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Cover illustration: A Naked Youth Seen from the Side, Perhaps Robert Blake, c. 1779-80 (Butlin 71). Reproduced by permission of the Trustees of the British Museum.
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Who Was Robert Blake?

BY AILEEN WARD

What G. E. Bentley once called "the decent ignorance which still obscures Blake's family" is still far from dispelled. The ages and even the identities of the Blake children have been especially problematic. Among his nineteenth-century biographers, Alexander Gilchrist mentioned only three of Blake's siblings and knew the names of only two; J. T. Smith and Allan Cunningham's information was still scantier, and B. H. Malkin spoke only of Blake's father among his family members. Frederick Tatham in his manuscript Life of Blake gave the names though not the birthdates of Blake's four surviving siblings but got their birth order wrong. However, his Life was not known to Gilchrist and the other early biographers: it did not come to light till 1864, after Gilchrist's death, and was referred to only casually by Swinburne and E. J. Ellis; it was in fact not published till A. G. B. Russell's 1906 edition of Blake's Letters. No doubt it was this publication that spurred Arthur Symons to search the St. James Parish register, where in 1907 he discovered the names and birthdates of six children of James and Catherine Blake: James, born 10 July 1753; John, born 12 May 1755; William, born 28 November 1757; a second John, born 20 March 1760; Richard, born 19 June 1762; and Catherine, born 7 January 1764. All six were duly baptized a few weeks after birth. But Symons's discovery raised almost as many questions as it answered. The duplication of the name John could be explained by the assumption that the first John died in infancy, though there is no record of his death. Blake himself, in describing the second John as "the evil one" (E 721), left no doubt of his existence, but almost nothing is known of his life. The name of Richard is another puzzle, since he is never mentioned again in the Blake records. If, like the first John, he died in infancy, this fact is not recorded, although the death or burial dates of young children are found fairly often in parish registers of the time—witness those of four young siblings of Catherine Boucher Blake. And most puzzling of all, nowhere in the St. James Parish register is the birth or baptism of Blake's beloved younger brother Robert to be found.

Robert's absence from the record remains the most controverted question about the makeup of Blake's family. Symons answered it by suggesting that the parish clerk made a careless mistake in entering Robert's name as Richard at the time of birth. A Naked Youth Seen from the Side, Perhaps Robert Blake, c. 1779-80 (Butlin 71). Reproduced by permission of the Trustees of the British Museum.

1. A Naked Youth Seen from the Side, Perhaps Robert Blake, c. 1779-80 (Butlin 71). Reproduced by permission of the Trustees of the British Museum.

2. Though Gilchrist knew from Blake's letter to Flaxman of September 1800 that he had a sister, he referred to her only as "Miss Blake" (Life of William Blake ed. Ruthven Todd [London: Everyman, 1945; hereafter cited as LWB] 357-58).
3. G. E. Bentley, Jr., Blake Records (Oxford: Clarendon, 1969; hereafter cited as BR) 508. Tatham presumably had his information from Catherine Blake, who was understandably vague about the details of her husband's childhood. Bentley provides a full account of the birth and baptism dates of the Blake children. BR 1-7.
6. See Tatham in BR 508-09 and Bentley, BR 509n1 and n2.
7. BR 5.
his birth in June 1762—as he had previously done in recording the name of Blake's father as John, not James, at the birth of the first John in 1755. This plausible supposition satisfied Blake scholars—including Mona Wilson and Geoffrey Keynes— for over 50 years. Then in 1969 Bentley offered a new explanation of the omission of Robert from the parish records. In the roster of the Royal Academy Schools he discovered a Robert Blake enrolled as a student of engraving in April 1782 and described as having been "14 last 4th August"—i.e., born in 1767. This he conjectured was in all probability Blake's youngest brother, five years younger than hitherto supposed. To explain why Robert's name was missing from the St. James Parish register, Bentley proposed that some time after his daughter's birth in 1764 James Blake Sr. joined the Baptist Church and so never had the infant Robert baptized. In support of this theory he noted that one "____ Blake" (no Christian name given) was listed among the members of the Grafton Street Baptist Church from 1769 to 1772—two years after the conjectured date of Robert's birth, it should be noted. While Bentley thought it possible that the Royal Academy student was not related to Blake, he dismissed the idea as "unlikely," seeing "no good reason to challenge [the] accuracy" of the entry as "the only record of the birthdate of Blake's favorite brother." And from the time of the publication of his Blake Records this hypothesis has been almost unanimously accepted as the solution to the puzzle of Robert's birthdate and non-baptism.

9 *BR* 7, 20; see also Sidney C. Hutchison, "The Royal Academy Schools, 1768-1830," *Walpole Society* 38 (1962): 146. Hereafter, to avoid confusion, this Royal Academy student will be referred to as "Robert Blake," and Blake's youngest brother simply as "Robert."

10 *BR* 7-8.
And yet some doubts remain. A number of small facts or inferences—none of them decisive evidence taken singly, but certainly suggestive in their totality—point in another direction. First of all, the assumption that the Robert Blake who entered the Royal Academy Schools in 1782 was in fact Blake’s youngest brother is questionable, given the “hosts of Blakes” living in London at the time. Bentley himself collected some 23 London contemporaries who bore the name of William Blake, one of whom was also an engraver, and today “Robert Blakes” are at least as common as “Williams.” This profusion of Blakes also undermines the probability of the nameless “Blake” of the Grafton Street Baptist Church being Blake’s father, the premise of Bentley’s explanation for the absence of a baptismal record for Robert. Furthermore, it is striking that not one of Blake’s early biographers—neither Malkin, to whom Blake described his own experience at the Academy, nor Smith, who knew Robert personally, nor Tatham, who got his information mainly from Catherine Blake—spoke of Robert’s studying at the Royal Academy Schools, certainly a noteworthy event if it actually occurred. And if, as seems likely, Blake continued attending the Schools for a full six year term after his admission in 1779, the brothers’ overlapping terms would be a still more notable circumstance—though if, as is generally assumed, Blake left the Academy in disgust after a few months, it is hard to see why Robert would have decided to apply there two years later. Nor can Robert’s surviving drawings be taken as evidence of Academy tutelage. While his work reveals some genuine talent, not unlike Blake’s own in theme and mood, it is an undeveloped one, showing neither the precocious ability that would have gained him admission to the Academy at the unusually early age of 14 nor the influence of Academy training thereafter—though of course there is no record of how long he remained there if he actually enrolled.

12 See BR 22 and n1, 553-54.
13 Bentley, N&Q 210 (1965): 172-78; see also Symons 26-28. Today there are eight Robert Blakes (plus three Williams) listed in the Manhattan telephone book. The current London telephone directory unhelpfully identifies most of its subscribers merely by their initials, but it does list two “Roberts” among 35 “R. Blakes,” with only nine “W. Blakes” and no “Williams.” It might be noted that Robert’s supposed admission to the Academy occurred only four months before Blake’s marriage in August 1782, which would seem to ensure that Catherine knew of his studying there.
16 Only eight boys (including John Flaxman) aged 14 or younger were among the 414 students admitted to the Schools prior to Robert Blake in 1782 (see Hutchison 313-46). On Robert’s “barely passable” drawing, as for example in “The
actually enrolled.

Yet since it appears that Blake at some point tutored Robert in drawing—"a task which he must have found above all others delightful"—this has been taken to imply that the older brother was preparing the younger to qualify for admission to the Academy. This would seem to strengthen the likelihood that Robert was actually the student of engraving admitted to the Schools in 1782, and indeed it appears a remarkable coincidence that two Robert Blakes both born in the 1760s should both be training as engravers at the same time. Yet a number of similar duplications occur in the roster of the Royal Academy Schools which—like that of Blake's namesake engraver—considerably diminish the coincidentality. As for Blake's teaching Robert, the story stems from Smith's mention that William "considered him [Robert] his pupil" around the time Blake opened his printshop with Parker, and since the discovery of the name of Robert Blake in the Academy roster it has been fortified by reference to the Robert Blake Sketch Book, first described by Geoffrey Keynes in 1949. This rather decrepit notebook containing about 50 pages of drawings is inscribed "Robert Blake's / 1777 Book" on the front cover, with similar signatures elsewhere and seven occurrences of the date 1778. Many of the pages contain competent sketches of various parts of the human body on the left hand side, apparently by some instructor, with rather hesitant copies filling up the rest of the page, progressing from lips, noses, eyes, hands, arms and legs to faces, busts and full figures. Despite some awkwardness, especially in the early pages, the work shows real ability for a 10 or 11 year old boy. He was evidently aiming at a kind of academic realism: later pages include heads of women with eighteenth-century hats and hairstyles as well as carefully detailed drawings of birds, animals and a rural scene. But his pedestrian manner contrasts strongly with the abstract and archaic but imaginatively expressive figures of the authentic drawings that served as the boy's models have a more assured and detailed grasp of human anatomy than Blake's own work at the time. It is hard to see these sketches as the work of either William or Robert. A final argument against linking the Sketch Book to Blake's teaching Robert in 1777-78 is the date implied in Smith's account—that the lessons occurred during Blake's partnership in the printshop, i.e., around 1784, two years after Robert's supposed entrance at the Schools and not, as Bentley suggests, prior to his enrollment. Whatever the instruction amounted to, its purpose was probably to train Robert as an assistant with his engraving, as Blake later did with Catherine—a supposition which gives point to the vision of Robert later providing Blake with his most valuable trade secret.

Although Keynes and Butlin accept the attribution of the Sketch Book to Blake's brother, both Bindman and Essick are quite doubtful. Apart from its dissimilarity to the brothers' work, the provenance of the book, as given in a long note inside the front cover by an unidentified hand sometime after 1878, is suspicious. The note claimed...
one time friend Thomas Stothard after his death in 1834 and again in the sale of Sir Alexander Spearman's books in 1878; thereafter it disappeared, to surface again in 1919 when it was purchased for the Huntington Library.\(^{22}\) However, it was not listed among the 1500 items in the catalogue of the Stothard sale or (apparently) in that of the Spearman sale.\(^{28}\) Wherever it came from, the book was not linked to Blake's brother Robert till a century after his death by its nameless late nineteenth-century owner, whose note may not have been a deliberate fabrication so much as a bit of wishful thinking. Moreover, there is no reason to think that Blake would have given Stothard such a treasured memento as this Sketch Book if indeed it was his brother's: there is no evidence of a close friendship between Robert and Stothard, but rather a seven if not a 12-year difference in age, and Blake had ceased collaborating with Stothard a year before Robert's death, perhaps as a result of a cooling of their friendship.\(^{29}\) All in all, it is a more likely guess that the book belonged to the other Robert Blake—the precocious lad who entered the Royal Academy Schools at 14.

If then Blake's youngest brother was not the Robert Blake enrolled in the Schools in 1782, who was he, or rather when was he born? The preponderant evidence seems to point back to Symons's conjecture—that he was in fact the mysterious Richard Blake conjured into being in June 1762 by a slip of the parish clerk's pen. Several other considerations support this hypothesis. First of all, the absence of a death record for Richard Blake (or any other record subsequent to that of his birth) suggests that a child of that name never existed. That a death record is also lacking for the first John is not mate­rial: he may have died elsewhere than in London, as Bentley suggests, or even have been the son not of James but of John Blake, the father's name given in the entry of his birth, and lived to maturity for all we know.\(^{30}\) Second, Blake's mother, who was born around 1722, would have been 45 in 1767, the supposed date of Robert's birth: a not impossible age for child-bearing, but an improbable one, especially considering that this would have been her seventh child. Again, the close intimacy between William and Robert, which probably dates from Blake's return home at the end of his apprenticeship in 1779, is far more likely to have been based on a five than a 10-year's difference in age. The "Academy study" of a naked youth seen from the side, dated c. 1779-80, which Keynes took to be a portrait of Robert represents a youth of about 17 or 18, not a boy of 12:\(^{31}\) and though both date and identification are tentative, this too would support a birth date for Robert of 1762 rather than 1767.\(^{32}\)

The most telling argument against the Bentley hypothesis, however, is the fact that the only two early biographers to mention Robert's age at the time of his death in February 1787 both gave it as 24: Tatham, whose information came from Blake's widow, and Gilchrist, who never saw Tatham's Life and relied on other informants such as Linnell and Palmer, both of whom knew Blake well.\(^{33}\) By this

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\(^{22}\) Butlin 1: cat. 71; Keynes 4 and pl. 1.

\(^{23}\) The fact that Robert's birthdate is given as 1767 in the London section of the Mormon Genealogical Register does not prove Bentley's theory, since the source given is Bentley's own Blake Records. Unfortunately the other Robert Blake (born in August 1767) is not listed anywhere in England, in London or outside: but this proves nothing, since the Genealogical Register relies on fragmentary parish records for its information.

