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At first glance, the poetic diction, heroic verse and classical allusions characterizing Phillis Wheatley’s 1773 Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral would seem to suggest that her poetry has everything to do with neoclassicism and nothing at all to do with romanticism. Yet a closer examination of Wheatley’s collection reveals its significance not just to the neoclassical tradition from which it derives, or even to the African-American literary tradition which it initiates (Gates x), but also, and quite surprisingly, to a particularly problematic poem of the English romantic tradition. The problematic poem is William Blake’s “The Little Black Boy,” and I will argue that reading this song of innocence alongside Wheatley’s “An Hymn to the Morning,” one of the poems in her 1773 volume, leads to a better understanding of Blake’s child speaker and of the intense irony used to portray his situation. Also arising from the juxtaposition of these two poems is the interesting possibility that Blake had some familiarity with Wheatley’s work in particular, and with eighteenth-century England’s small but notable African literary community in general.

The slave of a wealthy Boston family, Wheatley turned to England with her volume of poetry only after American publishers had rejected it (Mason 5). Yet these circumstances may have helped to establish and sustain her reputation, for upon its publication in London, the volume was widely and enthusiastically reviewed in British periodicals and its author acclaimed in abolitionist documents for years to come.

Blake may have read one of the many reviews of Wheatley’s volume, or he may have learned about the African poet as he composed his Songs of Innocence at the height of the English abolitionist movement in the late 1780s. This is the more plausible possibility, for one critic has suggested the likelihood that “Blake drew on” Thomas Clarkson’s celebrated 1786 Essay on the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species as he wrote “The Little Black Boy” (Macdonald 178); and in one component of his argument against slavery (an assertion of the intellectual capacities of blacks), Clarkson cites Wheatley as a representative example of African intellect and educability as he displays excerpts of four of her poems, “An Hymn to the Morning” among them (111).

Any examination of “An Hymn to the Morning” must be preceded by an understanding of Wheatley’s complex situation as a woman who is at once an African, an American, a slave, a Christian and a poet. Wheatley’s poetry has for many years been criticized by readers who see her verse as imitative and her reluctance to clearly condemn the institution of slavery as reprehensible. More recent critics have
began to point out African elements in Wheatley's form as well as her use of irony and subtle manipulations of language to censure the society that has enslaved her. They suggest that Wheatley's poetry must be read with the knowledge that she has been forced to speak "with a double tongue" (Erkkila 205).

Approaching "An Hymn to the Morning" with this knowledge, we find that the speaker communicates complex feelings about nature, religion, and her role as a poet in imagery that brings "The Little Black Boy" to mind. "[W]ritten in heroic verse," though "embody[ing] the spirit of the hymn," the poem begins as the speaker proclaims her intention to celebrate the dawn through her song. In this first stanza Wheatley calls upon the muses for assistance as she composes her paean to the rising sun, confidently situating this poem within the classical poetic tradition of the society which has enslaved her. Her description of the beauty and brilliance of the awakening morning progresses uneventfully throughout the second stanza, but by the third stanza a discordant note becomes apparent, as the speaker makes a curious request: "Ye shady groves, your verdant gloom display/To shield your poet from the burning day." At this point the poet seems to feel a need for protection from the very object of her praise. And in the final stanza it becomes evident that her apprehension was not unwarranted, for here the sun, or "th'illustrious king of day" has, with his "rising radiance," driven "the shades away." Thus, the now unprotected poet finds that she "feel[s] his fervid beams too strong" and must abruptly end her composition: "And scarce begun, concludes th'abortive song" (74).6

5 In "Classical Tidings from the Afric Muse: Phillis Wheatley's Use of Greek and Roman Mythology," Lucy Hayden suggests that Wheatley may have been "drawing subliminally on the storytelling tradition of her African past" in her poem "Goliath at Gath" (435); and John Shields, in a chapter in African American Writers: Profiles of their Lives and Works from the 1700s to the Present, asserts that both "An Hymn to the Morning" and "An Hymn to the Evening" suggest "the recollection of an African musical setting" (357). Shields, along with Mukhtar Ali Isani, Lynn Matson, William H. Robinson, Jr., Sondra O'Neil, Betsy Erkkila (and others), are amending our understanding of Wheatley by locating points of resistance and rebellion in her language and poetry.

6 John Shields, "Phillis Wheatley and Mather Byles," CLA Journal (1980): 380. Subsequent page references will appear parenthetically and will be abbreviated PWMB.


