is comfortable enough to settle at the edge of things as they are.

Stephen Cox, *Love and Logic: The Evolution of Blake's Thought*. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1992. 314 pp. \$32.50.

Reviewed by
Angela Esterhammer

Stephen Cox's new book is well worth reading for what it says about Blake, about Blake's critics, and about the evolution of ethical, aesthetic, and logical thought over the past two centuries. *Love and Logic* will no doubt become best known for its determined opposition to postmodernist readings of Blake. Postmodernism is widely defined here to include deconstruction as well as other forms of poststructuralism, historicism, and psychoanalysis; the most consistent targets of the argument appear to be critics like McGann, Hilton, Essick, Glen, Larrissy, and Mitchell. In defiance of all critics who stress the undecidability and indeterminacy of Blake's texts, Cox's aim is to remind us that, Blake's time not being our own, Blake lived in a logical universe dominated by a concept of objective truth, and his unflinching purpose was to persuade readers to reject error and embrace that truth, even though he was all too aware of the difficulties of representing it.



Blake wants to make the clearest possible distinction between truth and falsehood. . . . Nothing could be farther from his ambitions than the projects of those postmodern theorists who have abandoned, with no visible sign of regret, any attempt to locate a reliable truth. (235)

What makes this a powerful and relevant rebuttal is that (as Cox notes) most postmodern critics have at least implicitly coopted Blake's intentions into their argument, claiming not just that his texts are responsive to postmodern readings, but that Blake himself more or less consciously anticipated postmodernism.

Cox embarks on his reading of Blake with a strongly worded defense of authorial intention and its importance for interpretation. He deflects some, if not all, of the customary arguments against intention-oriented criticism by

clearly defining intention in logical rather than psychological terms: it is not Blake's purported marital problems that are significant to his vision of love (though Cox is occasionally tempted to allude to them anyway), but the effective choices he makes as an author, choices which organize his worldview and limit the referential scope of his texts. Cox acknowledges the influence of economist and philosopher of human action Ludwig von Mises on this critical perspective, but one is also tempted to draw comparisons with E. D. Hirsch, Jr., and Cox's previous publications show that his approach derives from a sustained investigation into hermeneutics and the limits of interpretative method.

Thus Cox's book resolutely reads the direction of Blake's logic from signs that others have found indeterminate or infinitely referential. If it is true that "some readers may be surprised . . . by [an] emphasis on logic, and hence on reason" (1), as Cox initially suggests, the excellent introductory chapter should convince many of those readers that logic may be regarded as the organizing principle of Blake's vision. "Logic," here, is primarily the establishment of relationships between ideas, and Cox maintains that Blake's favorite methods for handling ideas are substantialization (giving ideas a physical and spatial form), universalization (expanding the scope of individual ideas), and identification (equating ideas with one another). Blake's poetic works then become experiments with different ways of grasping and arranging concepts, par-

ticularly concepts of love—though love is defined broadly enough here to include freedom and individuality as well as familial, sexual, and religious relationships.

The logic of Cox's own book, as reflected in his subtitle, is severely chronological. This is explicitly a study in the *evolution* of Blake's thought, which means not only that the poetry is studied in chronological sequence (problems of dating, while not dwelt on, are competently handled), but also that the *Songs of Innocence*, for instance, are counterpointed with marginalia from the 1780s and the *Songs of Experience* are paired with contemporaneous notebook poems, even studied in their notebook versions. One consequence of this perspective is that Cox's narrative of Blake's career is unrelentingly teleological. The motivations of characters within each poem are likely to be explained by appeal to the development of the poem's logical pattern. More significantly, each work leads logically on to the next as if they were a series of computer programs to be tested and debugged in turn, or, to use Cox's more historical metaphor, as if they were the projects of a tinkerer or workshop inventor. The result is a curious view of Blake's oeuvre as "a series of experiments in using logic to construct a universe congenial to love" (35). The teleological bias may be an accurate reflection of Blake's pursuit of a goal, and thus justifiable within the limits of Cox's intentionalist perspective, but its corollary is a more dubious determinism: it sometimes seems as if Blake's works could not possibly have been other than they were, or been produced in a different order, given the logical problems they consecutively posed for him.

Nevertheless, this approach leads to some excellent, thought-provoking, original readings. It accounts—logically—for characteristics of some works that other critics have seen as indefensible, and therefore either as weaknesses or as indications that Blake must have been aiming at indeterminacy or deconstruction of his own

texts. *Songs of Innocence*, in particular, emerges here as a deliberate limitation of the world to certain kinds of logical love-relationships, so that emotional responses follow "as seemingly inevitable inferences from a logical relationship, the identification of God and humanity" (42). Cox's interpretation accounts for the limitation of innocence without identifying it as a limitation of Blake's awareness or his abilities. This makes possible a refreshing study of lyrics which have been pressed into deconstructive service so often that it hardly seemed possible any more to identify their embodiment of an ideal as a component of their meaning. Cox, however, realizes that love in *Innocence* "is purely and simply good—not because Blake cannot imagine any arguments against this ideal, but because he chooses to construct a world that corresponds to it" (39). In this context, the things about which the *Songs of Innocence* are silent can be interpreted positively (what would a world look like which had these boundaries?) instead of negatively (since Blake must be saying something about the "real" world, what have these boundaries excluded or repressed?).

The insightful reading of *Innocence* may point up a few weaknesses in readings of other poems. Granted that *Tiriel* is, as Cox suggests, an inverse and parody of the vision of innocence, why can the interpretation of *Tiriel* be substantiated by historical circumstances when these would distort the interpretation of *Innocence*? The superficial answer is that *Tiriel* adopts a different logical framework from the *Songs of Innocence*, which deliberately excluded historical cause and effect; a more considered answer might be that a book which examines Blake's authorial choices is justified in considering the context in which those choices were made. Yet introducing the context of eighteenth-century attitudes to love and familial relationships, as Cox occasionally does, seems somehow to detract from one of his most significant arguments, which is

that Blake's characters and states are more readily comprehensible as *logical* constructs than as the "realistic," historical, or psychological constructs we might expect to find in novels. *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* benefits particularly from this approach; Cox traces the consequences of its substantiating and dialectical logic and argues convincingly that it is neither naturalistic nor antinomian. A chapter on *The Book of Urizen* provides a marvelous pendant to the analysis of dialectical logic in *The Marriage*, since Cox reads *Urizen* as a parody of Blake's own "essentializing, dualizing, universalizing, and substantializing vision" (146).

Despite Cox's repeated dissociation of his viewpoint from that of "traditional" critics as well as from postmodernists, it seems to me that one of the critics he is closest to in terms of his patterns and priorities is Northrop Frye. If Frye regarded Blake's corpus as a quasi-architectural system, Cox sets that system in motion so that it becomes a series of components re-arranging themselves into different positions and progressively generating new members. His perspective is similar to Frye's in that it emphasizes the overall shape of Blake's thought rather than the often contradictory details—focusing, one might say, on *langue* rather than *parole*. His consistently deductive approach even suggests the extent to which the choice of focus determines the resulting vision. An emphasis on significant detail is likely to result in a postmodernist reading full of paradox and conflicting or indeterminate reference, while a focus on deep structure is more likely to result, like Cox's study and Frye's, in the discovery of logical patterns.

The originality and power of the book seem to me to lie in its focus on logic, but the primary subject of Cox's analysis is, after all, love. Love and logic are not related dialectically here, but rather as material and method: it is the vagaries of love that Blake, and Cox, try to work through in logical terms. The second half of *Love and Logic* addresses Blake's major pro-

phesies, all of which are read as "the torments of Love & Jealousy in The Death and Judgement of Albion the Ancient Man," or as a "history of the human heart" (167-68). In Cox's terms, the complexity of these poems results from Blake's attempt to set competing forms of logical thought side by side within the same text, rather than working through one possible logical organization of love as each of the shorter poems does. By working inward from Blake's logical method to the vision that method produces, Cox arrives at significant insights into the origins of sexual love and jealousy (consequences of dualistic thought itself), and the meaning of substantializations such as Beulah ("an effort to work out the logical conditions of an environment in which spiritual love can inhabit temporality," 231) or the Spectre of Los (a necessary parody of logic). Blake's solution to the torments of love and jealousy is a substantial and uncompromising vision of Christian love, a logical principle of redemption which can harmonize previously competing conceptual drives such as universality and individual identification.