\(^{24}\) Tatham in BR 510; Gilchrist 51. Gilchrist placed Robert's death "in his twenty-fifth year," i.e., a few months before his twenty-fifth birthday in June. Bentley noted this testimony but was not convinced by it (BR 31, 510n1); yet the congruence of two independent records is impressive. That Gilchrist had not seen Tatham's Life seems clear from internal evidence. His few direct citations of Tatham mostly concern matters not mentioned in Tatham's own Life (cf. LWB 261, 366) and often appear to be based on oral reports (e.g. LWB 352); but where Gilchrist discusses matters which are included in Tatham's Life his account either significantly departs from Tatham's (cf. LWB 10 and BR 511, LWB 81 and BR 530, LWB 355 and BR 534) or contradicts it (LWB 85 and BR 521) or is attributable to another source (cf. LWB 31-32 and BR 517 and 459, LWB 351 and BR 471). Though Gilchrist's account of Blake's midnight composition seems to derive from Tatham (cf. LWB 31-32 and BR 526n1), the unnamed "cordially appreciative friend" who supplied Gilchrist with this and much of his other information is almost certainly Samuel Palmer in one of his frequent discussions with Gilchrist of matters probably familiar to all the Ancients. Gilchrist's mentions of Tatham are infrequent and perfunctory compared with his own many cordial references to Palmer (cf. LWB 299). Thus, while Tatham's information about Robert's age at death was no doubt supplied by Catherine, with whom he became familiar after Blake's death, Gilchrist's most probably derived from Blake himself through Palmer.
account, Robert must have been born sometime between February 1762 and February 1763. Apparently it was their independent testimony that persuaded Symons that the name of Richard in the parish register for June 1762 must have been a clerical error for Robert; and indeed their record of Robert's age at death is in the end the only explicit evidence we have for his birthdate.34

Thus when all aspects of the question are considered, the conclusion seems almost inescapable: Robert was born in June 1762, not August 1767, and a slip of the pen accounts for the confusion over his name. More than merely revising the record, however, this investigation underscores a basic principle of biography. A single document, however impressive its credentials, cannot establish a fact apart from its total narrative context. The entry from the Schools register remains a tantalizing but isolated item, unsupported by any firm corroborative evidence, among the myriad minute particulars which the biographer of Blake must sift and assemble. Written evidence, while it can provide uniquely valuable information, can also be mistaken or misleading, and must therefore be scrutinized as carefully as all other kinds; conversely, nonverbal evidence may be admitted even where it appears to contradict the written evidence. In short, documentary evidence should not be privileged to the exclusion of all other kinds; we should remember how little of any life finds its way into written accounts, and keep our minds open to the mute testimony of things and circumstances and inferences from them. Every piece of biographical evidence, documentary or otherwise, must be viewed against the total experience of the biographical subject. It is the living context of each event that shapes isolated records into the semblance of biographical truth.

34 Bentley points out in correspondence that even the evidence of a death date is not definitive: Blake's brother James's age at death is given wrongly as 71 in the perfunctory six-word entry in the Bunhill Fields Burial register when he as actually 73 and a half (cf. BR 340 and n4). However, James's death was not the subject of any biographical interest that would have corrected the record, while Robert's death was a matter of concern to Blake's early biographers. Unfortunately his age is not given in the Bunhill Fields register as quoted by Bentley (BR 32). I wish to thank Professor Bentley for his generosity in reading the final draft of this article and offering perceptive criticism on this and other matters.

MINUTE PARTICULARS

“What have I to do with thee?”

BY JUNE STURROCK

The rejected “thee” of the fourth line of “To Tirzah” is Mary in that she was the original recipient of Jesus's snub at the marriage at Cana (John 2.4); she is also Tirzah because that is how the poem is addressed. Yet perhaps the preceding three lines may be read as directed (in rebuke? in consolation?) rather towards the two women who on the green hill below the text of the poem support the decaying corpse of a man:

Whate'er is Born of Mortal Birth,
Must be consumed with the Earth
To rise from Generation free.1

This group suggests Mary and Martha of Bethany with their brother Lazarus already decomposing, as Martha warns Jesus (John 11.39). Indeed the central figure resembles Lazarus in Blake's painting of The Raising of Lazarus in Aberdeen (B 487), in that Lazarus is emerging from the ground (not the sepulchre mentioned in John 11.38-41) and seems to be half in and half out of the grave. Certainly the inscription on the robes of the old man bending over the corpse—“It is raised a spiritual body” (1 Corinthians 15.44)—suggests Blake's reading of the raising of Lazarus as a spiritual resurrection misinterpreted by a materialistic church

1 Blake is quoted from Erdman's edition, which is abbreviated as E with page numbers following in the parenthetical references. Other abbreviations include B (Butlin's catalogue) and IB (Erdman's Illuminated Blake).

2 Both Mellor and Lincoln speak of Lazarus in this connection, but neither identifies Mary and Martha, or deals fully with the implications of the Lazarus story. Mellor says of this design “an old man pours a reviving, baptismal water upon a corpse held by two women. This iconographic fusion of the descent from the cross and the raising of Lazarus is summed up in the lines engraved upon the old man's robe—"It is raised a Spiritual Body." Mortal existence is totally evil; only through death can fallen man be freed from his corrupted human form and redeemed as a spiritual, purified body” (p.189) Lincoln, who foregrounds the negative reading of the design allows that "seen as an image of redemption the design shows humanity "Raised a Spiritual Body, "brought back from the grave like Lazarus (whose two sisters had faith in his resurrection),” but qualifies this by saying that "the Saviour who presides over this vision of Liberty is not Jesus but his Father, the God who promotes the vision of human nature as sinful" (201-02).
which completed its creed with the assertion of belief in "the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting.""

The comforting of Martha and Mary by the promise of resurrection for their brother is a repeated note in Vala, or The Four Zoas, where they appear as Daughters of Beulah:

The daughters of Beulah saw the Divine Vision they were comforted
And as a Double female form loveliness & perfection of beauty
They bowed the head & worshipped & with mild voice spoke these words

Lord, Saviour if thou hast been here our brother had not died
And now we know that whatsoever thou wilt ask of God
He will give it thee . . .

The Saviour mild & gentle bent over the corpse of Death
Saying If ye will believe your Brother shall rise again

(FZ 55.13-15; 56.1-18, E 337)

This dialogue follows closely the gospel version of the exchange between Martha and Jesus (John 11.21-27). Again in Night the Seventh the daughters of Beulah find comfort in these same words in the face of death when they write on "all their tombs & pillars & on every Urn" the eternal promise "If ye will believe your Brother shall rise again" (FZ 87.4-6, E 367). The daughters of Beulah are still identified with the sisters of Bethany in Night the Eighth when in praising the Lamb of God "they anoint his feet with ointment they wipe them with the hair of their head" (FZ 113.37, E 377) just as Mary of Bethany tends Jesus in the brief interval in John's gospel between the raising of Lazarus and the passion narrative (12.3). Flowing hair is a distinguishing mark of Mary of Bethany (as of Mary Magdalene), and in the "To Tirzah" design, as in The Raising of Lazarus, the two women are distinguished by their hair, one loose and flowing and the other bound or (in the painting) covered.

The old man offering a pitcher is more mysterious. He looks like the Ancient Bard in "The Voice of the Ancient Bard," which follows soon after "To Tirzah" in seven copies of the Songs of Experience, but also resembles Blake's portrayals of Joseph of Arimathea, with his long hair, long beard and robes: this is how Joseph is represented in three of the four versions of Joseph of Arimathea Preaching to the Inhabitants of Britain (B 262, 286, 780). He is long-haired, bearded and old in two other paintings, The Body of Christ Borne to the Tomb (B 426) and The Entombment (B 427). Joseph is associated with the dead body of Jesus, as the follower who takes him away for burial. If the old man in the "To Tirzah" design is Joseph of Arimathea, Mellor's suggestion of "an iconicographic fusion of the raising of Lazarus and the descent from the cross" (189) is strengthened.

Joseph of Arimathea is associated not only with British Christianity but also with the figure of the artist, for Blake sees him as "One of the Gothic Artists who Built the Cathedrals in what we call the Dark Ages" (E 671). The dead man (Lazarus) is thus possibly flanked by, on the one hand Mary and Martha, and on the other hand by Joseph of Arimathea; that is on the one hand by two women identified by Blake as daughters of Beulah, and thus as Muses, and on the other hand by the image of the Gothic artist. If both Joseph of Arimathea and the sisters of Lazarus are too concerned with physical death in the biblical narratives that concern them, all three believe in the power of Jesus and are associated with what can transform their vision, the work of the arts. Thus indeed in this design the sexes rise "to work and weep" (8). Work after all is essentially redemptive in the poems that are roughly contemporary with "To Tirzah" and with the Joseph of Arimathea inscription.

The first three lines of "To Tirzah" may thus be read as words of comfort in that they speak not only of the certainty of death and corruption but also of the certainty of rising again spiritually: and the design addresses this element in the poem. These lines are an affirmation followed by a strong rejection: the words of the fourth line are as abrupt

5 In the other version he is shown naked, but bearded and old (B 76).
6 Presumably this is why Bindman speaks of him as a figure of the artist (124).
7 Erdman implies that the date of "To Tirzah" is approximately 1803-06 (800). The Joseph of Arimathea inscription is from 1809-10 (889). Jerusalem and Milton, texts in which work is central, date from approximately 1804-15 (809) and 1804-10 (806) respectively.
8 Erdman seems to prefer such a "hopeful vision" suggesting that we could "see the two women and the pitcher-offering old man . . . as spiritual comforters . . . . As the "Mortal part" is consumed, the "Spiritual Body" is welcomed into the garden, and love does give support" (1894).
and disconcerting in the poem as they are in their original biblical context. The various verbal elements of the poem—the harshness of these repeated words, their added impact as Jesus' own words, their allusion to the mother of Jesus, the elements of the poem—the harshness of these repeated words, their added impact as Jesus' own words, their allusion to the mother of Jesus, the cruel imprisoner of the senses, the apparent clumsiness of the repetition in the first line (born, birth)—all work together to foreground birth as death. Read as a visual text, however, the poem with its greater complexity of biblical allusion—referring not only to the Jesus who denies his mother and dies as an act of liberation, but also to the Jesus who loves his friends and whose death leads to the life of a "spiritual body"—addresses death as birth. This sense is strengthened by the allusion to the story of Lazarus in the second stanza: "Mercy changed Death into Sleep" (7). Jesus the merciful, the forgiver of sins, associates the death of Lazarus with sleep when speaking to his disciples: "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth, but I go, that I may awake him out of sleep" (John 11.11). The rising from such a sleep ends Jerusalem and is besought by the bard who introduces the Songs of Experience.

The fourth and the last eight lines of the poem are so absolute in their rejection of the maternal and the natural* that they have often obscured the other implications of both song and design. Thus the female figures have been seen as necessarily negative—as useless Sex-Love and Mother-Love (Keynes 52), as "Tirzah-like" figures (Lincoln 201), or as Rahab and Tirzah (Lindsay 83). Yet while "the extreme hostility and contempt for the female and the maternal" as Mary Lynn Johnson says (61) cannot be easily dismissed, the presence of the sisters of Bethany in the design suggests not the overpowering anger of the third and fourth stanzas, but the power of belief and the power of human art.

Rajan speaks of this song's "deeply pessimistic antinaturalism" (222); Leader sees it as "the Bard's nadir" (202); Lincoln's long and judicious discussion of the poem suggests that it can be seen in two ways, either as showing "a clarification of vision" or as emphasizing the death of Jesus, which emphasis "may confirm the power of Tirzah by reinforcing a self-denying attitude" (201). I would add this qualification: the figures of Mary and Martha of Bethany (and perhaps of Joseph of Arimathea) in the design, together with the obligation "to work" ("and weep") in the text suggest that the song is not a pure rejection of human life. Art remains, work remains (as the last plate of Jerusalem shows Los and Enitharmon still laboring at the forge and the loom). If as Lincoln suggests "as the fruits [on the tree in the design] indicate, the myth of Eden predominates here" then Adam's biblical curse—work—is seen here as his blessing. The preceding reading is intended not so much to elucidate as to complicate: after all, the song itself, like "The Tyger" (but with no final modification), ends with a repetition of its initial question.

**Works Cited**


*Such a connection and rejection of the maternal and the natural is an aspect of various religious traditions: E. P. Thompson, discussing contemporary views of the humanum maternum, says of "To Tirzah" that "if we set aside the enigmatic second verse, might be an expression of orthodox Swedenborgian doctrine" (148). He also describes the poem as employing "the imagery of the feminine principle (the womb) clothing, enclosing, and binding the spirit in a way which Muggletonians as well as neo-Platonists would have understood" (81).
A Possible Corollary Source for The Gates of Paradise 10

BY STEPHEN C. BEHRENDT

In the course of examining Gerda S. Norvig's new study, Dark Figures in the Desired Country: Blake's Illustrations to The Pilgrim's Progress, I was struck by the author’s discussion of plate 10 of Blake's 1793 The Gates of Paradise (“Help! Help!”), which discussion echoes David V. Erdman's earlier argument that a strong connection exists between this plate and the preceding one (“I Want! I Want!”), and a well-known caricature print by James Gillray from the same year, The Slough of Despond. Norvig argues that Gillray deliberately invoked the context of Pilgrim's Progress, both in his explicit citation of Bunyan's title (in the title he inscribed at the bottom of the print) and in the verbal and iconographic details he included, and that Blake's subsequent engravings are therefore indebted both to Gillray and to Bunyan. While both the visual correspondences in Blake's two engravings (like the similar shapes of the land masses in the distance in the Gillray and “Help! Help!”) and the verbal connections between their captions and Gillray's print (especially the recurrence of the phrase, “Help! Help!”) certainly support the suggestion that Blake had Gillray's print in mind, another visual precedent may well be involved here as well.