8 The complete text of Wheatley's "An Hymn to the Morning" follows:

Attend my lays, ye ever honour'd nine,
Assist my labours, and my strains refine;
In smoothest numbers pour the notes along.
For bright Aurora now demands my song.

Clearly, the poet has mixed feelings about her purpose and her potential to accomplish it in this poem. We can only begin to understand the nature of those feelings if we are aware of the traditions which collide in these verses. The poem was certainly meant to be read by its original white English and American audiences as a melding of classicism and Christianity, in which the Greek gods of the sun and the dawn are celebrated at the same time that Christianity's God and His Son are praised and glorified. Subsequent readers have continued to emphasize these elements of Wheatley's work, as is evident in Julian Mason's remark that Wheatley's "mixing of Christian and classical in the many invocations in her poems (as well as in other parts of the poems) reflects the two greatest influences on her work, religion and neo-classicism" (15).

Yet an integrated reading of Wheatley's work (and of "An Hymn to the Morning" and its sun imagery in particular) requires recognition of cultural influences with non-Western roots. The reader needs to consider, for example, the strong possibility that Wheatley came from an African community in which sun worship was a religious practice, for Wheatley's first biographer claimed that the poet could remember only one thing about her life in Africa, and that was that every day her mother "poured out water before the sun at his rising" (Odell 10-11). Because Wheatley was kidnapped and brought to America when she was only seven or eight years old, there is no way to be certain of either her place of birth or her native religious traditions, although it has been suggested that "she was very likely of the Fulani people in the Gambia region of West Africa" and that the ritual she remembered may have been a "complex, syncretized version of Islam and solar worship," as "Islam had long before penetrated into the Gambia region." In any case, Wheatley's intense preoccupation with the sun in this
poem and others\textsuperscript{10} certainly can be traced to African origins\textsuperscript{11} and seen as quiet confirmation of a life and religion that were hers before she was enslaved. Because it is so fraught with contradictions, the sun imagery of "An Hymn to the Morning" calls attention to itself and to the various cultural and religious roles that it is asked to play. Perhaps while Wheatley encourages the reader to consider the cultural convergence in her depiction of this Christian/ classical/African sun, she concurrently questions the role that the sun in its Christian manifestation has played in her own life. We would certainly expect a slave carried to America and converted to the religion of her captors to have doubts about that religion, and of course the only way for her to communicate those doubts would be to cloak them in conventionality. Thus, the tension that exists between the poet's glorification of the sun and her discomfort when exposed to its "fervid beams" may be the result of Wheatley's ironic attitude towards her subject: while ostensibly praising her Christian God, she also implies that His presence in her life has made it impossible for her to fully express her beliefs and emotions, and therefore, to write the kind of poem she envisions.

The speaker's attempt to seek refuge in a "shady grove" and its "verdant gloom" may also be seen as evidence of Wheatley's conflicted feelings about Christianity and her abiding interest in the religious traditions she left behind in Africa. For just as the sun in this poem suggests an aspect of the poet's African past, so too does the shade. As Wheatley was composing her Poems on Various Subjects in colonial America, both England and America were amassing voluminous accounts of the life and land of Africa.\textsuperscript{12} These geographic/ethnographic reports were sometimes written (or compiled) by those interested in abolitionism, but most often by "slave traders or naval officers involved in protecting the trade"; yet in spite of their glaring flaws and prejudices, they were invaluable to those who wanted at least a glimpse of the continent they were colonizing (Marshall, Williams 228). It seems likely that Wheatley's lack of information about her homeland and "easy access" to the three largest libraries in the colonies (Shields PWMB 389n) would have led her to peruse some of these widely published accounts, and a reference to one of them in a 1774 letter suggests that she was, in fact, familiar with the genre.\textsuperscript{13}

Examination of some of these works reinforces this suggestion, for one of the African traditions repeatedly remarked upon concerns the practice of meeting and worshipping in a "shady grove."

One work typical of this genre is William Smith's A New Voyage to Guinea, first published in 1744. In his depiction of what was then known to the English as the country of Whydah (also referred to as Fida by the Dutch, and Juda by the French), on the Slave Coast of Africa, Smith writes that "[a]ll who have ever been here, allow this to be one of the most delightful Countries in the World," in part because of "[t]he great Number and Variety of tall, beautiful and shady Trees, which seem as if planted in fine Groves for ornament" (194). He later recognizes, however, that the groves serve a more than ornamental purpose, when he notes that "[a]llmost every Village has a Grove or publik Place of Worship, to which the principal Inhabitants on a set Day resort to make their Offerings, &c" (214).