Ironically, when viewed from this perspective Blake's method can come across as rather postmodern: instead of grand narratives, his major prophecies offer heterogeneity and continuous experimentation with logic. Cox indeed argues that Blake and postmodernism share some forms of logical thought ("The great problem of Blake and the postmodernists is the habit of imputing to propositions and logical operations the characteristics of substantial things" [235]), but they differ on the crucial issue of representation. In Blake's major prophecies the logical principles that he initially shares with postmodernism are taken a step further, toward a paradoxical "parody of a parody, a reproduction of reproductions" for which Cox coins the noun "paralectic" (239-40). Paralectic is the method of salvation in Blake's later works, a logical method by which Blakean realities are represented as parodic likenesses of a

material world that Blake knows and demonstrates to be itself a parody of the eternal world. This is the culmination of Blake's substantializing logic, and of Cox's predominantly spatializing explication of that logic (demonstrated, for instance, by his persistent interest in terms which etymologically convey some sort of positioning, such as "parody" and "dialectic"). Spatializing logic of this kind (which is again reminiscent of Frye) allows for a distinction between the postmodernists' "paradox," which is undecidability, and paradox in Blake, which literally means two beliefs existing side by side. Ultimately, the difference between Blake and the postmodernists resides in Blake's conviction and demonstration that paradox and indeterminacy, far from undermining the concept of objective truth, instead verify the existence of a truth beyond the power of human representation. Discussing Los's laborious efforts in building Golgonooza, Cox concludes that

The final effect is not, however, a denial of the power of vision; and it is not an affirmation of the value of mystery or indeterminacy. . . . It is, rather, a sign that Blakean visions are not empty self-reflexive but are imperfect and unapologetically inelegant aids to the contemplation of a truth beyond themselves. (270-71)

Not least among the strengths of Cox's argument is its ability to contain its own opposition, by a process analogous to the way Blake himself (according to Cox) contains negations by substantializing them and assigning them a place in his logical system. Cox agrees that there is profound indeterminacy in Blake's vision, only he redefines indeterminacy so that it is not limitlessness of meaning, but rather a kind of pluralism which results from Blake's "constantly varying involvement with logic," his "multiplication of logical strategies that organize meanings in a variety of momentarily determinate ways" (10). If, as Cox seems to suggest in his opening chapter, the mid-twentieth-century critics who set

out to elucidate Blake's system represented a certain innocence that has given way to the experienced state of postmodernist criticism, then Cox's own book represents a kind of organized innocence that is able to contain the postmodernist vision as a systematic part of a larger whole.

Still, it is worthwhile to have someone remind us, from a strongly intentionalist, mildly historicist perspective, that Blake did care more for mastery, persuasion, clarity, and a stable truth than many contemporary critics would comfortably admit. Blake's language and imagery, his psychology and his ideology continue to be fair game for critics fascinated by the capacity for play in his kaleidoscopic work. But these readings will also continue to contend with a tradition of interpretation which emphasizes the coherence and teleology of Blake's thought, a tradition now infused with new energy by *Love and Logic*.

Jon Mee, *Dangerous Enthusiasm: William Blake and the Culture of Radicalism in the 1790s*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992. \$59.00.

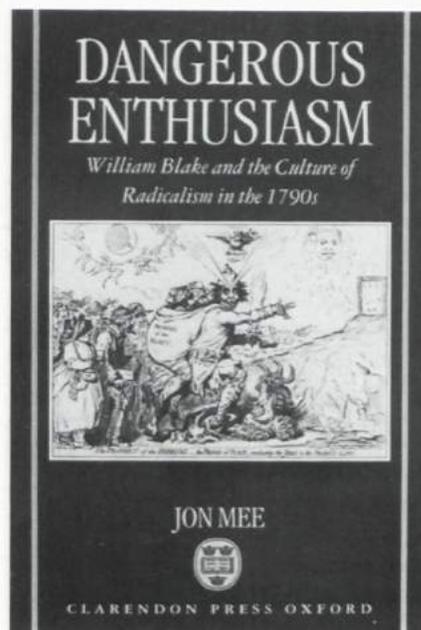
Reviewed by
Morton D. Paley

In the Introduction to the last annotated checklist, Detlef W. Dörrbecker remarked that "Blake's *revolutionary inclinations*, especially during the 1790s, are presently being studied with fresh momentum, and a new understanding of Blake's radical position is unfolding" (*Blake* 26 [1992/93]: 77). *Dangerous Enthusiasm* is an important contribution to that new understanding, while at the same time pointing the way to new areas of

research to be accomplished. It is particularly valuable for its consideration of the contexts provided by the writings of Richard Brothers and his circle, by deists such as Paine and Constantin Volney, by translations of "Northern" antiquities, and by the new biblical scholarship of Bishop Robert Lowth and (slightly later) Alexander Geddes. Some of this material has been covered before and some of it is new, but by bringing together subject areas often considered discretely, *Dangerous Enthusiasm* provides a valuable perspective on the study of Blake in his time.

Before one gets to the very interesting subject matter of this book, however, one must pass the Polypus: "Introduction: Blake the Bricoleur." At first the idea of Blake as a Levi-Straussian *bricoleur* may seem an attractive way of comprehending his spontaneity, his inventiveness, and his willingness to try often unconventional artistic solutions. Yet there is so much more to Blake's work than this that regarding it as *bricolage* seriously, if unintentionally, diminishes it. Blake himself would insist on his relation to Renaissance tradition, his mastery of his craft, and his concern for the public role of art. When the notion of Blake-as-bricoleur is brought in at the conclusion of the book in contrasting Blake with painters like Fuseli and poets like Wordsworth and Coleridge, we can see how deficient the idea is. It's just a step from this to the amiably wise crank invented by the Ancients. But the Illustrations of the Book of Job are not bricolage; they are great works of art.

This said, it must be added that the bricolage syndrome is hardly disabling to *Dangerous Enthusiasm*, which, for the most part, gets on very well without it. Chapter 1 explores the territory of radical millenarianism and is especially valuable for its discussion of writings and engravings by such figures as George Riebau and Garnet Terry, among others. The linking of figures like Terry with seventeenth-century radicalism is very interestingly estab-



lished in a discussion of his editions of John Saltmarsh's *Free Grace* and Samuel (Cobbler) How's *The Sufficiency of the Spirit's Teaching*. These associations, as Mee points out, are further enriched by the fact that the publisher of the How sermon was J. S. Jordan, member of the London Corresponding Society and first publisher of Paine's *Rights of Man*. One might wish that the choice of an engraving from Terry's *Prophetical Extracts* for reproduction and discussion had not been limited to *Daniel's Great Image*, since (as the author notes) this plate has already been reproduced in an article by David Bindman. Terry's series of reprinted prophecies, which Mee aptly calls "a rich millenarian stew," is very rare, and some of the other images are also of great interest. No. IV, for example, shows Christ and Satan in overlapping discs with the body of man in the overlapping area; No. V shows the Beast from the Sea in Revelation confronted by an angel with a shield and a flaming sword. Numerous analogies in both Blake's works and in his visual sources come to mind. One must, needless to say, be grateful for the highly interesting material presented in this chapter, particularly as it is handled with considerable tact. No attempt is made to force parallels into sources, the distinction

as well as the similarity between Blake's work and these parallels is observed, and useful demarcations are established within the phenomenon of millenarianism itself.

While some figures prominent in late eighteenth-century millenarian movement are well discussed in chapter 1, other individuals could be given more attention. This is especially true of the Swedenborgians, who are negatively viewed here as the Angels of Blake's *Marriage*. Yet there are other aspects of the Swedenborgian movement that are both important in themselves and pertinent to this book's subject. The words of one of Satan's Watch Fiends, William Hamilton Reid, whose *Rise and Dissolution of the Infidel Societies of London* (1800) is quoted elsewhere in *Dangerous Enthusiasm*, may be instructive here: "The principal article of this self-called New Church, it should be observed, is just as Old as Muggleton and Reeves . . . that the whole godhead is circumscribed in the person of Jesus Christ, . . . retaining the human form in heaven . . ." (53). If the Swedenborgian Divine Humanity could be so threatening to conservatives, what of the thought of someone like Charles Bernhard Wadström, the Swedish anti-slavery activist who, though expelled in the concubinage dispute of 1790, remained a Swedenborgian and lived in England for at least several years following? One would like to know something about Samuel Best, the Swedenborgian millenarian prophet known as "Poor Helps," and about Ralph Maher or Mather, who passed through various phases of seeking, including Methodism and Swedenborgianism, and who made contact with the Prophets of Avignon in the last phase of their existence.¹ Neither Wadström nor Best are mentioned in *Dangerous Enthusiasm*, while Malthus is named but not discussed. To say this is perhaps not so much to criticize *Dangerous Enthusiasm* as to point out the need for a larger and more comprehensive book on the mil-

lenarian and radical subcultures of the period.