In 1778 the American painter John Singleton Copley's remarkable painting, Watson and the Shark, became the sensation of that year's exhibition at the Royal Academy of Art. A contemporary critic fairly brimmed over with praise: "We heartily congratulate our Countrymen on a Genius, who bids fair to rival the great Masters of the Ancient Italian Schools." While Blake was not formally admitted to the Royal Academy Schools until 8 October 1779, it seems scarcely credible that he could have been unaware of the painting that had achieved such popular success in the previous year's exhibition. Moreover, Copley profited from the large number of engravings made after his picture, and it is therefore reasonable to assume that Blake likely knew the picture in both versions. The original painting (Copley painted a near-duplicate, which he never sold, and several years later a smaller, vertical version) was commissioned by Brook Watson, the Watson of the title who, appearances notwithstanding, survived the shark's attack although it cost him a leg, and who left the painting to Christ's Hospital when he died. The engraved version of Copley's picture was published in 1779, "seemingly with very good success," by Valentine Green, the successful engraver who also prepared engraved versions of other Copley paintings like the 1782 engraving after the full-length portrait of George Washington also engraved by Green. The less well-known engraved


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3 David Bindman, Blake as an Artist (Oxford: Phaidon, 1977) 19.

version is reproduced with this present note, rather than the more familiar and frequently reproduced painted version housed in the National Gallery of Art, in Washington, D.C. That Blake was familiar with Copley's work generally became apparent again later as well, when on the first page of the Prophecy section of *America* he borrowed, for the group fleeing the flames in the left margin, from a group at the lower right corner of Copley's *Death of Major Peirson* (1784), which likewise existed in a widely-known engraved version.6

The struggling figure in Blake's "Help! Help!"


bears striking visual resemblances to Copley's figure of the endangered and seemingly helpless Brook Watson, which figure is itself borrowed from the figure of a helpless child in Raphael's last altarpiece.7 The relationship of Blake's little figure to Copley's monumental one becomes even more striking when we recall that in reproductive engraving the engraver generally reverses the right-left orientation of his or her original, which in this case would produce a figure very much like that which Blake has drawn, complete with dramatically extended hand and with hair streaming out and away in the water from the figure's head. The waves in Blake's engraving are likewise much like those in Copley's painting. Norvig makes much of the curi-

7 Williams 30.
ous unidentified object that bobs on the crest of the wave to the right of the man’s arm in Blake’s engraving. I have no idea, either, of what this is supposed to be, nor does either the painted or the engraved version of Copley’s picture offer any useful guidance. There is something there, certainly, perhaps a bobber or flotation device of some sort (the specks on the object might be taken to suggest the texture of cork, for instance). Even under magnification, however, the object refuses to divulge its identity with any certainty.

Finally, a clear thematic connection exists between the two images. In the Copley the figure of Watson (whose vulnerability is underscored by his being rendered naked) is seemingly faced with imminent destruction: the various efforts of would-be rescuers appear to be both ineffective and too late. Even the life-line that has been offered Watson proves valueless, draped as it is across the extended forearm of the unresponsive Watson. Blake’s engraving only makes physically explicit (by actually isolating the struggling figure) what is implicit in Copley’s painting: the apparently total inability of the struggling figure to help, or to save, himself. Whether we take Geoffrey Keynes’ word that Blake’s emblem is “self-explanatory”—that it depicts “Man drowning helplessly in the materialistic Sea of Time and Space”—or whether we go further and agree with Gerda Norvig that the engraving asserts that drowning in the disappointed recognition that what one desires is out of reach constitutes “the next critical stage in the integration of the whole man,”8 the fact remains that both Blake’s image and Copley’s portray individuals in desperate straits indeed. That Copley’s Watson cannot be helped by his friends would have been less important to Blake—though he would have appreciated the pathos—than the fact that he cannot help himself, as the neglected life-line indicates. It is this thematic connection that seems to me to underscore the validity of recognizing in Blake’s apparent borrowing from Watson and the Shark a connotation that is intellectual as well as merely iconographical.


Philip D. Sherman’s Blakes at Brown University

A visit to an exhibition of Brown’s choice holdings has led to the recognition of five printed plates from Blake’s illuminated books that had been untraced: a single leaf bearing on its front and back uncolored impressions of plates 11 (“Arise O Rintrah . . .”) and 17 (“Ethinthus Queen of Waters . . .”) from the assemblage called copy c of Europe and three leaves from the posthumous copy o of Songs bearing uncolored pulls of plates 13 (“The Little Boy lost”), 20 and 21 (the first and second plates of “Night”). These items, along with a posthumous pull of Blake’s wood engraving XIII for Thornton’s Virgil, 1874 restrikes of plates 15 and 20 of the Illustrations of the Book of Job, and a Colnaghi restrike of the fifth state of Blake’s engraving of Chaucer’s Canterbury Pilgrims, are now in the Koopman collection in the John Hay Library at Brown University. All were given to Brown by Philip D. Sherman, an Oberlin professor and Brown alumnus who died in 1957, as part of a huge collection that he named in honor of Koopman, a Brown librarian. G. E. Bentley, Jr., Robert N. Essick, Mary Lynn Johnson, Charles Ryskamp, Joseph Viscomi, and the staff of the John Hay Library (especially Jennifer Lee) helped me to make sense of these discoveries.

Sherman purchased the Europe leaf, Songs 20 and 21, the proof from Thornton’s Virgil, and the Job engravings from the Weyhe Gallery (New York) in 1938 or 1939; in his copy of Weyhe’s Catalogue #81 (December 1938), preserved at Brown, he wrote “Mine” in the margin next to several entries on pp. 11 and 12, and dated the annotations 4 August 1939. (Sherman may have been mistaken in claiming the entry for Europe—see below.) Songs 13 could have come through Weyhe as well, but it is not listed in this catalogue; because it has been trimmed differently and bound separately, it may have been acquired at another time. According to Blake Books, the Weyhe Gallery probably broke up copy o of Songs, which once contained at least 17 plates from both Innocence and Experience (Bentley 429). Bentley’s forthcoming Blake Books Supplement will describe the fates of eight additional pages from Songs o.

Europe c

The leaf containing two plates from Europe (accession number KPR 142) is much more important from a scholarly perspective than the posthumous pages from Songs and the other restrikes. The Europe leaf was matted for the exhibition at Brown, but it is now loose in the portfolio that also contains the Job engravings. Its left edge (recto) is irregular where it has been cut from an earlier binding: the leaf now measures 22.3 centimeters across the top, 22.7 across the bottom, and is 31.2 centimeters high. It bears various unidentified dealers’ or collectors’ annotations in pencil (recto, top left: “18,” lower left: “Rx,” and “Europe page 6,” bottom margin: “This is the one in the [?]”; verso, top left: “19,” lower left: “Europe page 16”), as well as the number 38, written in ink at upper right in the recto. The leaf came from what is called copy c of Europe, which was never an actual copy of the book but the uncoordinated plates from Europe that were once included in a volume of miscellaneous Blakeana assembled by George A. Smith in the mid-nineteenth century. This collection is described in Blake Books under “The Order in which the Songs of Innocence and Experience ought to be paged” (337-41).

The leaf from Europe c at Brown is well printed on heavy wove paper, without watermarks, in two different colors of ink: a slightly brownish gray for plate 11 (illus. 1) and a grayish blue for plate 17 (illus. 2), with slight vestiges of black ink appearing along the edges of a few relief areas on both sides. Plate 11 probably would be darker but still gray if printed more heavily, and 17 would be decidedly blue, but not so bright a blue as the ink on plate 17 in copy B (on inks, see Viscomi 95). Both plates are printed squarely, and appear to have been carefully registered to each other in the recto/verso format. The plate border (the relief line around the edges of the plate created by the strips of wax used to hold acid on the plate during etching) has been wiped before printing on plate 17 and on the upper left corner of 11, as Blake often did in printing relief plates before 1795. This must be a 1794 impression because plate 17 is in the first of three states: line 32 reads “She ceas’d, and all went forth to sport,” rather than “She ceas’d, for All were forth at sport,” and line 35 still ends “and the angel trumpet blew”; this phrase was gouged out of the plate in later states. The leaf at Brown must therefore have been printed by Blake, even if he never finished it or assembled into a book the pages known as Europe c.

The discovery of this leaf solves some old puzzles and raises some new questions. A leaf of a slightly different size but bearing plates 11 and 17 on recto and verso that was formerly in the collection of Charles Ryskamp (sold in July 1994 by a Connecticut dealer to Robert N. Essick) has been confused with the one just discovered at Brown. In Blake Books Bentley traced the Ryskamp/Essick leaf from George A. Smith to Quaritch to Muir to Macgeorge to George C. Smith to Weyhe, after which it disappears until sold by “Allen of New York” in about 1964 to Ryskamp (Bentley 339-41). Sherman’s annotation in the Weyhe catalogue, noted above, and the closer fit of the Brown leaf to the fuller description in the 1938 Parke-Bernet catalogue of the George C. Smith sale (quoted below), led me at first to believe that this entire provenance should be assigned to the leaf at Brown, leaving the Ryskamp/Essick leaf an orphan. But the entry in the Weyhe catalogue that was claimed by Sherman is more likely a description of the Ryskamp/Essick leaf, which is printed in green on both sides, than of the leaf at Brown, which is unmistakably gray and blue:
125. "ARISE O RINTRAH . . . " Plate 6 of "Europe a Prophecy," almost full page composition of a kneeling woman clasping a patriarch with outstretched arms, superb in design, etched on copper and printed in relief as a woodcut in green ink; and on the reverse page 16 of the same book, "Ethnthus Queen [sic] of Waters," also printed in green ink, MacGeorge Coll., exceedingly scarce 125.00 (Weyhe 11).

Thus the Ryskamp/Essick leaf is probably first recorded in this Weyhe entry; the leaf is now closely trimmed, and does not bear an ink page number like those George A. Smith wrote on the items bound with "The Order of the 'Songs,'" though it might have been part of that collection or the later Macgeorge collection, as claimed in the Weyhe catalogue. The leaf at Brown does have an ink page number, 38, that corresponds to an appropriate place in the collected volume (which place had been tentatively assigned to an untraced impression of Europe 15; see Bentley 338). Both the Ryskamp/Essick and the Brown leaves must have come through Weyhe at some point; the Brown leaf was probably purchased from Weyhe in 1939 (Sherman must have recalled from whom he bought it and when, even if he didn't closely check the ink color in the catalogue entry). The Brown leaf is certainly
the one sold to Weyhe in 1938, as described in the Parke-Bernet catalogue:

32. [Blake]. Five Plates for “Europe, a Prophecy”. 5 plates on 3 leaves printed in gray, grayish-blue, sepia, and in black. These are apparently proofs.
   (1) Begins “Arise O Rintrah”. Printed in gray.
   Measures 12 3/16 by 8 7/8 inches [31.3 by 22.5 cm].
   (2) Begins “Ethinthus queen of waters”. Printed in grayish-blue on the reverse of the preceding plate (Parke-Bernet 17).

These colors are correct for the Brown leaf, as are the dimensions; the Ryskamp/Essick leaf is much smaller: 25.6 cm high and 19.3 cm wide.

The pairing of plates 11 and 17 on these leaves could have been an artifact of experimental proof-printing in which, to save paper, Blake grabbed at a proofed plate 17 on the other side to see how the unused impression of plate 11 would come out. It was possible that sequence happened a decade or two later with those plates of Europe that have plates from Jerusalem printed on the other side (Bentley 144). But the conjunction of plates 11 and 17 on recto and verso may be something more than an ordinary consequence of the pairing. The pairing may instead be a vestige of an early version of the book that was superseded rather than a mere accident. There are at least three additional 11/17 pairs, none of them in copies of Europe that are generally regarded as complete: in copy a, at the British Museum; in copy b, at the Morgan Library; and another leaf from Europe c at the Newberry Library (Bentley 144). The mere existence of five such pairs suggests that they were created deliberately rather than randomly. Further, Blake wiped the plate borders before printing the Ryskamp/Essick, Newberry and Brown 11/17 leaves (and perhaps the others as well), a procedure that would not have been necessary for most workshop proofs, such as those created to check the progress of a design or to monitor the adjustment of the press.