Thomas Salmon devotes the 27th volume of his encyclopedic Modern History; or the Present State of All Nations (1735) to an examination of Africa, and in so doing, also notes the importance of public shady groves in various African societies. In a discussion of the Congo, for example, he writes that

\begin{quote}
[as] to the Towns belonging to the Negroes, most of them consist of a few Huts, built with Clay and Reeds, in an irregular manner; and as every Tribe or Clan has its particular King or Sovereign, his Palace is usually distinguished by a spreading Tree before his Door, under which he sits and converses, or administers Justice to his Subjects. But I perceive most of their Towns are in or near a Grove of Trees; for our Sailors always conclude, there is a Negroe Town, wherever they observe a Tuft of Trees upon the Coast. (160)
\end{quote}

As Salmon goes on to discuss other areas of Africa, he, like Smith, pays particular attention to Whydah in a description he appropriates from Willem Bosman's firsthand account of the region in A New and Accurate Description of the Coast of Guinea (translated from Dutch into English in 1705). He writes that Bosman's inquiry into the religion of this society revealed that along with serpents and the sea, the natives of this land show reverence for trees and groves:

\begin{quote}
The next Things the Fidians pay Divine Honours to, are fine lofty Trees and Groves. To these they apply in their Sickness, or on any private Misfortune; and I
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{10} Shields writes that "solar imagery constitutes the dominant image pattern in [Wheatley's] poetry" (AAW 356.)

\textsuperscript{11} In a study of African traditional religions, John S. Mbiti writes that some African cultures perceive God as "the Sun" which beams its light everywhere and points out that "[a]mong many [African] societies, the sun is considered to be a manifestation of God Himself, and the same word, or its cognate, is used for both" (African Religions and Philosophy 31, 52.) Both Olaudah Equiano and James Grouniosaw also mention sun worship rituals in their narratives (discussed below).

\textsuperscript{12} Many of these works are discussed in chap. 8 of P. J. Marshall's and Glyndwr Williams' The Great Map of Mankind: British Perceptions of the World in the Age of Enlightenment. Philip Curtin also refers to the genre throughout The Image of Africa, as does William Lloyd James in his dissertation, "The Black Man in English Romantic Literature, 1772-1833."

\textsuperscript{13} In a letter to the "Rev'd Mr. Saml. Hopkins of New Port, Rhode Island," Wheatley writes that she "observe[s] [his] reference to the Maps of Guinea & Salmon's Gazetteer, and shall consult them" (Wheatley 208). Thus it appears that Reverend Hopkins has directed her to some information on Africa in one of Thomas Salmon's popular accounts.
ought to have taken Notice, that all the Serpents
Temple are in some Grove, or under some spreading
Tree. (228)

Salmon’s appropriation of Bosman’s text is not unusual
in this genre, for many writing these early accounts of Af­
ica incorporate entire paragraphs and even pages from the
works of their predecessors. This is especially true in the
case of Anthony Benezet’s Some Historical Account of Guine­a,
an abolitionist text first published in 1771, for Benezet’s attempt to establish the spiritual potential of Af­
icans is partially based on passages taken directly from both
William Smith and Bosman, and these happen to be the
passages portraying the religious practices of the Whidah
blacks, which, of course, include worshiping in a shady
grove (23-28).

Although we must read eighteenth century travel ac­
counts of Africa with caution, remembering that “travel­
ners with closed minds can tell us little except about them­
selves” (Achebe, qtd. in Brantlinger 95), the likelihood that
Wheatley consulted one or more of the works in this genre
nonetheless sheds new light on the “shady grove” of “An
Hymn to the Morning.” The image now seems to say less
about the burning sun and desire for relief from it and more
about Christianity and possible alternatives to it. Unear­
ing African roots in Wheatley’s “shady grove” thus relo­
cates the reader somewhere beyond the poem’s pious, con­
ventional, Christian surface. From this new vantage point,
we see Wheatley giving credence to a religious ritual that
might have been her own had she not been enslaved, and
we recognize the note of bitterness in the poem’s abrupt
conclusion where a potentially African shade is driven away
by a Christian incarnation of the sun.