Chapter 2, "Northern Antiquities," valuably explores the intersection of antiquarian and radical interests. Macpherson's *Ossian*, Joseph Ritson's writings on English songs, Edward Williams' Celtic researches, and Daniel Isaac Eaton's *Politics for the People* are among the sources explored in relation to Blake's works of the 1790s. Eaton's comparison of England's war against France with the "ferocious Odin . . . the active roaring deity; the father of slaughter, the God that carrieth desolation and fire" (99) aptly demonstrates how Blake participates in a shared radical discourse; and once more, there are cogent distinctions between Blake and, for example, "the disabling nostalgia of literary primitivists like Macpherson and Blair" (108-09). From this rich discussion, we go on to a chapter on mythology and politics that creates a context for *Los* as prophet and bard among authors as diverse as Thomas Paine, Constantin Volney, and Thomas Spence, among others. The concern is once more not so much with sources as with, as the author puts it in discussing the image of the sun of liberty, "the deep involvement of Blake's rhetorical resources, both written and visual in the Revolution controversy" (136). Later, the mythological-scientific poetry and prose of Erasmus Darwin is examined in relation to parts of *Europe*, *The Book of Los*, and *The Song of Los*. Some of this ground has, as the author acknowledges, been covered before, and this part of the exposition is more valuable for consolidating what is already known than for fresh insights. The same may be said for much of chapter 4: "Blake, the Bible, and Its Critics in the 1790s." The work of Alexander Geddes, whose biblical scholarship is an important topic here, has been discussed, as Mee notes, by Jerome McGann, and so the matter of "textual indeterminacy" will already be familiar to some readers. Viewing Geddes's biblical criticism with that of Priestley, Paine, and other contemporaries does

produce an interesting perspective. However, when specific Blakean texts are discussed in connection with the Bible here, the results are not as colored by the preceding historical discussion as one would expect; and although the author vigorously argues for a political reading of *The Song of Los* in opposition to the view of Leslie Tannenbaum in *Biblical Tradition in Blake's Early Prophecies* (1984), no hypothesis is advanced to account for the phenomenon of diminution evident—both in length and in number of copies produced—in the 1795 Lambeth books.

One further point, not as a conclusion, but as an endnote: *Dangerous Enthusiasm* is a richly documented book, with respect to both primary sources and to recent criticism and scholarship, yet there are some puzzling gaps in its documentation involving the omission of particularly important sources. A footnote reference to Hayley's *Life of Milton* (218) refers to several modern scholars, but not to the one who has written most extensively on this subject in relation to Blake: Joseph Anthony Wittreich. The author refers to "the boom in speculative mythography which gathered pace in the eighteenth century" (124-25) but not to the classic study of this subject, Edward B. Hungerford's *Shores of Darkness* (1941), in which the term "speculative mythology" was coined. Although some discussions of Blake's derivation of the "Druid" serpent temples from William Stukeley are cited, there is no mention of why we know that Blake, who never mentions Stukeley, was nonetheless indebted to him: Ruthven Todd's discovery (in *Tracks in the Snow* [1946] 48-49) that the serpent temple of *Jerusalem* 100 is based on one of the engravings in Stukeley's *Abury*. In the discussion of Blake's engraving after Fuseli of *The Fertilization of Egypt* (157-59) Todd's article "Two Blake Prints and Two Fuseli Drawings,"² would have been pertinent to the question of "collaboration between daughtsmen and engravers" (157n), as

that design is one of the two discussed. It is surprising that a work with the historical awareness of *Dangerous Enthusiasm* should at times show such unawareness of the history of its own discipline.

¹ Interestingly Ma[t]her had had links with working-class radicalism more direct than those of many seekers. In a pamphlet of 1780, *An Impartial Representation of the Case of the Poor Cotton Spinners of Lancashire*, he had spoken in the voice of unemployed weavers who had destroyed and demolished several of these machines: "We pulled down and demolished several of these machines," he wrote, speaking for "men and women, prisoners in the castle of Lancaster," who were, he said, about to be tried by a jury largely composed of relatives of the machine owners (15-16).

² *Blake* 5 (1971/72): 173-81.

Linda Lewis. *The Promethean Politics of Milton, Blake, and Shelley*. Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 1992. xii + 223 pp. \$34.95.

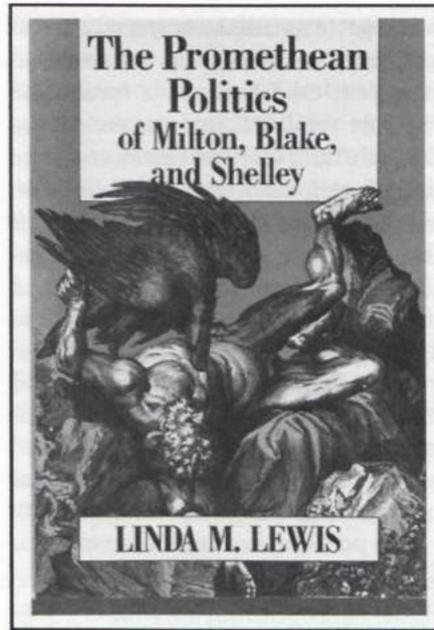
Reviewed by
George Anthony Rosso

This readable book treats the mythic figures of Prometheus and the Titans as "political icons" in the work of Aeschylus, Dante, Milton, Blake, and Shelley. Binding Stuart Curran's discrepant versions of Prometheus (in *Shelley's Annus Mirabilis* [1975] and "The Political Prometheus" [*Studies in Romanticism* 1986]), Lewis pursues a "diachronic study" of Promethean myth, tracking its modifications and new meanings, but "only inasmuch as these meanings apply to the study of power and powerlessness" (11). With something of Northrop Frye's allusive range—minus his insights into genre—she al-

so adeptly relates literary and pictorial "iconography" in a peppy, upbeat style. Despite its two major drawbacks—ubiquitous use of the term "power" and conventional treatment of Blake—the book provides a serviceable road map for exploring the politically charged revisionism at the core of Prometheus-Titan mythology, focusing especially on Milton's influence on Blake and Shelley.

Chapter 1 offers an interesting overview of the cultural and political context of Aeschylus's *Prometheus Bound*. Following George Thomson and Anthony Podlecki in regarding Aeschylus as a "moderate democrat," Lewis insightfully explains how Aeschylus, hater of tyrants, inherited two distinct Promethean figures: the creative champion and the overweening malefactor of mankind. While Aeschylus draws on several sources, Hesiod's *Theogony* remains the primary extant text, the one that sets the stage for interpretations of Prometheus as a benevolent soul who led a tragically misguided attack on the established authority of the Olympian regime.

Aeschylus's shrewd changes in the received myth reveal, says Lewis, "how carefully he set out to exalt his Titan rebel," turning Hesiod's failed usurper into a "political radical" (21). Two key inventions indicate Aeschylus's strategy. First, he portrays both Io and Prometheus as "victims of Zeus's abuse of power," turning Zeus into the antagonist. By giving Zeus the traits of tyrannical earthly sovereigns, *Prometheus Bound* illustrates the poet's "revisionist view of monarch and rebel" (22). Second, Aeschylus separates the binding of Prometheus and the sending of the eagle to eat his liver, which in Hesiod are two parts of one verdict for the theft of fire. In *Prometheus Bound*, the binding alone is punishment for the crime; the eagle, on the other hand, is sent by Zeus because Prometheus will not recant his deed or reveal the secret of Zeus's ultimate downfall. This "defiance" characterizes Promethean heroism and underlies the titan's rebel legacy.



The latter part of the chapter deals with Titan iconography. Although they do not make out as well as Prometheus, the Titans occupy a central place in the myth, since their "titanic nature" is feared as a threat to religious and social order. The value of the opening chapter emerges from Lewis's demonstration that Dante and later poets inherit a complex, even contradictory, Promethean-Titan mythology.

The second background chapter, "Titanism and Dantesque Revolt," expands discussion of the Titans by introducing the crucial Christian component that informs later treatments of the myth. By Dante's age, Christian commentaries associate the Titans with the rebel angels of biblical lore. Where Aeschylus allegedly seeks to restore the Titans to favor with Olympus, Dante and medieval allegorists consign the Titans to hell as "political traitors." Prometheus in turn takes on a divided role as "type" of Christ and as rebel to divine authority, a duality that penetrates to the heart of Dante's own predicament in mid-thirteenth-century Florence.

Suffering the ignominy of exile, Dante was forced to wrestle with the vexed issue of rebellion in God's empire. Lewis writes some effective prose explaining how Dante carefully avoids the charge of Titanic disobedience. By

opposing the Pope in the Guelph and Ghibbine struggles, Dante incurs the charge of treason; he counters that, since monarchy and empire are in fact ideal forms that can be perverted by tyranny and corruption, he has the right to exercise the independent "intellectual powers" willed to him by God. Setting up such a standard, Lewis writes, "Dante is able to separate his own behavior from Titanism" (53-54). Yet failing to integrate his intellect with the "Titanic" rebelliousness of his temperament, Dante projects Prometheus into hell with the Titans, leaving it to Milton to divine the true Christian aspect of Aeschylus's hero.

The three major chapters that follow explore this mythic-political nexus in terms of the dual Prometheus: the light-giver and bringer of hope, associated with Christ; and the thief-rebel and bringer of despair, associated with Satan. This "iconography" is a bit simplistic and reductive, as we will see in Lewis's discussion of Blake, but it helps Lewis to draw analogies between Milton, Blake, and Shelley on the nature of political tyranny and rebellion.