Evidence in the text confirms that the leaf at Brown and its 11/17 cousins, some of which have been modified extensively in various ways, mark phases in the transition from one version of Europe, probably a shorter one, to the version that he produced as finished copies in several configurations. Andrew Lincoln noticed in 1978 that copy a, the “incomplete” uncolored copy in the British Museum (with an 11/17 pair), could actually constitute an “early version” of Europe that lacked the episode on plates 12-16. It is not hard to envision the material on plate 17 following that on 11, for both consist of roughly parallel invocations of her offspring by Enitharmon. (For those using Erdman’s revised edition or The Illuminated Blake, plates 11 and 17 in Bentley’s pagination correspond with Erdman’s plates 8 and 14.) As Lincoln suggested, the narrative on plates 12-16 must be an interpolation, though it could have been assembled in part from plates that were originally elsewhere in Europe (see also Larrissy, who describes connections with America). Plates 12-16 encompass an independently coherent description of Enitharmon’s 1800-year sleep, beginning abruptly at the top of plate 12 and ending on plate 16, when she wakes up and returns to her invocations. It is true that Ethinthus, addressed at the beginning of 17, is first mentioned in the last four lines of 16, but as Viscomi notes in correspondence, the 11 lines at the end of this plate can be seen as a transitional device to reintroduce the interrupted song of Enitharmon.

Blake apparently made the textual revisions on plates 17 and 18, the mechanics of which are described by Viscomi (278-79), in order to accommodate the new narrative created by the interpolation. He modified line 17:32 from “She ceas’d, and all went forth to sport,” the original printed text in the 11/17 pairs, to “She ceas’d, for All were forth at sport” in the finished copies because, once plates 12-16 had been added, the party to which Enitharmon was calling her sons and daughters had already been going on without her for 1800

1 Unused impressions of plate 11 might be expected to exist, for the extensive white-line engraving (executed with a burin after etching) that delineates the clouds on that plate might have called for regular proofing to check progress. But in fact plate 11 on the Brown leaf is in exactly the same state as all other surviving impressions—so it probably didn’t become scrap paper because Blake was dissatisfied with the design or the text on the copperplate. Further, plate 11 printed at least as well as in pages that were used in Europe, so it wouldn’t have been rejected for that reason.

2 It is also possible that Blake and/or his wife became confused in trying to print pages in recto/verso format, the arrangement used in several early copies. Losing one’s place would be easy in the case of a book with no printed page numbers and few catchwords. Viscomi shows in Blake and the Idea of the Book that Blake usually produced illuminated books in small editions, so he and Catherine could have printed plate 17 several times on the back of good impressions of plate 11 when they meant to print plate 12, and then put these leaves aside when they discovered the error. But plate 17 is in at least three different colors in these 11/17 pairs, which makes a single printing disaster a little less likely.
years. Similarly, the angel and his trumpet were excised from lines 17:35 and 18:1 in the completed books because this comparatively simple apocalyptic gesture had been replaced by the more complicated episode involving the "red limb'd Angel" and the "mighty Spirit" of Newton on plate 16 (see Lincoln 213 and Bentley 155).

Europe as a whole generated an unusual number of surviving "proof" pages and variant states (Viscomi 276-79); each of these may have its own story to tell. Some of these pages appear to have been rejected preliminaries, some transitional states, and others private afterthoughts, as David Erdman regards the variant title pages (397). We certainly have an extraordinary wealth of complex evidence to work with: the other 11/17 pairs, especially those with modifications in ink and by erasure; other variant pages; additional recto/verso pairs of other plates; inferences that can be drawn from the order in which Blake used the backs of the America copperplates to make the Europe copperplates (see Bentley 145 and Viscomi 413n3); offsets on "proofs" and other pages; and more. It is possible that the version of Europe in which 17 followed 11 was merely one of several orders with which Blake experimented. Yet because there are five 11/17 pairs, Blake probably had settled on a complete ur-Europe (perhaps corresponding to copy a, as Lincoln suggests) that he regarded as ready to publish, and he began to do so. Then he decided to make radical changes, one consequence of which is the extraordinary number of unused plates from this illuminated book. Scholars attempting to sort out the composition process of Europe must carefully consider the potential significance of all the "proof" leaves, especially the recto/verso pairs, but even a study of the further implications of the 11/17 pairs alone will depend on a much more thorough survey of them than I have done.

Songs o

All three plates from the posthumous Songs o at Brown are printed in the orange-brown ink that Bentley describes as having been used for Songs 39, copy o, in his collection (Bentley 371). Songs 13 and 20 are underinked, and all three plates were printed with their borders. The poor inking and the unwiped borders are characteristic of posthumous pulls by Frederick Tatham, as is the fact that the platemark dimensions run about two millimeters larger than those of copies printed by Blake, who dampened the paper before printing to improve ink absorption; it shrank as it dried (Bentley 67). Songs 13 and 20 both show portions of a J WHATMAN watermark that do not include a date, though the paper is probably the same as that of Songs 39, copy o, which has an 1831 Whatman watermark (Bentley 371).

Songs 13 is by itself in blue boards, together with a loose fragment trimmed from the page; the leaf now measures 16.0 by 23.0 centimeters (using width by height as in Blake Books). The fragment measures 18.1 by 2.5 centimeters; the whole leaf
was therefore almost as wide as Bentley's Songs 39 from this copy of the book, which measures 18.6 centimeters. The fragment, inscribed in pencil "Page from Blake's Songs of Innocence Chas Eliot Norton/SP 40," identifies one nineteenth-century owner of the whole book. Songs 20 and 21 are bound together in the same kind of blue boards as those containing Songs 13, but the two leaves have been even more severely trimmed, to 11.8 by 20.0 centimeters. They are both inscribed (at the bottom of the leaves, in the same hand as on the scrap from Songs 13), "Blake Songs of Innocence Charles Eliot Norton Collection." The accession numbers in the Koopman Collection for the Songs pages are KPR 178-80.

**Other Blakes**

The impression of Blake's wood engraving XIII from Thornton's Virgil (illus. 3; accession number KPR 177) is probably what its mount claims it to be, a posthumous impression once owned by Samuel Palmer that was taken by Edward Calvert from the blocks when they were owned by John Linnell. The heavily inked print is on thin paper without a visible watermark, trimmed to the very edge of the image at 7.8 by 3.6 centimeters, mounted on a thick card that is only about a millimeter wider all around, then pasted on heavy wove paper and bound in brown boards. An inscription on the original mount by A. H. Palmer, Samuel's son, has been copied onto the stiff paper on which the print and card are now mounted: "These identical proofs [there is only one now] of Blake's Philips's Pastoral (and this mount) were S. Palmer's constant companions for many years. The proofs were printed by Edward Calvert, at Brixton, for John Linnell. See No. 28, V and A Museum Exhibition Catalogue p. 27. A. H. P." One might suspect the younger Palmer of mild puffery here. Samuel Palmer also owned (and gave away) at least one impression from the unmutilated blocks made in his presence by Blake himself (Palmer 2: 707-08), and the particular image on Plate XIII contributed less decisively to the Shoreham style than did the pastoral scenes among Blake's illustrations in this series. But the gracefully distorted dancers here resemble figures that appear in Palmer's work and that of the other "Ancients" (see Paley), and this print may well have been important to him.

The *Job* engravings (accession numbers KPR 140 and 141) are good "post-proof" impressions on thin India paper laid into unmarked heavy wove paper; they are probably from the final 1874 issue of 100 copies ordered by John Linnell (Bentley 524). The wove paper of *Job* 15 measures 33.0 by 43.9 centimeters (India 16.3 by 20.8); *Job* 20 is 34.3 by 42.5 (India 16.2 by 21.1).

The copy of Chaucers Canterbury Pilgrims (KPR 258) at Brown is sealed in a mat and frame and was not available for close inspection, but it is certainly a fifth state impression on India laid on wove paper, probably a late nineteenth-century Colnaghi restrike (see Essick 85-86). This print is much less heavily inked than the Sessler restrikes of the 1940's and seems almost gray by comparison; Essick attributes the flatness of Colnaghi restrikes to inadequate cleaning of the plate before printing (85).

**WORKS CONSULTED**


A New Colored Copy of Night Thoughts at Smith College

BY ALEXANDER S. GOURLAY

In late 1992, G. E. Bentley learned that the Neilson Library at Smith College, Northampton, MA, contains a hand-colored copy of the 1797 edition of Young's Night Thoughts with engravings by Blake. This copy is not listed in Bentley's 1977 Blake Books (642-46, 956-57), nor in the census of colored copies in the 1980 Clarendon edition of Blake's illustrations to Young (Grant et al. 1: 62-72). Bentley, who was in England at the time, asked me to take a look at the book so that it could be included in his forthcoming supplement to Blake Books, where it will be designated Copy Z, the twenty-sixth colored copy known. I am grateful to G. E. Bentley for the tip, to John E. Grant for loaning me slides of other colored copies, and to Sarah Black and other members of the staff of the Neilson Library for their assistance.

The volume at Smith College is a fine example of a "Type I" or "White Death" copy, that is, one of a group of similar copies, most of which are thought to have been colored by someone other than Blake under commercial auspices shortly after the publication of the book. (Perhaps the colorist was John Harris, Sr., a London artist specializing in book-coloring who was long affiliated with the family of the publisher of the 1797 Night Thoughts; see Weimerskirch 251n15.) Although there is considerable variation within the group, and some problems have arisen with the classification system devised by the editors of the Clarendon edition, one can still say that the White Death copies are as a class most similar in coloring to Blake's watercolor drawings on which the engravings were based.

The title page of the Smith College copy is colored according to the pattern found in other White Death copies; furthermore, the robe of Disease on illustration 6E (page 10) and the faces of the old man and woman on 20E (page 35) contain the darkened, mottled colors that were referred to as "grotesque coloring" in the Clarendon edition (1: 57-59). The presence of these colors, which probably resulted from long-term chemical decomposition of pigments that were intended to produce a much less extreme effect, indicates that the colorist used the same unusual palette as well as the same coloring pattern found in several other White Death copies. The most interesting feature of the Smith College copy is the title page to "Night the Second" (11E, page 17), where the giant figure of Death has been given a black gown and shroud that cover his head and even his left hand. Grant reports in correspondence that this color detail also appears in other White Death copies, including those at Washington University (Copy W) and the University of Texas (Copy C). The pigments throughout the Smith College copy are bright and fresh, some remarkably so, and the coloring scheme is often complex, but no more so than in many other White Death copies; in general the work is very competent and careful but evinces no inspired attention. I couldn't discern any pencil annotations or variant states of plates in the book.

According to a tiny stamp inside the front cover, the volume was "Bound by Riviere and Son" in the present full dark blue leather with elaborate gilt tooling on the back and sides; this binding appears to have been part of a general restoration in which all the leaves were cut out of an earlier binding and "guarded," that is, glued (precariously) in pairs to narrow strips of paper and sewn together in a new binding. This unusual guarding may have been intended to correct the inadequate inner margins usually found throughout these books; several designs disappear into the gutter in most copies. The last leaf of the poem (43E, pages 95-96) has been trimmed by an extra inch at the bottom, probably to even up a ragged edge. The single-sheet "Explanation of the Engravings," which is here smaller than any other leaf, has been inlaid in a larger sheet of paper and bound last (as in Copy E).

The book came to Smith College from the collection of Mr. and Mrs. Louis W. Dommerich, accessioned 13 April 1967, and bears the Smith College bookplate. It is undoubtedly the copy listed as item number 25 in a 1935 sales catalogue of The Library of the Late Ogden Goellet (American Art Association), where it is described exactly as it appears today.

WORKS CITED


Reviewed by Ronald Paulson

In one sense Morris Eaves's book fills in the context of earlier art histories for Blake's narrative of art history in his *Public Address* and *Descriptive Catalogue*. This is to focus on chapters 3 and 4. But in a larger sense the context is the book. This is a fascinating study in historiography—a narrative of "narratives," "histories," and "stories" of the English School of painting and engraving, with heroes and villains in its artists and patrons. Eaves shows the interdependence of the narratives of art and of British commerce and religion. He studies the alternative narratives, their variants and common structures, categorizing them as progressive based on improvement of technical and aesthetic education (the Vasari canon, the Carracci eclecticism, the de Piles *balance de la peinture*), cyclic and regressive based on recovery and return, and static based on native ability (due possibly to the English climate). Narrative is a more flexible term than discourse, more various than deterministic, suggesting more of Propp than Foucault. It permits Eaves to separate truth from myth, showing how a myth reflected in the interested party who invented and promulgated it, and often how narrative—also another word for theory—fitted with practice.

It is a relief to read that "the fit between the simplicities of official theory and the complexities of practice had become ill indeed; the margins were threatening to outgrow the text." Eaves's book covers most of the same ground as Barrell's *Political Theory of Painting* but offers a much broader, less claustrophobic perspective. Barrell's book explored one master discourse (or theory) which projected one narrative, the one sanctified by Reynolds in which English art grows from the imitation of continental art (but in practice essentially the collecting of it), reaches its peak in the patronage of Charles I, declines in the iconoclasm of his Puritan opponents, and except for the momentary flowering of Wren and Thornhill's St. Paul's (in Prince Hoare's narrative), only recovers when Reynolds reunites the English School once again with the continental and founds an academy on the French model.