Turning to “The Little Black Boy,” we find that Blake’s
poem brings Wheatley’s to mind, as it too makes the reader
aware of irony and bitterness through tensions and con­
tradictions in its depiction of the sun and a “shady grove.”
As the child of Blake’s poem relates his story, he brings the
reader to “the southern wild” where he was born and tells
us of his mother’s religious lessons. We find that she, like
Wheatley and her own mother, worships a God which she
quotes his mother as saying that “these black bodies and
this sunburnt face / is but a cloud, and like a shady grove”
(E 9). The mother also proclaims that someday, when their
“souls have learn’d the heat to bear,” she and her son will be
called “out from the grove” by the loving voice of God (E 9).
Determining whether or not Blake is aware of the reli­
gious implications of trees and groves for an African writer
such as Wheatley is less important than noticing that the
relationship he establishes between the image of a “shady
grove” and an African sense of self and blackness dupli­
cates the one developed in “An Hymn to the Morning.” In
both poems the “shady grove” is associated with an African
speaker’s struggle to construct an identity (either poetic or
personal), and in both poems the image of the protective
grove is set up in opposition to the sun and to Christianity.

The complexity of the images of sun and shade in these
two poems continually conducts the reader back to critical
questions about Christianity, and more specifically, about
the role that Christianity plays in the life of an enslaved
African. When we consider that Christian doctrine was de­
ployed both by pro-slavery apologists who argued that Af­
rican servitude was ordained by God, and by abolition­
ist who asserted that the institution of slavery was in­com­
patible with Christian teachings, the relevance and im­
portance of these questions become incontrovertible. Thus,
Blake’s reformulation of some of the ideas and images of
Wheatley’s poem in “The Little Black Boy” may demon­
strate

14 Modern studies of African religions attest to the continuing sig­
ificance of “shady groves” in many African societies. For example, in
a chapter on places and objects of worship, Dominique Zahan writes
that “the tree acquires an even greater value when it forms a part of the
thickets and groves in which man holds religious meetings,” and claims
that “[i]n fact, groves are the most preferred places of worship in Afri­
can religion” (The Religion, Spirituality, and Thought of Traditional Af­
can 28). Similarly, in African Religions and Philosophy, John S. Mbiti
writes of the importance of trees and groves in the worship practices
of many African cultures (73).
15 William Blake, The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake,
ed. David Erdman, 9. Subsequent references to this edition will cite it
as “E,” followed by page number.
16 Illustrating the pervasive notion that Christianity sanctioned sla­
very, Daniel Burton (secretary of London’s Society for the Propaga­
tion of the Gospel) explains in a 1786 letter to the Quaker abolitionist
Anthony Benezet that the society is unwilling to support Benezet’s an­
tislavery efforts because it “cannot condemn the Practice of keeping Slaves as unlawful, finding the contrary very plainly implied in the
precepts given by the Apostles, both to Masters and Servants, which
last were for the most part Slaves...” (qtd. in Winthrop Jordan’s White
Over Black 197). For commentary on some of the pseudo-Biblical theo­
ries employed by early defenders of the slave trade, see Charles Lyons’
reference to the Hamitic curse in To Wash an Aethiop White (12) and
Keith Sandiford’s discussion of the mark of Cain in Measuring the
Moment (100).
17 For one discussion of the argument that slaveholding was in vi­
olation of the Christian condition, see “Quaker Conscience and Con­
sciousness” in Winthrop Jordan’s White Over Black (271-76).
his struggle to try to provide his own representation of some of the bleak but unavoidable answers to these questions.

Blake's struggle to come to terms with these questions and answers is reflected in his depiction of the child speaker of his poem. The "little black boy" is clearly confused by the complexity of the religious and social lessons he has been taught, and by his own dual role as a child of Africa and a child of God. Almost all readers of this poem point to the contradictory nature of the boy's reasoning: he looks to God for love and protection and yet needs protection from Him; he sees his blackness as a sign that he is "bereav'd of light" (E 9) and as a gift from God; and he believes that when he goes to Heaven, he and the white English boy will both shed their cloud-bodies, and thus achieve some kind of equality, and yet still envisions himself serving the white child, "shad[ing] him from the heat" and "stand[ing] and strok[ing] his silver hair" (E 9).