In the Milton chapter Lewis proclaims that in *Paradise Lost* the poet explores "the whole interrelated pattern of myth" sketched in the opening chapters, ranging from the "titanic seizure and division of power" to the "search for recapturing lost Eden" (56). A special feature of the chapter is Lewis's engagement with the critical issue of Satan's heroic status, situated in the context of Milton's political activity. Like Dante, she argues, Milton must prove that his rebellion against authority—regicide—is not disobedience to God, as royalists claim, but resistance to tyranny: "He accomplishes this," Lewis asserts, "through his double use of the Prometheus myth" (61). Lewis shows that after Satan's degeneration following the scene on Mount Niphates in Book IV—when he announces "Evil be thou my Good"—Milton increasingly dissociates Prometheus and Satan until Satan's heroism is exposed as a hoax,

a mockery of the Son of God's genuine Prometheanism. "Christ as word and wisdom of God," Lewis states, "usurps the positive aspects of the Prometheus myth," negating the "phony Prometheanism of Satan" (98).

Lewis concludes that Milton's revisioning of Promethean myth, coupled with his conception of Christian liberty, underpins his critique of Satan as a tyrant. For Milton, Christian liberty is based on God's love and man's free will; Satan's rebellion, rooted in envy, force, and deceit, violates this fundamental conception. Departing from Calvin's strict separation of civil and religious concerns, Milton reasons that since political power derives from the people, not the king, citizens have the right of independence or even rebellion in the exercise of their liberty. He further denies that kings rule in the image of God, arguing in particular that since Charles I failed to govern by love and right reason, the real image of Godly virtue in politics, Christians were duty-bound to depose him. Sadly, for Milton, the radical Puritans also fail to live up to his principles. Aiming his rebellion at the earthly not the heavenly sovereign, Milton places Charles and both his "Titanic" defenders and opponents, the irrational sectaries, in Satan's camp, while reserving a place for Prometheus in God's kingdom. God is the only true monarch because his rule, in contrast to all earthly kingdoms, is manifest in the Son's "loving Prometheanism."

Lewis applies Milton's Promethean design to Blake's work, claiming that Blake's "whole constellation of meaning turns on the bad (Orc) and good (Los) versions of Prometheus." Lewis evinces a broad familiarity with Blake's myth from *America* to *Jerusalem* and seriously grapples with Blake's critique of *Paradise Lost*. She contends that in the epic prophecies Blake "is writing against the tradition that, for him, culminates in *Paradise Lost*: the deceiver Prometheus/Satan unmasked and punished and Prometheus/Christ seated at the right hand of the Judeo-Christian God, reason per-

sonified" (121). Blake corrects Milton's errors by recasting the Promethean complex: God is made a tyrant, the "Satanic fire-thief becomes the saving Messiah," and Orc and Urizen are fused and neutralized in the apocalypse. Orc and Urizen are *both* tyrants because, as the romantic ideology has it, revolution turns into its opposite when defiance is not transcended by imagination and love. Blake's seminal revision exchanges the bad for the good Prometheus, Orc for Los, who rejects political for "universal values and ideas" and thus transforms political rebellion into imaginative art (149-50).

The problem with this assessment is that it reiterates what an influential faction of Blake scholars have been saying for decades: that the Promethean Orc is not liberatory but tyrannical and that Los is called in to bring about the mental apocalypse. This view possesses a general validity, although to substantiate it Lewis makes a number of questionable moves.

First, by declaring that Blake is more faithful than Milton to the Aeschylean model, Lewis suggests a classical paradigm for Blake's myth. She speaks to the issue on page 118, saying that despite his adverse prefatory comments in *Milton*, Blake "borrows freely" from classical sources: however, she argues that to be true to his "revisionist view of reality" Blake "must abandon the Greek and Roman system" (123). She then drops the point, which is unfortunate, since the collision of the Greco-Roman and Judeo-Christian systems produces much of the creative tension in Blake's epics. Second, Lewis shuns analysis of the formal ties between Blake's Lambeth and epic prophecies, skirting discussion of Blake's narrative complexity and making somewhat reductive generalizations about his characters. Urizen and Orc are bad; Los is good. Los's self-sacrifice sets in motion the redemptive power of the epic prophecies, the "Lamb in Luvahs robes," but the intricate relations of Orc, Luvah, Los, and the Lamb are left unexamined. Third, while she illu-

minates the "progress" of Blake's myth from the rebellion of Orc to the creativity of Los, Lewis idealizes Blake's politics. That is, Los represents the light-bearing Promethean gospel of imaginative apocalypse in which "political power and powerlessness become irrelevant issues" (141). Again, many readers will not quarrel with this position, but they may wonder whether it advances discussion.

The problem is carried over into the chapter on Shelley, in which Blake plays a pivotal role. Lewis is instructive on the political and literary models that Shelley draws on for his portrait of Prometheus. But she tends to eviscerate a realistic conception of power politics, as exposed most starkly in the semantic proliferation of the term "power" in the opening pages of the chapter.

Lewis begins with the romantic Satanist charge against Shelley, countering that to equate Prometheus and Milton's Satan is distorted because Prometheus incorporates aspects of Adam and Christ as well as Satan. Shelley adapts the traditional myth as "subtext" but revises it to convey his political meaning. He reforms Prometheus, making him a prototype of passive forgiveness and love while defining Jupiter as both a tyrant and a rebel. Prometheus, in fact, is no rebel at all: "he is innocent of Titanism . . . and the potentiality for violence that Hesiod, Dante, and Milton condemn" (160). Further, Shelley undermines Milton's dualistic universe, combining Prometheus and Jupiter as component parts of the soul rather than separating them, as Milton does with his Promethean Messiah and Satan (185). And he performs this feat by trumping Milton with Rousseau: the figure of Demogorgon, "grim power of the people," Lewis claims, embodies Rousseau's concept of "sovereignty," the "vital force" that, united with the "mind of man (Prometheus), can remove despots from power" (187). These creative revisions turn the Aeschylean into a distinctly romantic hero: Shelley's Prometheus unbinds himself from the

manacles of defiance and ushers in a "system never before tried, one based on pure love and pure idea" (181).

Despite her breadth and erudition, Lewis's account of Shelleyan politics and power verges on the metaphysical. Ignoring the more seasoned work of Kenneth Neill Cameron and Carl Woodring, and avoiding Shelley's overtly political poems, Lewis ensnares herself in the trap of myth criticism, concluding that "political man" and "Promethean man" are ultimately distinct (190-91). Also, by eschewing "specific political allegory" for "broader notions of power" (12),

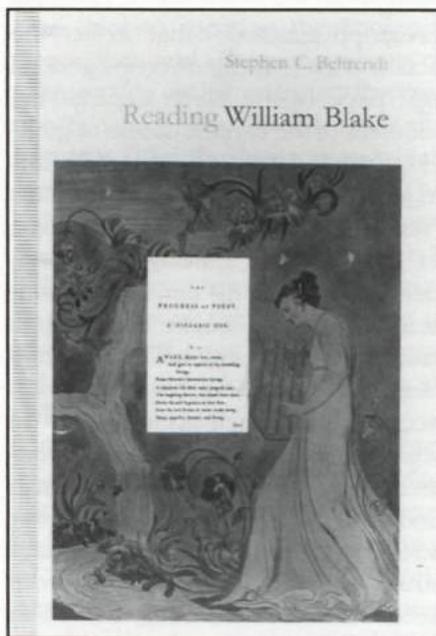
Lewis's intertextual analyses beg some fundamental questions. For example, how does "democracy" in late eighteenth-century London differ from its appearance in fifth-century BC Athens? What role does the French Revolution, or Enlightenment philosophy, play in Blake and Shelley's effort to "negate the God of Christianity"? How does the "post-Christian" cosmology that Shelley inherits stem from Blake's unorthodox yet decidedly Christian cosmos? Finally, how is the romantics' treatment of Prometheism an advance on Milton when they too opt for a "return to Eden" solution

to political power and rebellion? These questions require a more substantial historical theory than the archetypal method affords, one that can account for disparate social and political factors in the reproduction of a myth. While Lewis undoubtedly contributes to an understanding of the Promethean-Titan complex in western culture, her contribution neglects historical differences for mythological continuity. Succeeding in her quest for mythic coherence, Lewis uncritically ratifies the stubborn idealism currently under seige in Blake studies and literary theory.

Stephen C. Behrendt,
Reading William Blake.
New York: St. Martin's
Press, 1992. xv + 196 pp.
\$45.00.

Reviewed by
Dennis M. Welch

This book explores the dynamics of the reading process involved in reading William Blake's illuminated poems, focusing specifically on "some of the demands" that his texts place on us by embodying "a fertile intersection among frequently differing . . . [artistic] systems of reference . . ." (viii). Following "A Note on Copies," in which Behrendt acknowledges multiple differences among various copies of the illuminated texts and proposes therefore to "deal only sparingly with these matters of variation" (xv), he includes six chapters: "Introduction: Reading Blake's Texts," "Songs of Innocence and of Experience," "Three Early Illuminated Works," "Lambeth Prophecies I: History of the World," "Lambeth Prophecies II: History of the Universe," and "Epic Art: Milton and Jerusalem."