The great printseller John Boydell is the central figure of Eaves's own narrative. He is the symbolic middleman, initiator of the Shakespeare Gallery project which fulfilled the earlier narratives of blocking and opportunity, bringing together painter and engraver with the great English literary subject, Shakespeare. Boydell's personal myth of the shopkeeper Maecenas (in its most elaborate form laid out by John Pye II) is shown being created, developed, discredited, and utilized by artists from James Barry to Prince Hoare and John Landseer. Eaves focuses on the historiographical moment when Boydell, the art of reproductive engraving, and the international dissemination of English prints triumphantly merged, just before the French Revolution changed all the rules. Eaves—who ends with an exceptionally lucid chapter on the technical problems of engraving in the period—demonstrates the centrality of the history of engraving in the Boydell era, when engraving was "coupled with the commercial success of English painting"; it served the Reynolds ethos of academic copying and expanded the audience of art (in theory at least) beyond imagining, while at the same time—as Landseer and Blake were to show—its distinctions between original and copy undermined the role of the artist.

The counter-narrative, suppressed but implicit in Boydell's project, surfaces in Hazlitt (the villain of Barrell's academic narrative) and, above all, in Allan Cunningham, whose *Lives of the most Eminent British Painters* (1829-33) has been unfairly shunted aside by art historians as a mere popularization. Indeed, their writings are a culmination of that large body of relatively journalistic (as opposed to "philosophical") material that from the 1730s onward had projected an opposing tradition. In Cunningham's story of the Reformation, far from a disaster, begins the process of liberating English artists from foreign influence and domination (Roman Catholicism, and Holbein, Rubens, and Van Dyck), making way for a Protestant and therefore English artist, Hogarth. This was, of course, Hogarth's own narrative, pointing the way to the primitivistic Signpainters' Exhibition, which consisted of examples of that form of aboriginal English painting; but more than Cunningham seems aware he developed and demonstrated, in his engraved works, the principles of Protestant iconoclasm itself. Cunningham picked up through the Hogarth narrative, at its most agitated in the academy dispute of the 1750s, when Hogarth opposed the primary principle of Reynolds and his followers who argued for "the continuity of English with continental art."
Cunningham’s words on Hogarth show how antithetical this narrative is to the academic: (1) Hogarth was antiacademic and original: “That his works are unlike those of other men, is his merit, not his fault. He belonged to no school of art; he was the produce of no academy; no man living or dead had any share in forming his mind, or in rendering his hand skilful.” (2) And he was native English: “He was the spontaneous offspring of the graphic spirit of his country, as native to the heart of England as independence is, and he may be fairly called, in his own way, the first-born of her spirit” (emphasis added). Although the perennial “in his own way” is retained, to delimit his genius, Hogarth is given the temporal priority reserved in the academic discourse for Reynolds. It is, of course, another myth, as prejudiced as the Reynolds-Royal Academy one, but it is good to see Cunningham, if not Hogarth himself, replaced in the history from which theorists from Reynolds to Barrell have elided him.

Boydell was near enough in time to recognize this, and his Shakespeare Gallery was signalized—as was his term as lord mayor—by the purchase of the copperplates and publication of the folios of Hogarth’s engraved works. For Hogarth was his model, as the first English painter to show how painting can be commercialized, how the international market can be broached, how more and less expensive versions of a print can be produced, and how to exploit all the intricacies of subscription and every other kind of publication Boydell later developed. Hogarth even anticipated aspects of the business of popularizing “high art” missed by Boydell but exploited by Wedgewood, such as the talent for “commercializing history” by utilizing events, heroes, and villains. Though he did not fit into Barry’s academic discourse, he also prefigured Barry’s Society of Arts paintings with his St. Bartholomew’s Hospital paintings.

After the marshalling of these conflicting narratives, in chapter 3 Eaves turns to the other “original,” William Blake. The main point is clear enough—that Blake traced the history of engraving all the way back to Egypt and Moses and wrote a history in which the Bible and the technology of engraving intersect in interesting ways that are now, in the light of the various more conventional narratives we have seen, much more easily understood. It is less easy to turn from exposition of the discursive prose of Hazlitt and Cunningham to the density of Blakean myth and poetry to its exegesis. We lose (at least in chapter 3, if not 4) the broad perspective we enjoyed with the other narratives. We are reading inside this narrative and our author is a Blakean who takes us from rational analysis to special pleading; from public argument, in a shared discourse, to personal imagery based on these arguments and a private system, which carries over into the “discursive” Public Address and Descriptive Catalogue. Characteristically, Blake introduces a Christian narrative: his vocabulary (Florentine vs. Venetian, original-imitation, art-counter-arts, Christian-Neoclassical, artist-priest, white-black, Jesus-Moses) is all based on the old New Testament-Old Testament contrast of spirit and law. As Eaves puts it plainly, Blake’s argument “soars high above the average level of the most acute critiques of English-school discourse” (183).

With a few exceptions in the Blake chapters, Eaves’s book treats his subject with brilliant commonsense, and it will be a pity if his book does not enjoy the same level of critical attention accorded recent art-historical studies of the period which have offered formulas, easily expanded by eager graduate students, into which such complex pictures as Eaves’s will not easily fit. Eaves’s study, in all its gaudy variety, is of greater utility and imagination, as well as enjoyment in the reading. Typographically the book offers further pleasures. The illustrations are generous and well-placed. The text which accompanies them sometimes runs on for pages at a time parallel with the regular text. The effect is somewhere between Derrida’s Glas and a Time-Life art book. The lessons, both theoretical and practical, in the history of print technology and engraving techniques are alone worth the price of admission.

Reviewed by D.W. Dorrbecker

Does anybody actually need a full-blown catalogue of this particular sort of material, illustrated with no less than 295 high-quality reproductions? Or is its publication just another ritual move in the process of Blake's canonization as a hero of late eighteenth-century British culture? In order to understand Blake's "original" works, his poetry and his creative art, does one have to care, really, about "copy" engravings such as his frontispieces after Saverio Dalla Rosa's drawings of the statues of Catullus and his friend, Cornelius Nepos (#XXX, 66)? With the author of the book under review, I should like to argue that the answer to these and similar questions concerning the scholarly legitimation of the production of this catalogue very definitely has to be in the affirmative. Due to some classicist notions that still define what is to be considered an "original" work of art, and what is "merely" a "reproduction"—ideological norms and concepts that as yet await deconstruction—Blake's work as a commercial engraver remains the least known aspect of his output. This alone would justify the publication of Robert N. Essick's latest book. In addition there are some other very good reasons for supplanting the earlier bibliographical checklists of Blake's commercial engravings with a complete chalcographical catalogue raisonné of the book illustrations, reasons I hope to suggest in what follows.1

At the very beginning of his introduction Robert Essick reminds his readers that the modern aesthetic, one that Blake helped to initiate, emphasizes original print-making and devalues reproductive prints. Consequently, Blake's translations on to copperplates of images first executed in other media by other artists are given short shrift and their multifaceted importance to his life is overlooked. It would be foolish to claim for these copy plates artistic equivalence with *Songs of Innocence* or the illustrations to The Book of Job, but an understanding of the economic and graphic matrix in which Blake created these visual and verbal masterpieces requires some attention to the lesser productions of his etching needle and graver. (1)

This much one may learn simply by looking at the dates inscribed on the prints catalogued in the present publication, and by comparing them with the chronology of Blake's dated paintings and the printings of his own illuminated books. Evidently a considerable amount of the work which went into the production of Blake's poetry and of what is today considered his "original" drawings, paintings, and engravings was financed—and thus made possible—only by Blake's commissions for commercial "reproductive" engravings after designs by other artists. 2

Both the "original" works and the "reproductive" engravings were often executed with the same tools and at the same working table. This much granted, it is more than reasonable to assume that there are also technical, formal, and iconographical characteristics shared by the products of both of these realms of the poet-artist's activities. For the very first time, Essick's catalogue allows for a systematic investigation of such cross-currents. Also, it seems more than likely that, much as Blake's imagery would have absorbed a considerable number of motifs from his commercial engravings after the designs of others (and the entries in the catalogue under review are full of suggestive comparisons between the book illustrations and Blake's other works), so his ideas about the generic functioning of printed images would have been shaped in part by his work as a reproductive engraver. For example, the peculiarities in the production and "marketing" of Blake's illuminated books are, I think, best understood if seen in connection with that of the engraved galleries of pictures rather than that of late eighteenth-century books of poetry.3

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1 For a list of earlier catalogues of Blake's reproductive engravings, see Essick's "Abbreviations and Works Frequently Cited" (xv).

2 In his introductory study, Essick comments on the "crucial financial support for Blake's first efforts in relief etching" (7) that may have been provided by the fee the engraver had received for the large plate after Hogarth (#XX), first published in 1788.

In 1987-88, the Huntington Library and Art Gallery presented an exhibition devoted to William Blake and His Contemporaries and Followers. The works on show had been selected "from the Collection of Robert N. Essick," arguably the finest and, in any case, for the scholar the most interesting collection of Blake's works currently in private hands. In the introduction to the exhibition catalogue, the collector and author of Blake's Commercial Book Illustrations (hereafter abbreviated as CBI) gave a brief account of "the shape of [his] Blake collection and the principles by which it was assembled." While still "a graduate student of English literature in the late sixties," Essick set for himself "the modest goal of acquiring the standard texts and works of criticism on William Blake's poetry and art as a reference library to assist [his] own early attempts at becoming a scholar." He unquestionably succeeded, and any subscriber to Blake is certainly well aware of his prolific output of books and articles devoted to the study of Blake and his contemporaries.

As a collector Essick was soon to find that "no one bitten by the bibliomania bug can limit himself to merely practical needs." Because availability and cost "are important in any collecting," he decided "in the early seventies, to acquire books containing Blake's commercial illustrations—the one area of his activities as an artist and craftsman not already well mined by dealers and collectors. Thus, almost by default," the author of CBI has been able to bring together (and only inter alia, to be sure) what now probably is "the largest collection of editions containing Blake's engravings (the British Library is second)." At the same time, and starting with his groundbreaking study of the iconography of graphic styles in "Blake and the Traditions of Reproductive Engraving," the scholar-collector began to demonstrate the "research interest" of the materials he collected. Following the example of the late Sir Geoffrey Keynes, Essick developed "the habit of combining scholarship and collecting," a habit from which all readers of his book on Blake's printmaking processes, of his catalogue raisonné of Blake's separate plates, and now of CBI may profit enormously.

This study of Blake's commercial engravings begins with Essick's account of the relationship between the new catalogue and some earlier surveys of some of the same material, especially the extensive two of the three volumes planned as a bibliographical and chalcographical account of William Blake: Book Illustrator. These he himself coauthored with Roger R. Easson, and the two volumes were published in 1972 and 1979. "The present catalogue is not a revision of Easson and Essick, but it is intended to replace the print catalogue and reproductions in the second volume and treat most of the materials intended for the absent third" (v). The preface then outlines the purpose of CBI:

I have taken as my first responsibility the recording of facts about Blake's reproductive book illustrations— their sizes, inscriptions, progressive states, locations of preliminary drawings, and the quotation or summary of all documents relating to their production. I have supplemented this basic information with discussions of graphic techniques and styles, Blake's revisions of preliminary designs, his borrowings of motifs for his own compositions, the relationships of illustrations with their texts, and the role major commissions played in Blake's life and the shaping of his ideas. (v)

The second part of the book's preface details "a few guidelines" (vi) to the use of the catalogue entries. It establishes the meaning of certain technical terms in Essick's text, introduces the conventions employed in the measurements of prints, the recording of signatures, titles, and imprints, and explains the author's use of cross-references and the coverage of the index.

Like the catalogue entries themselves, Essick's introductory study of "Blake's Reproductive Book Illustrations" is organized chronologically, following Blake's career as a professional reproductive engraver from the years of his apprenticeship to Basire up to his late book illustrations after Flaxman. This arrangement not only offers a chance to view the plates Blake executed for the book publishers in historical perspective, it also leaves enough room for the author's interpolation of a systematic discussion of some key issues con-

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6 See Essick 1987 (n. 4) 6.
nected with the artist's commercial engravings. Thus, it allows Essick to define clearly what he thinks is the "multifaceted importance" of Blake's work as a reproductive engraver and to describe "the multiple interactions between art and commerce, graphic execution and literary conception, that shaped Blake's life and works" (I, 15).

As a synopsis, or as the summa, of many of his earlier studies of Blake's printmaking processes, Essick's introduction by necessity returns to some of the subjects he has previously treated in his publications. However, the new vantage-point supplied by the book illustrations results in a considerable shift of focus. Essick provides an account of the "characteristics of Basire's shop practices [which] influenced Blake's later career and aesthetic concepts" (2; see also 6), and he explains "the basic systems for the production of intaglio copperplate book illustrations in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries" (2), stressing the decisive role played by the publisher in these systems (see 2-3). He then briefly glances at the more important of the techniques that were employed in the engraver's workshop, and next turns to the economics of the trade in general and, in particular, to the fees paid to the copy engravers (see 3-4). One learns of the division of labor between the engraver of the pictorial image, the professional writing engraver and the copperplate printer (see 4-5). The function of working proofs and of published proofs in pre-publication states is explained, as is the reason for the succession of the various published states of a copperplate engraving (see 3 and 5).