Some readers of the poem see the child's "fractured theology" (Macdonald 168) as evidence that he has mingled the religion his mother taught him with the Christianity he was exposed to through missionaries or English Sunday schools in order to "produc[e] a self-affirming discourse of his own" (Richardson 243). While it is difficult to extricate the separate strands of religion and culture here, I think that it is safe to say that there is little of a self-affirming nature in the tensions and contradictions that comprise the resulting religious views of "the little black boy." Like Wheatley, he has clearly learned that the spiritual teachings of his homeland are considered at best insufficient, and at worst, mere superstition by the society he now lives in. And, like Wheatley, he has learned that in order to be tolerated by this society, he is expected to embrace Christianity, but not to expect too much out of Christianity in return. Thus, as the little boy of this poem grapples with the religions of his past and his present, Blake suggests that confusion, contradictions, and irony are the necessary results of Christianity's involvement in Africa and the slave trade.

Blake does, however, provide the reader of "The Little Black Boy" with more than a bleak example of Christianity's impact on Africa and Africans. In the language and images that his poem shares with Wheatley's, Blake attests to the significance of beliefs and rituals with African origins and thus offers a revised reading of religion to eighteenth-century England. While recognizing, as one modern writer on Africa puts it, that "African traditions are no more homogeneous than those of any other continent" (Hountondji, qtd. in Appiah 95), we can nonetheless see that Blake's song of innocence, although obviously limited by its historical situation, presents a picture of traditional African belief systems that is both accepting and appreciative of their differences from English Christian creeds. This accepting and appreciative perspective is evident not only in the sun worship and the retreat to a "shady grove" central to this poem and to Wheatley's, but also in "The Little Black Boy's" affinities with the writings of other eighteenth-century Africans.

Blake's portrait of childhood in Africa, for example, reminds Paul Edwards of James Albert Gronniosaw's slave narrative, published in at least four editions in England and America from the 1770s through the 1790s. Edwards suggests that although some of Blake's later writings, notably Jerusalem, describe groves in a much more negative manner, these are clearly not the "shady groves" of African culture, but are instead "oaken groves"
gests an admittedly shaky circumstantial link between Blake and Gronniosaw’s Narrative of the Most Remarkable Particulars as he explains that Blake was good friends with the painter Richard Cosway, whose house servant was Ottobah Cugoano, one of the leaders of England’s black abolitionists. Because Cugoano’s antislavery document, first published in 1787, mentions Gronniosaw’s work, Edwards proposes that Blake may have been introduced to Gronniosaw’s narrative on a visit to the Cosways (181).

In any case, the story told by “the little black boy” of Blake’s poem bears an uncanny resemblance to the story Gronniosaw tells of his own childhood. Gronniosaw writes of a conversation he once had with his mother in Africa about the author of creation and reports that when he “raised [his] hands toward heaven,” and asked “who lived there,” he was “much dissatisfied when she told [him] sun, moon, and stars, being persuaded in [his] own mind that there must be some superior Power” (3). Gronniosaw then remarks that the members of his village often congregated under a number of “large palm tree[s]” for their early morning worship (8). Edwards notes the resemblance of these lines to the second and third stanzas of “The Little Black Boy,” and sums up the relationship by saying that “the two passages share a conversation between mother and child, a sheltering tree, and an identification of the Heavenly Power with the sun, [though] in Gronniosaw it is the child who appears more aware of the Heavenly Power than the mother” (180).

Once again encountering the tradition of worshipping the sun from the protective covering of a “shady grove,” we find that Blake’s poem and Gronniosaw’s narrative share more than the specifics of plot outlined by Edwards. Gronniosaw unmistakably establishes the tree and the shade it provides as emblems of African religion, for his initial image of the tree is extended later in the narrative when he explains that even after he had been enslaved and converted to Christianity, he continued to pray under a tree, although he had to replace the palm trees of Africa with a “large, remarkably fine” American oak, “about a quarter of a mile from [his] master’s house” (24). Reading Blake’s poem in the light of Gronniosaw’s Narrative thus reinforces the suggestion that the specific setting of the religious lesson in “The Little Black Boy,” “underneath a tree,” “before the heat of day,” is intended as acknowledgement of the little that Blake could have known of African religious practices (E 9). And because a thorough

associated with Druidism (E 170; pl. 25, L4). Similarly, we should not see in the serpent temples of Europe and Jerusalem any indictment of African religious customs, as these too are associated with Druidism and Blake’s view of Britain’s religious history.

3 Map from Willem Bosman’s A New and Accurate Description of the Coast of Guinea, 1705. Courtesy of the Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundation.