The Introduction lays out primarily Behrendt's theory of Blake's perspective on readers and reading: his "works challenge . . . our assumptions and expectations about the authority of both narrator (and/or author) and text," requiring that we possess "both equilibrium and a good deal of self-assurance" and "serve as co-creators of the work under consideration" (1). Behrendt initially offers us the comforting assurance that "Blake does not *require* [although he 'encourages'] of his readers elaborate preparation" in order to read with feeling and intelligence what Behrendt calls

(via Wolfgang Iser) Blake's intertextual "metatexts." But if the poet-and-artist's aim is in fact "to liberate" us "from conventional ways of reading" (4), then *disequilibrium* seems to be a primary strategy for fostering such liberation. As Behrendt himself observes, Blake's texts are in a sense "non-authoritative" (5), tempting us to impose on them reductivist understanding. It is this temptation that helps to unsettle us and to transform our vision.

Citing Robert Adams's *Strains of Discord: Studies in Literary Openness* (1958) and Umberto Eco's *The Role of the Reader* (1979) and *The Open Work* (1989), Behrendt considers Blake's illuminated work "open" like the novels of Fielding and Sterne and the history painting of Benjamin West—open to countless interpretations, making "readers" take responsibility for them. While certainly democratic, this view is true only to a point. There is little doubt that Blake had strong convictions although he was open to change ("Expect poison from the standing water"). Indeed, the refusal in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* even "to converse with" the Angel "whose works are only Analytics" (pls. 9, 20; E 37, 42) implies that he was not always open-minded. Nor do I believe (despite my desires otherwise) that his texts and his expectations from readers are always open-minded. His

metaphor of conventional Bible readers reading "black" where he reads "white" (E524) implies to me that the line of his understanding and of being understood is firm and wiry. Behrendt seems almost to recognize this line when he refers (uncharacteristically and rather too extremely) to the readers' need to "affirm the existence . . . of absolute right and wrong, truth and falsehood" and to "read" and rebuild Jerusalem "properly" (148, 149). But perhaps he puts the matter more accurately by saying that Blake's iconographic (and, of course, poetic) significance does not drift "aimlessly in a sea of indeterminacy." Instead, it engages "in a form of intellectual sabotage that tests both the limits of his own art and the alertness and intellectual independence of his reader . . ." (37).

Like the emphasis on openness, the emphasis on independence may be put too heavily, however: "We must . . . learn to depend upon ourselves, and upon our own imaginative and experiential resources. For it is there, perhaps even more than in that remarkable artist's illuminated pages, that the real meaning . . . of Blake's poetry lies" (35). Yes and no. I become a little skeptical about a theory of reading that emphasizes self-sufficiency sometimes at the expense of interaction and interchange, especially since Blake was radically reformulating the eighteenth-century ideal of self-sufficient consciousness as conceptualized by one of his chief intellectual enemies—John Locke.¹ As implied in Behrendt's own language—"Blake expects [readers] to be paying attention" (37)—self-sufficiency without adequately hearing, seeing, and learning from what the texts say and show is utterly insufficient. Stanley Cavell argues that writers—in particular, the romantic poets—who want us to "imagine that which we know" make extraordinary demands on us as readers. They seek "to prevent understanding which is unaccompanied by inner change," or, as Michael Fischer puts it, "to prevent our substituting belief in

what they say for being touched or moved by it." The implication in this for our reading involves the idea of personal growth through interaction with the text, indeed a form of discipleship that is strenuous friendship with it. "Blake's model for the relationship between artist and audience is Jesus and his followers . . . (John 15:15-16)."²

Chapter 2 of Behrendt's book "explore[s] the contributions made by Blake and his individual reader to the process of reading" the *Songs* (41). Attempting to be "neither prescriptive nor proscriptive" in order to avoid "imputing . . . operations and observations that are in fact my own" (51), Behrendt proceeds nonetheless to a fairly prescriptive assertion that "in fact" the action of the male figure on the general title page of the *Songs* depicts "the moment of the consciousness of guilt" (52). While I tend to agree with this assertion, it is worth noting that this "real Fall of humanity" into the sense of guilt became apocalyptically evident to Blake in his era, for the consciousness that Locke and others associated with personal identity had deep and disturbing ties with moral accountability, self-accusation, and legalistic justice.³ Of course, seventeenth- and eighteenth-century puritan and evangelical views helped foster such consciousness. And as Jean Hagstrum observes, in dictionaries from 1662 on, "conscious" was defined as "inwardly guilty," "culpable," "self-convicted."⁴

Part of Behrendt's exploration of the process of reading the *Songs* involves his comparison of their multiple resonating voices to a kind of polyphony in which words and sounds interact to form another "metatext," not unlike that of the interaction of words and pictures. This comparison is evocative, but as happens often in verbal discussions of music it tends to remain somewhat abstract. Perhaps this is why Behrendt advises us to try to "imagine" the music of the *Songs*. But perhaps an even more helpful strategy might have been for him to

select three or four *Songs* that in most copies are adjacent to one another and discuss the various voices and tones that speak, or rather sing, those *Songs*.

Examining briefly but contextually *The Book of Thel*, *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, and *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, chapter 3 shows that "Blake plants the seeds of his subversion of reader expectations already in his early works" (73). After pointing out several ambiguities in the motto and first five lines of *Thel*, Behrendt says that such "calculated indeterminacy pervades not just . . . *Thel* but many of Blake's finest poems . . ." (80). Another example of such calculated indeterminacy that "forces . . . readers to construct yet a third text [a 'metatext'] that partakes of both the verbal and visual texts . . . but which is precisely coincident with neither" (89) is the frontispiece of *Visions* (in all copies but one). But while Behrendt offers an appropriately sympathetic view of Oothoon, who faces "enormous odds . . . in the male establishment" around her (90), he tends to follow the pattern of judging her performance as a success or failure when, I think, the whole thrust of the prophecy and her distinctly *unwoeful* rhetoric is to present a strenuous voice of resistance. Hence, he is disturbed by her "acceding to . . . male dominance and male-emulation" (90) when she asks, "How can I be defiled when I reflect thy image pure?" (pl. 3.16, E 47)—a question which in context is ironic.⁵ Insisting that the faithless Theotormon look at her (pl. 3.15, E 47), Oothoon's wish to reflect him becomes a subtle but nonetheless critical form of resistance that uses his limited epistemological perspective against him. Because from his merely surface or sensory perspective she reflects his filthy ("mudded") image, then looking at her as defiled he should see who and what *he* really is. On the other hand, because she is in fact a "clear spring" (pl. 2.19, E 46) that cannot reflect the real Theotormon, he should by contrast to her still see who and

what he is—but only if he acknowledges his hypocrisy.

Placing three of Blake's most openly political prophecies (*America, Europe,* and *The Song of Los*) in the context of late eighteenth-century millenarianism, chapter 4 shows how he "marshals his verbal and visual forces to present for infernal reading a documentary history" of the era's millennial signs (105). Such signs are traced in the prophecies through two phenomena that challenge and influence the reading process—metamorphosis and encyclopedic allusion. For example, the notion of absolute space, whereby eighteenth-century science served to "bind the infinite" (*Europe* pl. 2.13, E 61), is both imaged and undermined by the dynamic and allusive aspects of the Urizenic creator and the huge coiling serpent on the frontispiece and the title page respectively in *Europe*. With these designs the reader's imagination is called upon to "discover and create something greater than what is represented . . ." (115). Similarly, absolute time is both represented and subverted in verses such as "The times are ended; shadows pass the morning gins to break . . ." (*America* pl. 8.2, E 54), where "Blake superimposes upon one another two very different conceptions of time, presenting us with the paradoxical situation in which metamorphosis is both continually progressing and already completed" (116). But for Behrendt to say that "Blake's texts supply verbal and visual commentaries on events and ideas whose ultimate specific location is in fact in the reader's consciousness" (120) seems something of an exaggeration, if not a contradictory misstatement, given the highly allusive nature of those texts.

Whereas chapter 4 discusses the more historical and topical "minor" prophecies (as mythological histories of the then-known world—Europe, America, Asia, and Africa), chapter 5 discusses the prophecies concerned with a "history of the universe that involves the events" of Genesis and Exodus (126). These prophecies are

The Book of Urizen, The Book of Ahania, and *The Book of Los*, in which Behrendt traces examples of inversion (such as the de-creation in *Urizen*), aimed at attacking authority and getting us to "read" our Bibles and our worlds in contrary and liberating ways. Inversion and reversal appear also in the "seemingly erratic organization" of plates in *Urizen*, implying as Behrendt says (citing Eco) "an assault on artistic structure" and on "received notions of reality" (135, 136). Although he appears to imply (as he did earlier) what these notions are when he says that the organization seeks "to liberate" the verbal text from "time and place," the received notions were probably those of absolute space and time—not to mention the Lockean, Newtonian, and Humean concepts of identity ("a solid without fluctuation?"), which turns out to be radically transient (like the horizon to which *Urizen's* name in Greek refers). The deletion of plate 4 in copies D, E, and G—eliminating the "solid" (pl. 4.11, E 71) that *Urizen* seeks for his self—may imply some of the discontinuity in identity that is based on memory and reason (or "consciousness," as Locke defined it).