At this point, a less restricted discussion of some of the problems of attribution that are involved might have been in place. In discriminating between a first and a second state of any of Blake's separate plates one takes it for granted—usually without a moment's hesitation—that it was no one other than the peintre-graveur himself who was responsible for the "purposeful changes . . . on the copperplate" (5n7) which transformed the earlier into the later state. In this respect, there is no difference whatsoever between the chalcographical examination of the three states of "The Accusers of Theft Adultery Murder" (1793-c. 1810 or later), of the five states of "Chaucer's Canterbury Pilgrims" (1810-c. 1823 or later), or of the dramatic changes between the first and the eighth state of Rembrandt's "Christ Presented to the People" (dated 1655 in its seventh state). But with an engraving that serves as a book illustration, and with the plate usually owned by the publisher, not the engraver (see 4), the situation is slightly different. Can the original engraver be identified with the engraver who reworks a plate for use in a later edition? Or does one have to speculate that at least occasionally a publisher would employ someone else to restore a set of worn copperplates?

Essick tells his readers this much: "It seems to have been common practice to hire the original engraver to rework plates whenever possible, but this of course would become increasingly less likely as the time since first execution lengthened" (5). He thus hints at the possibility that some of the later states of Blake's commercial book illustrations which are recorded in his catalogue may in fact have to be attributed to anonymous journeyman engravers, yet he does not enlarge on the subject. If, however, one thinks of the 1811 and 1818 editions of Richardson's Sir Charles Grandison, published by C. Cooke and T. Kelly respectively and illustrated with impressions from the plates Blake had engraved for The Novelist's Magazine (#XI[6-8], 32-33), one might feel tempted to suspect that the engravings Blake did for Harrison & Co. in 1783 have been "substantially reworked" (32) for their third and fourth states by some other engraver(s). The reworked states recorded for Blake's plates in later issues of Wedgwood's catalogue of earthenware and porcelain (#L) present another, even more obvious case in point. At the same time, Blake may himself have been employed occasionally to rework plates that had originally been engraved by one of his colleagues, and he may thus have added to his income. Here then is a field that might offer some interesting research opportunities, though since it has not been singled out as particularly promising by Essick, the evidence available from publishers' account books and other period documents may well be all too scanty to allow for convincing results.

While the variety of stylistic modes of representation available to the artist-artisan are of course well-characterized in the introduction, Essick also underscores the fact that "reproductive engraving was dependent upon a rigorous division of labour and the subordination of individual expression to uniformity and repeatability" (5). This phenomenon and its effects are described by reference to Blake's early commissions and his "graphic involvement

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8 For a descriptive analysis of this etching (B. 76) and its states see, e.g., Christopher White, Rembrandt as an E'tcher: A Study of the Artist at Work (London: A. Zwemmer, 1969) i: 87-92.

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with Stothard" (6) and with the William Walker circle of engravers working after Stothard's designs in the 1780s and 1790s. The problems encountered when attempting to distinguish the graphic vocabulary and syntax used by James Heath in one of his plates after Stothard from that employed by Blake in a reproduction of another of the same artist's designs signify "the inevitable interweaving of economic exigencies and aesthetic norms that shaped eighteenth-century reproductive graphics" (6). At the same time, such pertinent observations help the reader to understand why the attribution of an unsigned book illustration to Blake (or any other of his colleagues) can seldom be based entirely on stylistic considerations.10

The introductory study to the catalogue also pays considerable attention to the examination of some representative working relations between Blake and one of his publishers, with an author of some of the texts he engraved for, and with two of his fellow artists whose designs he translated onto copperplates. In fairly detailed discussions, one learns of Blake's business relationships with Joseph Johnson and with Henry Fuseli as one of Johnson's favorite illustrators (see 7-9),11 with William Hayley (see 9-11), and with John Flaxman (see 11-12). Essick's keen and experienced eyes enable him to observe how, in Blake's plates for Wollstonecraft's Original Stories, the "graphic syntax . . . begins to emerge above the threshold of the visual apprehension and become self-referential. As we view such images, we are given both the illusion of three-dimensional objects in space and an awareness of the medium in which that illusion is created." This in turn allows for a demonstration of "how experiments in original graphics influenced reproductive styles" (8)—and vice versa. The introduction offers many similarly stimulating comments, for example on "the conceptual implications of stippled lines" (12) as used in Blake's engravings after Flaxman's Hesiod compositions, before Essick summarizes the influence of Blake's career as a copy engraver on the formation of those of the artist's ideas that were given expression in his "more private and more important endeavours" (13).

At the end of his introductory study Essick turns to the research opportunities offered by the material described in his catalogue. Discussing "the conventions of text-design relationships" of Blake's times, and drawing on examples from Blake's engravings after Stothard, Fuseli, and his own inventions, Essick finds that ultimately what Blake learned "from his contemporaries about illustrative strategies by engraving their work, and the way in which he both incorporates and diverges from their practices, are more important than his occasional borrowings of specific motifs from their designs" (15).12 While he describes many of these "occasional borrowings" in the catalogue entries, Essick ends this study with a brief discussion of the possibility that "the texts for which Blake engraved plates might have been read by him and [thus might have] influenced his ideas" (15).

Seen as a whole, the introduction successfully documents the "multifaceted" interdependence of "original" art and "reproductive" engraving in Blake's career; and, at the very same time, it effectively clears away the ignorance of those who still do not want to see to what an extent the profession of the commercial reproductive engraver actually "established Blake's social position for the majority of his contemporaries, placing him in the class of urban artisans" (1), a social affiliation that is of major importance for a proper understanding of Blake's peculiar stance in a variety of discoursesystems of his times. With the author, one hopes that in the interpretation of Blake's works, such insights regarding the manifold impact Blake's "low" art had on the "grand style" of his "high" art productions will now be more generally put into action. CBI supplies all the information necessary in order to do so.

In the catalogue itself (19-114), each entry begins with a short-title reference to the book in which Blake's commercial engravings can be found and, wherever that is called for, to its various printings and editions. A typical entry reports in an intro-

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10 See Essick's discussion of this matter in the book's two appendices (especially 115-17 [#C] and 121).
11 Following a suggestion first made by the late Ruthven Todd, Essick had previously discussed the case of Blake's engravings after Fuseli—and what there appears to be "an unusual amount of responsibility for the completion of the design, not merely its translation to copper" (7)—in Essick 1980 (n. 7) 51-52. While I am still not entirely convinced of this hypothesis (especially because Fuseli is known to have been hard for any other reproductive engraver to satisfy), I wish to stress that CBI is characterized by an exemplary scholarly open-mindedness that invites, rather than suffocates, such differences of opinion. Essick himself points out alternatives to his preferred reading of the evidence, and in a proviso he alerts his readers to the possibility that here as elsewhere Blake may have "worked from a far more detailed preliminary drawing, of the type conventionally supplied by an artist to a copy engraver" (#XVIII, 41).
ductory note the total number of illustrations included in the respective book, Blake's own contributions and, if necessary, the history of their attribution to the poet-artist (see, e.g., #XXIII), and the designer(s) of the plates engraved by Blake; in addition, it supplies information regarding preliminary sketches and preparatory drawings for the engravings whenever the current whereabouts of these are known, working proofs and proofs before (some or all) letters, documents relating to the commission, the author of the text, its publisher(s), and reviews that make mention of the plates discussed. This is followed by the catalogue proper of the book's prints with documentation of the measurements, all the inscriptions, the sequence of the published states, and then a generally short annotation commenting on iconography, related drawings, and the possible significance of motifs that Blake may have borrowed for his "original" inventions. A list of the earlier secondary literature on Blake's engravings in the book catalogued marks the end of each main entry.

In order to check the accuracy of Essick's measurements, of his transcriptions of signatures, titles, and imprints, and of the descriptive commentaries on the images themselves, I reexamined impressions from 165 of the 271 engraved plates that are detailed under the 53 main entries in the catalogue. Though I was trying hard to find some substantial errors in Essick's descriptions of the prints, the results of the endeavor cannot be summarized in any other way than by stating that this catalogue raisonné deserves the highest possible praise for its reliability. Essick's descriptive prose is precise—for example, he discriminates between a "proof before letters" and a "proof before signatures" (#XVI, 38)—unimpassioned, and admirably economical. Though there is always some general reference to the graphic mode employed by the artist-artisan in a given engraving (such as "outline" or "stipple"), Essick describes the particulars of the hatching patterns, of burnishing and the like only where there is the need to distinguish a second or third state from the first published version that is illustrated. This need, however, exists in many more cases than may have been expected, largely because the author has discovered numerous previously unrecorded states of Blake's plates. For example, even where in 1979 Easson and Essick had already recorded no less than three states for Blake's large plate after Hogarth's "Beggar's Opera" painting, the 1991 publication more than doubles this with a list of no fewer than seven states (see #XX, 43); and where one may have expected two states at most for the two 1803 printings of Hayley's The Life, and Posthumous Writings, of William Cowper, Essick confronts his readers with no less than four published states of Blake's "Weather-House" engraving (#XLIV[4], 88-89).

In 1979 Easson and Essick still included some of the plates in Bryant's New System, in Ayloffe's Ancient Monuments, and in Gough's Sepulchral Monuments in the main sequence of their catalogue of the commercial book illustrations attributed to Blake as the engraver. In the present publication Essick has decided in favor of a more cautious approach to "Blake's Apprentice Engravings." Lacking a "solid basis for attribution" (117), these plates have now been relegated in their entirety to the first of Essick's appendices (see 115-20). This may not be pleasing, and yet it will be hard to contradict the author's statement that "for published engravings, we can hardly expect the work of an apprentice to diverge in any clear way from the house style taught by his master" (115). In a second appendix (see 121-27) Essick presents a list of 37 "False and Conjectural Attributions." Whereas some of the plates that during the 1770s came from the workshop of James Basire may or may not have been engraved by Blake under the supervision of his master, most of the engravings referred to in Appendix ii were clearly executed by someone other than the poet-artist. A few of these more than "doubtful" ascriptions date back to the nineteenth century, but Essick's list ought to prevent dealers and curators from perpetuating them "innocently" (121) in the future.

Though mostly consisting of proper names, the index (see 129-38) seems to be perfectly sufficient for all reference purposes. It is particularly welcome (and entirely in keeping with the author's...
approach to his material) that besides the names of the artists and authors among Blake's contemporaries, and those of the "owners, past and present, of drawings and pre-publication proofs" (vi), the index includes the names of the publishers of the books illustrated. It thus allows readers to search the catalogue for references to Blake's business connections with, say, the firm of Harrison & Co. There are few misprints in this book, and scarcely any of them merit ceremonious correction; those I have spotted (such as the typos in the transcription of a German title on page 50) in no way impair the intelligibility of the text (see the appendix, below).

The author and his publisher are also to be congratulated on the near-300 reproductions which illustrate all the engravings discussed as well as some of the preliminary drawings from which Blake worked. Not only do these "Figures" make it easy to use the book as a visual encyclopaedia of Blake's commercial book illustrations—and to follow some of the lines for future investigations that are suggested by Essick's catalogue and study—; they are also of the highest possible quality and as such successfully "replace" (v) the sadly inadequate reproductions in volume 2 of William Blake: Book Illustrator. To give an idea just how good the reproductions are, it seems sufficient to refer to the author's own caveat concerning a "very small signature" which he thought would "probably not [be] visible in the reproduction" (#XIX[1], 42). Turning to figure 61, one finds that it actually is visible, regardless of Essick's concern.

No doubt, as a work of reference this catalogue raisonné will unquestionably (and for a long time to come) function as the definite and standard source of information on Blake's reproductive engravings. If this is high praise, it still is not enough for the book under review. Though definitive in the material descriptions of Blake's copy engravings, Essick has succeeded not in closing down his subject, but in efficiently opening up a new field of investigation. While answering almost any question of interest to the collector, CBI also intriguingly challenges Blake scholarship with a new set of questions that deserve to be examined in greater detail. For all these reasons, the acquisition of this volume can only be highly recommended. Serious students as well as all collectors of Blake's works will want to have a copy ready at hand, if not on their own shelves then at least on those of their preferred research library.

In trying to think of any negative aspect of the publication of CBI, only one thing comes to mind. Besides the collectors and scholars that are interested in a fuller understanding of Blake's work, there are also the dealers and auctioneers whose interest in Blake is likely to be informed primarily by economic considerations. With its easily accessible information on all the various states of Blake's reproductive engravings and with its references to particularly scarce printings of some of these plates, Essick's catalogue will probably cause a further increase in the prices asked for the books illustrated with the artist-poet's commercial engravings. Yet this is in the nature of the production of any catalogue raisonné and none of the author's fault. Therefore, even its possibly disastrous effect on the market for Blake's lesser productions as a graphic artist can in no way detract from the gratitude we owe the author for sharing his intimate knowledge of the subject. In any case, there can be little doubt about the justice of Essick's own claim that the material presented in CBI, "along with the introductory survey of Blake's career as a commercial book engraver and research opportunities in the field, gives this volume a larger interpretive and critical dimension than that offered by most print catalogues" (v-vi).