Chapter 6 deals with Blake's epic art, specifically in *Milton* and *Jerusalem* and largely in the context of history painting. "*Milton* is . . . an interdisciplinary analogue to grand style eighteenth-century history painting . . . that directly engages artist, subject and audience in a community activity of consciousness-raising" (155). Returning from Eternity into space and time in order "to correct the errors in his own vision," Blake's *Milton* "offers the reader . . . the personal paradise of visionary insight that is the Miltonic-Blakean legacy" (156, 157). And the offer is made in the form of metatexts that readers must construct imaginatively from the visual, verbal, and allusive details of individual plates. Such readers, who are taxed even further by the linearity and simultaneity, the extensive allusiveness, and the multiple perspectivity in *Jerusalem*, are finally

said to be "ideal readers" (167)—self-sacrificing and forgiving, knowledgeable and enthusiastic.

Reading William Blake is a well-documented book. The practice of referring to specific page and/or plate numbers of designs not included in it but in David Erdman's *Illuminated Blake*, Martin Butlin's *Paintings and Drawings of William Blake*, and elsewhere is also very useful. There are, however, a few documentary citations that deserve to have been made. Given the interpretive problem of many differences among various copies of the illuminated texts, reference to the studies by Myra Glazer-Schotz and by her and Gerda Norvig would have been appropriate.⁶ Also deserving of reference is Graham Pechey's essay on *The Marriage*, one of the best on that work.⁷ Since Joseph Viscomi's excellent study of Blake's relief-etching technique supercedes Ruthven Todd's, John Wright's, and even Robert Essick's, it should have been mentioned in note 1 of Chapter 4 (184).⁸ Finally, Morris Eaves's discussion of Blake's audience is among the very best and in several ways complements Behrendt's.⁹

As with most good books, *Reading William Blake* includes some brief comments which one would like to see elaborated. These include but are not limited to: (1) the statement that the "complex polyphony" among the Songs "enables us . . . better to resolve the problems created . . . by Blake's decisions to alter" their "order" (21); (2) the tantalizing remark about "the enthusiasm with which Blake and . . . the radical Johnson circle must have responded to the substantial contemporary support" for Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (85); and (3) the briefly mentioned intertextualities between Ecclesiastes 12.5 and the motto of *Thel*, between the madonna-like figure of *Thel* in plate 5 and the figure of Constance in Fuseli's *Here I and Sorrows Sit* (180n8), and between the scenes in *Thel* plates 4 and 5 and the dynamics

of the hiding and finding of Moses—subjects that Blake later painted (81).

Far outnumbering such tantalizing tidbits are Behrendt's many informative and commendable discussions of such topics as: (1) "open" texts parallel to Blake's in eighteenth-century fiction, history painting, caricature, and cartoons; (2) his interest in various forms of music, especially hymns and religious songs for children; (3) the primping nurse in "Nurses Song" (*Experience*); (4) the senses and their representation in *Visions*; (5) multiple parallels among designs within and between Blake's works; (6) similar parallels between his designs and eighteenth-century illustrations of Miltonic subjects; and (7) late eighteenth-century millenarianism and its dependence (like that of Blake's work) on a highly attentive audience. Despite my quibbles raised earlier (mostly as matters of emphasis, not substance) and despite the inattentiveness of its copy editor, *Reading William Blake* is a fine book. With its overall focus, breadth, and lucidity

and with its 16 well chosen, nicely reproduced, and appropriately discussed plates, the book constitutes a splendid advanced introduction to Blake—well suited to upper-division English majors, graduate students, and anyone else seeking a concise but well-informed *entrée* into Blake's illuminated work.

¹ For two of the most important sources on Locke's understanding of autonomous self-consciousness and its relationships to reason, memory, self-concernment, and moral as well as political "independence," see *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter H. Niddich (Oxford: Clarendon, 1975), 2.27; and *Some Thoughts Concerning Education, The Educational Writings of John Locke*, ed. James L. Axtell (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1968) 109-325.

² See Stanley Cavell, "The Avoidance of Love," *Must We Mean What We Say?* (1969; rpt. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1976) 324-25; Michael Fischer, "Accepting the Romantics as Philosophers," *Philosophy and Literature* 12 (1988): 186; and Morris Eaves, *William Blake's Theory of Art* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1982) 193.

³ See Locke, *Essay* 2.27.22, 26 and 3.11.16; Ernest Lee Tuveson, *Imagination*

as a Means of Grace: Locke and the Aesthetics of Romanticism (Berkeley: U of California P, 1960) 44, 48; and Antony Flew, "Locke and the Problem of Personal Identity," *Locke and Berkeley: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. C. B. Martin and D. M. Armstrong (New York: Anchor, 1968) 155.

⁴ Jean H. Hagstrum, "Towards a Profile of the Word *Conscious* in Eighteenth-Century Literature," *Psychology and Literature in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Christopher Fox (New York: AMS, 1987) 27.

⁵ See James A. W. Heffernan, "Blake's Oothoon: The Dilemmas of Marginality," *Studies in Romanticism* 30 (1991): 12 and 14n20.

⁶ Myra Glazer-Schotz, "Blake's Little Black Boys: On the Dynamics of Blake's Composite Art," *Colby Library Quarterly* 16 (1980): 220-36; Myra Glazer-Schotz and Gerda Norvig, "Blake's Book of Changes: On Viewing Three Copies of the *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*," *Blake Studies* 9 (1980): 100-21.

⁷ Graham Pechey, "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell: A Text and its Conjunction," *Oxford Literary Review* 3 (1979): 54-76.

⁸ Joseph Viscomi, *The Art of William Blake's Illuminated Prints* (Manchester, Eng.: Manchester Etching Workshop, 1983).

⁹ Cited above in n. 2.

David Worrall, *Radical Culture: Discourse, Resistance and Surveillance, 1790-1820*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1992. 236 + ix pp. \$29.95.

Reviewed by
David Simpson

It seems fair to say that in recent years, and until very recently, the social and political history of British modernity has been dominated by the left. Between them, Christopher Hill, E.P. Thompson and Eric Hobsbawm have narrativized the periods between and including the English Revolution of the 1640s and the French Revolu-

tions of 1789 and 1848. Their books, and those of their followers, tell the ongoing story of radical energies variously expressed and repressed. After reading them one comes away with a history of constant protest by the common man and woman against social, political and economic injustice. They inspire, for others on the left, a pride in the British radical tradition, along with a powerful and emotionally felt disappointment at its failure to overturn the established order. They show us a world where, for several centuries, the rich men made the laws and the clergy dazzled us with heaven and damned us into hell. And they make us wonder why a Paine, or indeed a Blake, in writing what they wrote, have left us merely with a John Major.

Inspiring as this history has been, it has its problems as a clear and coherent narrative, when we try to make

it so. And the current widely read histories of the eighteenth century offer quite different and alternative visions. Two such histories in particular, both written by students of J. H. Plumb, have set out to complicate the picture. John Brewer's *The Sinews of Power* has explained (inadvertently or otherwise) the non-event of a second English revolution by a sort of homage to British bureaucracy. Everything worked efficiently, and with at least reasonable justice, so that the massive financial burden of more or less constant warfare could be sustained without radical social upheaval. Where others have focused on the game laws, the hangings and the transportations, and the terrible effects of enclosure, Brewer describes the invention of a functional civil service. In a similar spirit, Linda Colley, in her recent *Britons: Forging the Nation*, sets out to argue that patriotism was not so much the last

refuge of scoundrels as the rational-choice affiliation of an emergent middle class seeking to elide its localist and class encumbrances by declaring allegiance to a common category of Britishness. Against Blake and Joyce, Colley's book manages to make no use of the pun on *forging*: her story is an affirmative one, in which more persons did well than lost out by the culture of patriotism.¹

So we are at an interesting crossroads, whether it prove a parting of the ways or a meeting point. The second seems likely, since Hill and Thompson have always been a little short on attention to ideology and mediation, the very categories that have proved obsessive to a "western Marxism" whose basic task is after all to explain why the revolution has not happened.² Thompson in particular, whose work is the most germane to any study of romanticism, has been taken to suggest that ideology and mediation were not very important in the history of radicalism's failures, that the common folk were not deceived at all about what they wanted and why they wanted it, and that repression alone was what stopped them. Thompson's famous chapter on Methodism offers a more nuanced account, and we should not simplify his great work, *The Making of the English Working Class*, as if it were entirely an example of his own later, passionately anti-Althusserian position in *The Poverty of Theory*. Nonetheless, there is a clear difference of emphasis between those who regard the British radical tradition as coherent and articulate and potentially able to have taken control, and kept down by sheer brute force, and those who would prefer to attribute the ongoing hegemony of the establishment to some failure of psycho-social integrity in the revolutionary classes themselves. We choose, then, between a genuine alternative that is overpowered, and an incoherent opposition that shoots itself in the foot.

It seems likely that neither of these narratives in its pure form—and I have of course simplified them for the sake

of expository clarity—is going to help us much in the elucidation of particular events in the history of British radicalism. But even as one preaches the virtues of a dogged historical localism—thick descriptions of small pieces of the general puzzle—a doubt creeps in: at least it does for me. For is not this eschewal of the master narrative itself now a merely routine embrace of the fashionable, postmodern history-making, one that seeks to avoid big mistakes by risking only small ones? And do not these local narratives themselves require some incorporation into larger (if not master) ones in order to claim some sort of context or meaning? Even a model of historical incoherence is such a narrative; it too is a general model of how things are (not) connected. Can history limit itself to an account of the contingent clash of ignorant platoons (there are no armies) by night, out of touch with a central command that does not exist? And if not, how then does it return to 'the big picture' without repeating all the Hegelian mistakes now made familiar by the skeptical attentions of feminist and postmodern historiographers?

This is not a question I can pretend to answer, so that I will not expect David Worrall's book, here to be reviewed, to provide a solution I cannot myself compose. But Worrall's book can be read as an interesting if at times unconscious instance of the problems that come along with writing history now. On the one hand, it is a highly localized history, built upon thick description, and a fascinating one at that. Following in the tradition of Hill, Thompson, Erdman, Goodwin, Cone, Margaret Jacob, McCalman, J. Anne Hone and others, its major task is simply to reveal what has for so long remained hidden: in this case, hidden largely in the Public Record Offices. Worrall succeeds admirably at this. He writes that he wants above all "to make this radical culture visible, to operate a recovery in the tradition so firmly established by feminist literary history" (3). This he certainly does, and his originality is largely the result of the

work he has done in the Home Office files and in other such places. His book has a refreshingly low percentage of citations from other people's books, and a correspondingly high incidence of "primary" sources. This gives his narrative the quality of strong verisimilitude, of writing about what happened, and in great detail. And this is hard to doubt, especially when we are told exactly and chillingly how individuals died on the scaffold: "Colonel Despard had not one struggle; twice he opened and clenched his hands together convulsively; he stirred no more . . . Broughton and Francis struggled violently for some moments . . . The executioner pulled their legs to put an end to their pain more speedily" (cited 57).

These passages take on moral and emotional power, especially when we are reminded that the case against Despard rested on six cards with printed oaths and a green silk umbrella (59). Worrall's book is rich in this kind of detail, which adds immeasurably to what we know of the lives of Thomas Spence, Thomas Evans, Marcus Despard, Thomas Preston, Allen Davenport, Arthur Thistlewood, Robert Wedderburn, E. J. Blandford, and others like them. The accounts of Spa Fields, Bartholomew Fair, Cato Street and Hopkins Street seem as good as eyewitnesses. The account of the Spencean "Free and Easies," where radical doctrine was shared in beer and song rather than in print, suggests a component of radical history that we may never recover fully. Worrall suggests a general drift toward "physical force" and away from the moderate radical movement (which, if true, has the effect of explaining the violence of the authorities at Peterloo), as he chronicles the evolution of Spencean ideology in the early nineteenth century—Christianized by Thomas Evans (157) and extinguished altogether with the arrests of Watson and Wedderburn in November, 1819 (187). In its wealth of detail, Worrall's book makes a major contribution to our sense—for it is not yet an understanding, and may never

be such—of the connections between the radicals of the 1640s and those of the 1790s. In this tradition, Thomas Spence has a major place.

But Worrall himself is not quite sure of the validity of the details he so loyally presents. His insecurity takes the form of initial skepticism followed by occasionally overambitious claims in the cause of "theory." He admits at the start that he has been "completely unable to avoid the central problem that much of my text has been produced by those who were doing the surveillance of the culture I report" (3). He further sees the "connected problem of the role of my narrativity: again, this has presented a problem which has seemed to me effectively insuperable" (4). One sympathizes with the decision to ignore these qualifications as soon as they are lodged, since to take them with complete seriousness might make it impossible to write this kind of book, which still seems to me very much worth writing. The second admission, that of his own narrativity, is one whose implications we need not pursue. Though they are of absolute importance, and are indeed the object of a great deal of state-of-the-art negotiation within the poststructuralist ethos, they need not be rehearsed here. The first admission, that the very accounts cited in the book as the basis of some sort of history are often the products of spies and other persons with clear personal investments in "discovering" criminal intent and lurid detail, is another matter. Worrall admits that he has made no attempt to decide what to believe and what to doubt; and in the present climate where all is narrative and all is open to some sort of doubt, one can see why. But then one wonders why the book pretends to be a narrative at all, and why it did not, instead, elect the format of an edition of records, with as much information as possible given about the authors of those records. This at least would have maintained a structural skepticism of the sort that is hard to hold on to in the present genre of the ripping yarn.

And yet, of course, there was a sequence and a story, and Worrall is in the prestigious company of the new historicists in giving us a story while holding back from specifying what kind of truth it might claim. At the same time some of his ambiguities are more open to specification or resolution, insofar as they are within the conventional framework of historical inquiry, assuming the possibility of that inquiry in the first place. Writing as he does about figures who have been deemed marginal or indeed ignored altogether, Worrall faces the problem of legitimation. This he hopes to accomplish with reference to a standard poststructuralist leveling principle, according to which there are "no soliloquies" (5) even for the most obscure figures:

It is not strictly necessary to prove the extent or the circulation of any ideology (which I think of as a readable formation of signs as texts), nor is it necessary to show that the performance of linguistic or other sign utterances is connected with other historical events involving human agency. Human agency is already in speech and writing which is already constructed as social . . . there are no discursively marginal figures in *Radical Culture*. (4)

This, I think, will not quite do. (And, to state the obvious, we are here facing something very germane to Blake studies). Of course language is already there, even as it is being modified, and of course any statement can have all sorts of effects in the culture within which it is created. But this is an argument about its potential, not its effect. To address effect we do have to deal with differences within discourse or between discourses, with ideology and mediation, with parts in relations to wholes, or bigger parts. To say that something is "already social" is to say nothing useful, unless one really does subscribe to a debased Foucauldian model of discourse (hardly Foucault's own) in which everything is always available to everybody, and everybody receives it. With this model, there are no problems for doing history: one just describes everything written or uttered as having the same status.

Worrall does not need to make an argument about effects in order to write his book, which could subsist perfectly well as an account of the records or as an account of statements and intentions, whether as narrative or as edition. But he has the habit of collapsing statements into effects, texts into acts, or of hypothesizing the one as the other. Spence's "political token coinage" may indeed be seen as an attempt to subvert the legal currency. But what does it mean to say that while the "sum total effect" of this effort was "negligible, the discursive implications are more far reaching?" (26). Whom did they reach, or not reach? And what exactly is "discourse" here? Ever since Foucault himself waffled on this word, others have rushed headlong into further wafflings, so that it seems reasonable to suggest that "discourse" is the word one uses precisely to *avoid* the more difficult and otherwise obligatory questions about history.³ Discourse, it seems, is the last affirmation of the postmodernist. To invoke it is to head off the abyss, so that we can still claim to be saying something.

There is an answer, of sorts, to the question of what kind of effect Spence's tokens might have had, or be having, and it is the one elected by the poets, who are not bound by the same conventions as the historians. Its principle is utopian, and/or anarchistic. All language is latent in future histories, and may as such be assumed available for future application and interpretation even if it is deemed marginal or redundant at its moment of origin. Shelley and Blake certainly proposed such a potential future for their own writings, well aware of their limited currency among their historical contemporaries. But Worrall does not resort to this hypothesis about relevance. He suggests instead that discourse *is* effect, at its moment of utterance or inscription. For him, "language is always transgressive," and revolutions occur when "language transgresses into another order of discourse, the discourse of action" (104). No matter that

this has happened so seldom in anyone's history; no matter that to call action "discourse" is to undermine all the other uses to which the same term is put throughout the book.

This conflation of discourse/language with effect leads to some odd claims at various points in the book—the points at which Worrall seeks most assertively to narrativize his materials. Hopkins Street Chapel becomes "a forum in which the discourse of the emergent could be grafted over the discourse of the dominant" (178). But where is the proof of emergence, and how was any dissenting rhetoric "dominant" to begin with? The discovery that some among the Pantonn Street regulars were either short or lame, or both, leads Worrall to wonder whether the radical clubs "may have been socially important for providing the opportunity for people with disabilities to fully realize their own potential" (36-37). He very much wants to contend that his writers were historically central, and had an effect. This is the anxiety that allows him to discover that Keats's "To Autumn" is "saturated with the common ideology of its contemporary ultra-radical culture" (202). One does not have to believe that Keats's poem is apolitical—though many do—in order to wonder about the integrity of this claim. Mere references to fullness and ripeness are not enough to render the poem emblematic of the "unappropriated fertility of England's land" (202).