Appendix

Robert Essick has himself gathered some "substantive additions or corrections" to Blake's Commercial Book Illustrations in the appendices published with his 1990 and 1991 "Marketplace" reports. The following list—in addition to a couple of mostly negligible corrections of the few typographical errors—offers a number of supplementary observations pertaining to individual entries in the catalogue; however, none of these addenda et corrigenda claim to be of a "substantive" nature. pp. 4 and 137: for "William Sharpe" read "William Sharp"; the spelling of the engraver's name is not the same as that of the publisher, John Sharpe.

p. 13n28: for "Joachim Moller" read "Joachim Möller" (which, in most library catalogues, will be translated as "Moeller").

p. 14n29: I entirely agree with Essick's rebuke to Hodnett's criticisms concerning Fuseli's illustrations for Chalmers's 1805 edition of The Plays of Shakespeare; however, readers who are interested in Hodnett's arguments will want to examine "The Fuseli Shakespeare (1805)," a chapter in Edward Hodnett, Image and Text: Studies in the Illustra-

tion of English Literature (London: Scolar P, 1982) 69-76, rather than the potted version contained in the same author's Five Centuries of English Book Illustration that is cited by Essick.

p. 25: Essick's catalogue entries discuss many of Blake's possible borrowings of specific motifs from the book illustrations he was commissioned to engrave. Looking at #V(3) one feels tempted to suggest an additional, non-iconographic connection between Blake's work as a professional "copy" engraver and the compositional treatment of his own, "original" designs. Here, in Conrad Martin [? METZ"s design for "The Fugitive Shechemites" (Fig. 14) the relation between the actual two-dimensional picture plane and the illusion of pictorial space is, I think, reminiscent of the same relation in a considerable number of Blake's compositions that use the vertical axis for sequencing both narrative time and pictorial space (see, e.g., "The Descent of Man into the Vale of Death," the related plate among the GRAVE illustrations, or the "Epitome for James Hervey's Meditations among the Tombs").

p. 31: #XI(4), the plate after STOTHARD for David Simple, may have been the eidetic image at the back of Blake's mind when he was drawing the figure of the nurse for plate 2 of "A Cradle Song" in Innocence.

p. 42: commenting on #XIX(2), the plate after Rubens's "Democritus," Essick suggests that "Blake may have based his plate on the engraving of the portrait by Lucas Vorsterman"; there is nothing to be said against such a possibility, and yet it seems more likely to me that (in Blake's case just as elsewhere) the full-page illustrations in the earlier German and French editions of Lavater's Essays served as models for the British engravers.

p. 48: Essick's measurements for #XXI(11) read "8.7 x 10.6 cm."; this appears to be a typo for "8.7 x 16.6 cm."

p. 50: capitalize "Zeichnungen," and read "gestochen" for "gestocken" in the German title of Chodowiecki's Illustrations to Salzmann's Elementarbuch.

p. 54: capitalize "Years" in the citation of the title inscription for #XXIII(17); this minor change is certainly open to debate, but compare "Want" in the title quoted for #XXIII(20).

p. 60: in the reference to WINDLE's 1988 Wollstonecraft bibliography, read "no. 17" for "no. 3" (the latter is WINDLE's entry for Original Stories).

p. 66: in the signatures of the two plates that were engraved by Blake and that are here catalogued as #XXX(1-2), a "Xaverius Della Rosa" is credited as the artist who "evidently made [the] drawings of the statues" in Verona. Though Essick could "find no information" about this draughtsman, the latter is probably to be identified with the Veronese painter and etcher Saverio Dalla Rosa (1745-1821). Dalla Rosa is not a complete unknown in the history of Italian eighteenth-century art and art theory, and a brief biographical account is easily accessible in volume 28 of the Allgemeines Lexikon der bildenden Künstler von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart (ed. Ulrich Thieme and Felix Becker).

p. 69: for the reference to "(Bentley 1969, p. 12)" read "(\ldots p. 56 n. 1)."

p. 75: in his entry for Blake's engraved portrait of "The Late Mr. Wright of Derby," Essick states that he has "not been able to trace the drawing, painting, or print on which Blake's plate is based." It seems very likely, though, that Blake's model was—a copy of or the original drawing for—\ldots a drypoint etching, presumably executed by the painter himself. This scarce print, a copy of which was in the collection of George Cumberland, is included in Tim CLAYTON's "Catalogue of the Engraved Works of Joseph Wright of Derby."

p. 83: in the title quoted for #XLII (as well as in the index [137]) read "George Steevens" for "George Stevens." The measurements for #XLII(1) in CBI read "16.5 x 25.5 cm." On my ruler, however, I read "16.5 (or 16.6) x 23.5 cm.," a discrepancy that is too large to be accounted for by paper shrinkage and similar effects.

p. 84: similarly, the measurements cited by Essick for #XLII(2) read "10 x 7.9 cm.," whereas I found the actual height of the image in this plate to be 10.5 cm.

p. 85: the publishers' names in the imprint for #XLIII(4) have been transcribed as "Cadell & Davies' Strand," and, in fact, this is what the letters look like at first sight. However, if one compares the "s" in "Davies" in this engraving with the same letter in the same position in #XLIII(1-3 and 6) or with Blake's scratched inscriptions in other plates of the Felpham period such as the "Weather-House" tailpiece for Hayley's Life of Cowper (#XLIV[4]), it becomes clear, I think, that the small vertical stroke at the end of "Davies" in the fourth plate Blake executed for the 1803 edition of Hayley's Triumphs of Temper was, at the very least, not intended to be read as an apostrophe, but simply to be part of the lower case letter "s." If one insists on reading "Davies" in the imprint for #XLIII(4), then
one may as well read “Caclell” for “Cadell” in #XXXIX(3).


p. 88: following “. . . Church Yard,” insert a period at the end of the imprint line that is quoted for #XLIV(4).

p. 89: Essick refers to “an untraced drawing by Francis Stone (dates unknown)” as the model for #XLIV(5). The designer was probably Francis Stone (1775-1834), an architect, draughtsman and lithographer active in Norwich. The width of the engraving after Flaxman recorded as #XLIV(6) is, including the vertical shading lines, nearer to 15.0 cm. than to Essick’s “14.5 cm.”

p. 104: for “vials,” read “Justice’s vial, pl. 13” in the entry for #LI(16).

p. 105: from Essick’s preface readers learn that measurements are supplied according to art historical conventions, i.e., “height followed by width,” and “are of the pictorial image exclusive of frames, borders, and inscriptions unless noted otherwise” (vi). In theory this method of reference may seem both simple and unequivocal enough; in practice, at least occasionally, even measurements involve an act of interpretation and may therefore cause some vexation. Here is an appropriate example. The measurements Essick supplies for #LI(20), “15.3 x 23.9 cm.,” are exactly the same as my own, if, that is, one measures the framing lines of the pictorial image on the right and at the top. If, however, one measures the same engraving on the left and at the bottom framing line, one ends up with only “15.1 x 23.4 cm.” Similar discrepancies between left and right as well as top and bottom measurements can be observed in many other plates (see, e.g., #LI[27 or 30]), and ideally the author would have told his readers precisely where the height and width of the printed images were measured. And yet this may well be too much. Essick, no doubt, is well aware of such possible discrepancies. However, with engravings that have been bound in a book it is often difficult to measure at the inner margin (which, in approximately 50% of all cases) may happen to be the margin that the rule would call for. Therefore, users of CBI (as in the case of any other print catalogue I have used extensively) will have to live with a few of these occasionally irritating measurements. I cannot possibly end this note, however, without emphasizing that I was as much impressed by the accuracy of the measurements cited in CBI as by all the other data supplied for each print. As a reviewer I assumed an obligation to search CBI for factual mistakes of this kind; after having measured for myself more than 60% of the 271 prints described in the new catalogue, I can only say that I was thoroughly frustrated in this attempt.

p. 123: at the end of the entry for #11 in the book’s second appendix read “James Neagle” instead of “John Neagle.” I return to this correction, previously noted in Essick’s own “New Information on Blake’s Engravings,” merely in order to point out that the decisive evidence for the correct version of Neagle’s Christian name comes neither from the DNB nor any other standard reference work. Rather, such evidence is provided by the signatures on quite a few of the plates executed by this engraver. Many of Neagle’s engravings have been signed with only the artist’s second name, or as engraved by “J. Neagle.” However, there are also quite a few of his plates with a “Ja. Neagle” inscription, and I know of at least one plate that is signed by “James Neagle,” whereas I have never seen a single plate the execution of which has been attributed by the artist himself or by some writing engraver to a “John Neagle.”


21 However, and thinking of printed references, one may note that the engraver’s name is also cited as “James Neagle” in the Memoirs and Recollections of the Late Abraham Raimbach, Esq., Engraver, ed. M. T. S. Raimbach (London: Frederick Shoberl, 1843) 36n57.


19 This is particularly true, and very obviously so, where an oval engraving or an irregularly shaped pictorial image has to be measured.

Reviewed by Mark S. Lussier

The power of Charles Minahen's *Vortex: The Poetics of Turbulence* resides in its willingness to speculate creatively with somewhat limited evidence. However, the work also has holes, and while perhaps appropriate given its attempted "hermeneutical disclosure of symbolic turbulence" in diverse philosophical and poetic writings, these holes qualify somewhat the insights achieved. Those wishing to derive maximum benefit from the book should invert normal reading procedure and proceed immediately to the work's closing appendix to come to grips with the confusing terms "Vortices, Helices, Spirals, and Gyres" often wrongly applied to related but different phenomena. Normally, such a definition of terms occurs at the opening of a work, but the inverse reading has the function of tapping the processes diachronically and synchronically explored in the three major divisions of the book. The appendix traces vortical phenomena "at all levels of the known universe," which are "widely dispersed through the whole range of phenomena from the micro- to the macrocosmic, and inhering in both organic and inorganic systems and states" (149). Yet the terms (vortex, helix, spiral, gyre) differ in their spatial properties, and these differences are crucial in Minahen's mapping of "symbolic turbulence" (3) in the authors considered in his study.

In exploring the differences in the specific definitions of the varied yet related terms of turbulence, readers gain insights grounded in physical phenomena, and this grounding makes legible the barrage of technical language at the beginning of Minahen's complicated assessment of the literal presence and symbolic function of vortical figuration in widely disparate works. The opening "Archaeology of Symbolic Turbulence" (3) charts the "mystical cosmic and religious significance" (3) of two types of symbols to establish a characteristic structural dialectic of embodied "polar opposition and synthesis" (3). The text then observes vortical symbols from the Hebraic and Hellenic traditions and successfully argues that vortextual processes, although different in their origins, undergird Western epistemologies from "the whirlwind [as] Yahweh's distinct emblem" (10) to "vortical symbolism [that] . . . typifies the Homeric conception of the cosmos" (14).

Having identified literary and philosophic aspects of symbolic turbulence embedded in Hellenic and Hebraic thought and practice, Minahen undertakes an exploration of "vortical cosmogonic theory" (20) in relation to the pre-Socratic philosophers Heraclitus, Anaxagoras, Empedocles, and Democritus, and the chasm between poetry and science in Western tradition: "[Aristotle's] response is indicative of the tension, in the epistememe, between the more rigorous 'scientific' method espoused by Aristotle, concerned with the validity of the mechanics of the theory, and the 'poetic' tradition which Empedocles is still a part of and which Aristotle ignores altogether" (20). While the chapter is set up as a diachronic exploration of thinkers concerned with "a matrix from which the entire Western tradition of discursive thinking issues" (15), it offers one noticeable critical anachronism when Yeats's *A Vision* is used to illustrate the conceptual possibility of "the Empedoclean double process" (22). While Yeats's gyres give the "perfect example of dialectic (i.e., polarity, antithesis, and synthesis, simultaneously and/or in sequence)" (21), his presence in a chapter on pre-Socratic thinkers breaks an otherwise implied historical progression. Furthermore, given both Yeats's exploitation of the vortex at the foundation of his 'system' and his appropriation of the concept from Blake (who is discussed in chapter 7), this brief inclusion only points to the more striking exclusion of Yeats from his logical position, towards the end of the book. What binds the pre-Socratics is the element of chance or necessity at work in "sequences of mechanical interaction" (25), rendering the diverse expression of vorticality in their thought "as much a metaphor as a scientific cosmogonic principle" (25).¹

Minahen's discussion of Plato's "Great Whorl," in chapter 3, rightly focuses on the myth of Ur that concludes the *Republic*, and the mythic narrative of a soldier's death and return to life that brings him to view "a vision of the structure of the cosmos" (28). The cosmos, gyrating hemispheres that correspond to astronomical and planetary movements, is a "revolving vault" (28), with eight "whorls in all, lying within one another" (29), and its operations are linked to that of a "free circular vortex," where "velocities vary in a manner inversely

¹ However, as Roger Jones discusses in his *Physics as Metaphor* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1982), there is some validity to the representational interweaving of physics and metaphor: "we were all poets and the world was our metaphor," since "the observer and observed form an integrated unit that cannot be broken down into independent components" (3, 6).
The same critical practice that structures chapter 3 continues in chapter 4, “Epicurean Whirlings and Lucretius’s Turbulent Flux,” where Minahen confronts Donald A. Mackenzie’s denial of the vorticity in the thought of Epicurus. The crux of the matter hinges upon Epicurus’s discomfort with the role that “necessity” or “chance” plays in pre-Socratic and Platonic thought, due to “the teleological implications” (38) of the clinamen or random swerve at the foundation of atomist theory. Although Epicurus cites certain meteorological phenomena as demonstrative of the presence of the vortex, his thought does “lack the symbolic multivocity of other examples we have seen” (38).