These remarks, and others like them, suggest that a little discourse theory can be a limiting thing. And because they are so often no more than remarks, they do not much distract from the conventional historical interest of Worrall's book. Moreover, in his account of the treason trials, Worrall himself is much shrewder about the relation between discourse and effect, word and act. He shows that the state's interest lay in seeking to prove what he himself elsewhere assumes: that words were deeds, or clear indicators of intentions. This assumed, men could be hanged in good conscience for what they said, regardless of how they

said it and who could have heard them. The defense, on the contrary, sought to distinguish between texts and acts/intentions. They maintained that "language addressed does not mean language arrived" (109). In the words of Arthur Seale, recorded at Watson's trial, "it is impossible to swear that a man heard, for a man may turn a deaf ear to what is read" (cited 109). Again, here is Despard's lawyer quoting Montesquieu: "Words do not constitute an overt act—they remain only in idea" (61). The trial debates are fascinating analogues to the debates, then and now, about the First Amendment in the United States. One might deduce from them, and remind David Worrall, that discourse also is not an act, and that much of the work of making history begins from that understanding.

While I am suspicious, then, of the means by which Spence and the others are rendered into historical significance by way of the appeal to discourse, I certainly share Worrall's regret (6-7) at the relative absence of a Spencean component to subsequent radical doctrines. As I have hinted, some of the same pressures and dilemmas attend Blake studies. Blake himself occupies only a few pages in this book. He appears in the context of the 1800 London Bread Riots as the poeticizer of radical handbills (43-47), and there is a brief account of his own sedition trial, described as exceptional in Sussex history (67-75). But if Blake's literal presence in the book is slight, he is everywhere by analogy. For is not the problem of Spence-in-history very like that of Blake-in-history? Is not Blake, in his attributed madness, his unrecognized genius, and his lack of immediate effect, very much the poetical equivalent of Spence? Blake, of course, had had his effects on the traditions of art and literature: on Palmer, Linnell, the Rossettis, Yeats, and so on, even before he was familiarized in the universities. But literary critics have still wondered and investigated what other effects he had or might have had besides those on the utopian imagina-

tions of poets, artists and scholars. We know there is a tradition created by Blake, but we are unsure of the place of that tradition in the wider historical world and the public sphere. Thomas Spence has not been even this lucky. While it is now unfashionable to invoke madness as any sufficient explanation of what Blake wrote, it is still possible to dismiss Spence as the author of "ineffectual half-crazed theorizings."⁴ Even E. P. Thompson, who seems to have missed very little, left Spence on the margins of his history of the English working class, as Worrall points out (6). If Thomas Spence and the Spenceans should yet have their day, it will be no little thanks to the researches of David Worrall and others like him. In these times and after recent histories it is good to be reminded of those like James Watson who stood up to protest a world in which "four Millions are overwhelmed with distress—while half a Million only are living in a state of splendid Luxury" (cited 100). Where now are our Watsons, our Spences, our Wedderburns, our Blakes?

¹ John Brewer, *The Sinews of Power: War, Money and the English State, 1688-1783* (New York: Knopf, 1989); Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (New Haven and London: Yale UP, 1992). I leave aside the other major alternative reading of the eighteenth century, the radically conservative story told by J. C. D. Clark. For a comprehensive account of Clark's work and the debate around it, see G. S. Rousseau, "Revisionist Polemics: J. C. D. Clark and the Collapse of Modernity in the Age of Johnson," in Paul Korshin, ed., *The Age of Johnson* (New York: AMS P, 1989) 2: 421-50.

² The phrase, and the argument, belong to Perry Anderson: see *Considerations on Western Marxism* (London: New Left Books, 1976).

³ On this matter, see my *Subject to History: Ideology, Class, Gender* (Ithaca and London: Cornell UP, 1991) 4.

⁴ Stanley Jones, *Hazlitt, A Life: From Winterslow to Frith Street* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1989) 235.

*"STATES OF THE
HUMAN SOUL:
WILLIAM BLAKE'S
SONGS OF INNO-
CENCE AND OF
EXPERIENCE"*

Dr. Eugenie R. Freed, of the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, has prepared a half-hour video on "States of the Human Soul: William Blake's *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*." Taped, edited, and dubbed by Laura Cloete, the video features a host of Blake's images with a dash of Hogarth and medieval illumination while professional voice-over artists and Freed read from the *Songs* and offer analysis of the verbal and visual texts. A selection of background music completes this labor of love and expertise.

Through the courtesy of Dr. Freed, the tape was previewed by the 15 participants in the 1993 NEH Summer Seminar of "Blake: Innocence and Ex-

perience" (Athens GA). The group agreed in finding the tape accomplished, traditionally-oriented (as in the considerable reference to Milton and Blake's illustrations to Milton), and eminently useful both in itself and for the questions it can raise. It is an attractive addition to audio-visual resources for Blake.

Dr. Freed has permission to produce copies for schools and other educational institutions on a non-profit basis and would be pleased to hear from anyone interested in obtaining a copy. She may be reached at the Department of English, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, P.O. Wits, South Africa, or (more efficiently) by fax at 27-11-622-3460 (marked "for attention E. Isserow").

*THE 1993 BLAKE
CUMULATIVE INDEX*

Most subscribers know that *Blake* publishes an annual index of its contents. Longtime subscribers know

that we published a cumulative index of volumes 1-11 in 1978. All subscribers, young and old, with imperfect memories now have Patricia Neill, our managing editor, to thank for the new cumulative index of all 25 volumes of *Blake* since its inception in 1967. It arrived with your fall 1993 issue. We hope you will keep it handy for future reference.

CORRECTION

My apologies to both David Bindman and Andrew Lincoln. In the Contributor's Notes in the fall issue (volume 27, #2), I inadvertently cited Andrew Lincoln as the general editor of the Blake Trust editions of Blake's illuminated books. David Bindman is the general editor, and Andrew Lincoln is the editor of the Blake Trust edition of *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*. Thanks to Robert Essick for calling this mistake to my attention.

- Patricia Neill

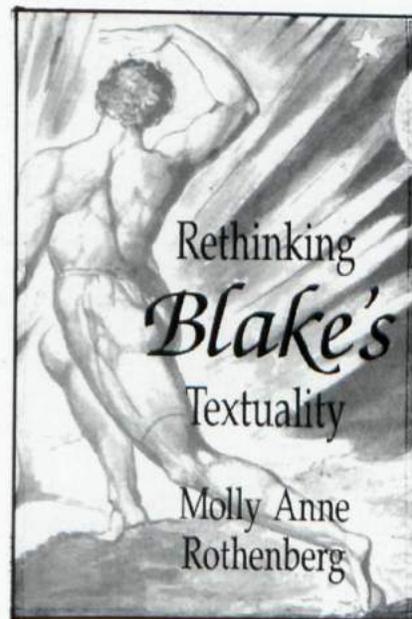
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III.

Then did astonish'd view'd the Worm upon its slony bed,
 Are these a Worm's ways of workdays, yet thou hast a Worm?
 I see thee like an infant weeping in the Lilies' bed,
 All ways are little ways, thou canst not speak, but thou canst weep:
 Is this a Worm? I see thee far helpless for waked: weeping,
 And none to answer, none to cherish thee with mother's smiles.
 For Clod of Clay heard the Worm's voice, he raised her pining head;
 She laid over the weeping infant, and her life exhil'd,
 In water's fountain, then on that she fixed her humble eyes.
 O women of the vales of flow, we live not for ourselves,
 You must be the weeping things, and so I am sad;
 My bosom of itself is cold, and of itself is dark.

PL

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But he that leaves the Lark, pours his oil upon my head,
 And kisses me, and pants for my dear love,
 And says, Thou mother of my children, I have loved thee,
 And I have given thee a crown that none can take away,
 But how this is sweet words, I have not, and I cannot know,
 I ponder, and I cannot ponder; so I live and love.

The daughter of Jesse wip'd her pining tears with her white veil,
 And said, How I have not thee, and therefore did I weep,
 But God would love in my love, and punish the evil love,
 That would, instead of his blessing here, for that he, stretch'd it
 With milk and oil, I never knew, and therefore did I weep,
 And I complain'd in thy mild air, because I hade sin'd,
 And by me thou in thy cold bed, and love me, always let.

Queen of the vales, the western Clay, answered, I heard thy words,
 And all the promises flow out my feet, but I have call'd them down,
 But thou O' them, enter my house, thy grace thou to enter,
 And to return, fear nothing, enter with the virgin lot.



IV

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