In contrast to the use of previous interpretations as critical cannon-fodder, Minahen’s confrontation with conflicting interpretations of Lucretius’s De Rerum Natura (Mackenzie versus Michel Serres) successfully provides a frame for Lucretius’s cosmology of “many vortices coming into and out of existence in ever-changing complexes of colliding atoms and swarming fluid flows” (40). As a result, his use of Lucretius as the terminus to the opening section elevates the concluding discussion of “the vortex” (48), clarifying “its evolution into so rich and complex a symbol by the end of the classical age” (48) and its “reemerge[nce] as a quintessential symbol of the late Medieval Christian vision in the work of Dante” (48).

Once into the second section, “Visionary Breakthrough,” Minahen’s text supplies just that, breaking through its negative dialogical engagement with isolated critics to confront the complexities of Dante’s use of “circular, spiral, and vortical properties [as] a reservoir of symbolic possibilities with which to fashion his mystical vision of the afterlife” (51). In “Dante’s Vortical Triptych” (chapter 5), Minahen does justice to the prevalent layering of spiral, vortical, and helical symbols in the large structures of hell, purgatory, and heaven and in the smallest descriptive details, with the minute particulars of local symbolism reinforcing the grand gyrations of bodies and spheres. The most obvious example is hell; the pit spirals downward to a singularity, powered by the “association of vortical turbulence with sin” (54) appropriated from St. Augustine, and displays characteristics defined by “the concentric streamlines of a ‘free circular vortex’ . . . in which the velocities are backward [fast on the periphery and stagnant at the center]” (52).

Dante’s sensitivity to structural possibilities in vortical phenomena can be seen when “purgatory reveals itself to be an enantiomorph of hell, turned inside-out” (59). The prototypical spiro-helical qualities of pyramids and mountains are pressed into Dante’s service, and, true to its inverse relationship with hell, activity intensifies with the ascent just as, in hell, activity decreases with descent. “Whereas hell and purgatory are visible entities in Dante’s scheme . . . the system of concentric crystalline spheres of the Ptolemaic universe . . . is transparent and invisible” (62). This obvious difference and its moral implications lead Minahen into a discussion of the “four great symbols” (63) that structure paradise: “the ‘wheel’ of planetary orbits”; “the ‘nest of hemispheres’ . . . that turn on the axis of the North Star”; “the primum mobile,” and “the celestial rose” (63). The interweaving of these symbols brings “centrically circular, spirohelical, or vortical structures” (63) into conjunction in such a way that deity can be both center and circumference, and the terms and instances of vorticality increase as the poet moves through the heavens. The penultimate and ultimate images of vortical phenomena in heaven are the juxtaposed primum mobile and celestial white rose, and Minahen’s analysis of the “paradox of this inverse double image” (69) justifies his conclusion that Dante’s “elaboration of spiro-vortical symbolism” has been of “seminal importance in the history of ideas” (69).

The brief analysis of Descartes, in “The Turbulent Dream-Vision of Descartes’s ‘Olympian’ Experience” (chapter 6), provides a transition into the modern period of “scientific cosmology” (71) yet resists the exploration of the vortices upon which Descartes built his mechanics of planetary movement, preferring, instead, to examine a tripartite dream vision experienced by Descartes which proved pivotal to the development of his thought. This is a clever and wise procedure, and Minahen’s “reading” of Descartes’s dream provides a tangible example of the philosopher’s symbolic intertwining of “physics and metaphysics” at the foundation of his material analysis. Minahen concludes that “Descartes’s turbulent cosmology was thus figuratively correct, even if literally misapplied, since the vortical configuration is ubiquitous in the universe” (72). Minahen’s selection also skillfully bridges the gap between the Ptolemaic Christian vision of Dante and the post-Newtonian visionary physics.
pursued by Blake. Descartes’s dream reveals him as a man grappling with “a profound conflict between science and religion, knowledge and faith, vanity and deference to divinity” (83), and these dualities, characteristic of vortical phenomena in nature, symbolically “anticipate such important antitheses as body and soul, doubt and certainty, dream and reality” that shaped philosophical discourse in the eighteenth century. Additionally, the focus on “dream” helps shorten the distance between the material dualism of Descartes and Blake’s radical eradication of dualities, since Blake too turns to dream discourse for solutions.

The next chapter, “. . . That Every Thing Has Its/ Own Vortex . . .”: Dialectics of Vortical Symbolism in Blake,” ends the center section of the text with Blake’s “pithy, if somewhat cryptic, synthesis of many of the vortical images examined heretofore” (85). Minahen discusses the symbol’s verbal and visual manifestations to explore Blake’s negative and positive uses of spiral and vortical imagery: the former associated with Urizen’s vortical passage in The Four Zoas (Night 6) and with plate 11 of the Job illustrations; the latter associated with the famous “vortex” passage from Milton and plate 13 of the Job illustrations. The ambiguities of Blake’s use of the vortex are considered at the conclusion of the chapter through one of Blake’s better-known watercolors to Dante, “Beatrice Addressing Dante from the Car”; Beatrice represents the “Female Will,” and the painting “epitomizes the equivocal, dialectical function of the vortex in Blake’s art” (95). As these last formulations indicate, this chapter adds little to our understanding of Blake, his use of the vortex, or his place in a line of thinkers operating in a counter-linear fashion in relation to culture. There are some troubling generalizations scattered throughout this and other chapters: for example, Minahen’s claim that Blake reinforces “left-handedness” (90) as the direction of error ignores Blake’s propensity for inverting exact these stereotypical categories, as in the title page to The Marriage of Heaven and Hell.

The last section of the book, “Threshold of the Unknown,” opens with “Descents into Poe’s Maelstrom” (chapter 8), in which Minahen “consider[s] Edgar Allan Poe a symbolist along with Rimbaud and Mallarmé” (101). Certainly, all three writers liberate the vortical symbolism from its nebulous dependence upon “necessity” in the first section and the markedly Christian orientation found in the second section, and the growth of the symbol from Poe to Mallarmé might very well “identify a specific nineteenth-century symbolist epistemé” (102).

It is not new to find “the recurrence of the spiral or vortex’ as one of [Poe’s] most pervasive symbols” (quoting Richard Wilbur 102), and Minahen examines such symbols in Poe’s early “MS. Found in a Bottle” and the later “A Descent into the Maelstrom.” Both stories, which conclude with a narratorial descent into a watery vortex, present “the vortex [a]s literally a natural destructive force” (103). In the first, the natural experience collapses into a teleological event with “Dantesque” overtones of “evil, hopelessness, and death” (106). In the second, the narrator’s visual observation of a vortex, punctuated by an old sailor’s verbal narration of surviving his passage through one, takes on the aesthetic and dramatic dimensions of the sublime and the cathartic. Both stories achieve, in lesser and greater degree (respectively), a double mise en abyme, an interpenetration of content and style as well as the intertwining of narrative layers. According to Minahen, “the paradox of Poe’s vortex” resides in its ambiguous functions as “threshold” and “state of suspension” (112), but this could be said about several of the previous writers; Minahen’s singular focus on the natural and symbolic correspondences between text and world creates blindspots that could be pursued to widen the effects of vortical symbolism as a viable epistemology.

My point here is simply illustrated. When we apply, as I believe we must, terms and concepts drawn from quantum mechanics and relativistic physics to our discussions of the structure and effects of literary phenomena, as Minahen does in evoking terms drawn from black hole theory in this chapter (104), then we are equally obligated to perform an analysis of psyche’s role in the construction of that reality, since the two are inseparably entwined, as both the poet Blake and the physicist Heisenberg know too well. Given the attention paid to Poe by postmodern critics (Lacan, Derrida, Holland, et al.), it seems inconceivably neglectful to cite Marie Bonaparte’s rather infantile and shallow reading of Poe, when the full psychoanalytic dimensions of Poe’s use of the symbol in fact support a reading that his and all texts incorporating mise en abyme techniques often function as ‘vortexts.’

Minahen’s analysis of vortex as modern episteme achieves significant insights when confronting the poetic phenomena unleashed in chapter 9, “‘Tourbillons de Lumière’: Rimbaud’s Illuminating Vorti-

I discuss such “vortextuality” in “‘Vortex’ as Philosopher’s Stone: Blake’s Textual Mirrors and the Transmutation of Audience” New Orleans Review 13 (1986): 40-50. In regard to the postmodern ‘uses’ made of Poe that could further this ar-
ces." Minahen approaches Rimbaud's "bizarre symbolic universe" (115) at both the level of image and the literal level of appearance of words floating on blank pages with interesting results, although a similar approach in the Blake and Poe chapters would bolster and complicate the symbol's efficacy there in forcing the "breakdown in the linguistic sign itself" (116) observed in several of Rimbaud's poems. Clearly, Rimbaud's most intense engagement with symbolic turbulence occurs in three "illuminations" ("Marine," "Mouvement," and "Mystique"), and the analyses of these poems are illuminating. In "Marine," the "free association of subject-predicate" evokes a stylistic vortical dynamic, tapping the "opposition, tension, and possible fusion" (118) that the symbol has gathered to itself in its passage through time. The turbulence discussed in "Mouvement" grows out of "vortical synecdoches that abound throughout the text" (120) and unveils the vertiginous 'discovery' of poetic insight" (123). The last poem, "Mystique," differs from the previously discussed illuminations in its movement away from aquatic contexts and toward the poem as "a window into a kind of noumenal world beyond that of phenomenal appearances" (124). These readings support Minahen's contention that "the Rimbaldean vortex is a metamorphosing entity... that develops across the young poet's career, becoming increasingly hermetic and complex" (127).

"Whirling Toward the Void in Dead Center: Symbolic Turbulence in Mallarme's Un Coup de des" (chapter 10) clarifies the metaphorical differences in "the symbolist concept of reality" (129) that become apparent in the nexus of their turbulent representations. Mallarmé's use of the shipwreck reaccesses the associations of aquatic phenomena with vortical symbolism found in all three sections of Minahen's text, and the graphic dispersal of terms on the page embodies the oppositions explored in the poem's content in a manner analogous to Rimbaud's. Confronting Mallarmé's poetic "epistemological statement that depicts the complex, fragmented nature of thought" (130), Minahen enters the poem's "absences and omissions" (130) to elucidate the "vortex paradigm... established throughout" (131). The effect of this effort, while admirable, accounts for the sense of the chapter's "constructed" feel; in this way, the poem seems to function more like a mirror that comes to reflect the author's desire for closure, even though vortical symbolic clusters are present. Mallarmé's use of the vortex, where transcendent ideas are subsumed in a vortex that leads to death, intersects practices traced in all previous chapters but in inverse fashion, since Mallarmé's metaphors of turbulence function as "a negating absence at the center of all experience" (141).

In summary, although the work articulates, at the outset, a desire to pursue these matters through "a synchrony of the symbol" (ix), the actual pursuit is clearly established as a diachronic sequence from earlier to later writers, creating inexplicable holes where evidence seems to support the progression. Drawing an example from the material most familiar to me, the chapter on Blake places the poet in an epistemological line issuing forth from Descartes (in spite of Blake's repeated attacks on Cartesian dualism) and situates Blake's vortical practices within the framework of critical consensus by powerful readers of Blake's poetic and visual designs (Mitchell, Raine, and Ault, among others). However, Minahen neglects to connect Blake's use of the vortex in Milton to the intense inquiries into cones of vision as vortical phenomena in the diverse writings of Newton, Berkeley, Priestley (to name only a few) and, of course, Blake himself. Worse still, the chapter neglects specific attempts to address Blake's use of the vortex; the most glaring omission, to this reader, is failure to reference the information provided in Nelson Hilton's chapter of Literal Imagination entitled "Word and Text: Vortex and Wheel," although other examples could be cited.1

There is much to recommend a reading of Vortex/I: The Poetic of Turbulence, for the continuity and development of vortical symbolism as a counter epistemology capable of embodying the inner and outer turbulence of thought and experience is thoroughly established. However, there is considerable room for disagreement with individual readings in the text, and readers should be prepared to engage the text dialogically, probing the limits of Minahen's application of vortical processes and entering, in the process, the vortex of mental strife that Blake terms "mental war."

1 E.g., Kay Parkhurst Easson and Roger Easson's "Commentary" to their edition of Milton (Boulder: Shambhala Press; New York: Random House, 1978) which speaks directly to the function of the eye as vortical in nature (145-50) and the vortex itself as "Blake's image of spiritual travel" (151 ff.).
Teaching Blake

Before you go
a word further,
let me posit that
teaching Blake
requires a kind of
rigor
you may
want to avoid,

that is, unless
you've learned
enough detachment
from day-long conversations,
matching silences

—in rooms of
Virginia, Libya,
and Japan
where drapes
match
sofas and
beds,
where paintings
match
neither—

to suggest
with restraint,
of course,

that eleven o'clock
efforts, even
lifting a coffee mug,
a fax, a receiver,
a finger, are
bivalved
marriages
of heaven
and hell,
acidic mysteries of
some concern.

Alma Bennett