20 Michael Echeruo recently suggested that Paul Edwards’s article on the possible link between “The Little Black Boy” and Gronniosaw’s Narrative is in need of “some expansion and revision” (51). Echeruo’s argument is that “Thoughts in Exile,” a poem published in 1864 by the Nigerian poet William Cole, “challenges Blake’s and Gronniosaw’s [poems] in every particular,” especially in its depiction of an African child learning religious lessons underneath his father’s tree (56). In his conclusion, Echeruo suggests that “[i]t would be well worth the effort to identify other instances of this habit of ‘theologizing under a tree’ in written and oral African literature and determine the rhetorical uses to which the topos is variously put” (“Theologizing ‘Underneath the Tree’: An African Topos in Ukwawsu Gronniosaw, William Blake, and William Cole” 56).
reading of Gronniosaw's Narrative confirms that tension and irony inevitably accompany the Christian conversion of an enslaved African, we can recognize in this writer one more likely model for Blake's child speaker.

If Blake was indeed familiar with Gronniosaw's Narrative, it is almost certain that he would also have been aware of the work of Olaudah Equiano, a close friend of Cosway's servant Cugoano, and probably the most famous of England's black abolitionists. Equiano's work, entitled The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano or Gustavus Vassa the African was first published in London in 1789 and went through at least 15 editions by 1834 (Sandiford 10). Along with exposing some of the horrors of slavery, the work depicts the same kind of spiritual struggle as is seen in Wheatley's poem and Gronniosaw's Narrative. Equiano appears in one part of the narrative to have completely supplanted his African religious training with Christianity and in another to be revolting against such a distasteful idea. We find him at his most direct when he compares English society to cultures with non-Christian belief systems, and when he presents the reader with an account of his "early life in Eboe" (1). In this account, he describes many of the traditional practices and beliefs with which he was raised, and after considering subjects such as the homes, the food, and the daily occupations of the Eboes, he states that "as to Religion, the natives believe that there is one Creator of all things and that he lives in the sun..." (10), thus presenting us with another possible source for the mother's message to her child in "The Little Black Boy."

The parallels between Blake's poem and these African works are valuable in and of themselves, for they awaken us to the fact that enslaved Africans were writing, publishing, and being widely read during the romantic period in England, and thus that they were actively influencing the tide of the abolitionist movement. At the same time, the possibility that this literature may have influenced Blake's rendering of African experience in "The Little Black Boy" allows a better understanding of why his child speaker voices such paradoxical notions and what Christianity has had to do with the development of these notions.

As Blake's poem concludes, the "little black boy" offers the reader a vision of his hopes for the future. He sees himself and the little English boy, free from their respective clouds, together in a Heaven in which Christ is depicted as the good shepherd and where "round the tent of God like lambs [they] joy" (E 9). This conclusion has been condemned for its evasion of historical realities and its imperialist implications,21 and the black child's contented, unquestioning acceptance of this Christian afterlife in which he is the playmate and yet still the servant of the white child seems to substantiate such criticism. And yet the ending of Blake's antislavery statement is quite similar to that of one of his African contemporaries, Ottobah Cugoano. In Thoughts and Sentiments on the Evil of Slavery, Cugoano concludes his condemnation of the slave trade with three proposals for the people of England. He recommends that after praying for forgiveness for "making merchandize" of human beings (129), and completely abolishing slavery, the British should convert all of the forts and factories used for the slave trade in West Africa into Christian missions or "shepherd's tents," where "good shepherds" sent from England will "call the flocks to feed beside them" (133). Juxtaposing these two conclusions makes the ironic element of Blake's poem more apparent. If Cugoano was unable to represent anything other than an English/Christian vision of the future, then why should we be surprised that Blake's "little black boy" finds himself in the same situation? Essentially, he has learned the lessons of Phillis Wheatley and his other real-life counterparts only too well.

Works Cited


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21 For these assertions, see D.L. Macdonald ("Pre-Romantic and Romantic Abolitionism" 168) and Ngugi wa Thiong'o (Writers in Politics: Essays 20).
In "William Blake’s 'The Phoenix': A Problem in Attribution," Robert N. Essick argues that "The Phoenix / to Mrs Butts," a manuscript poem discovered in 1981 and first attributed to Blake by Geoffrey Keynes, was indeed written by Blake for Mrs. Butts and is not a forgery, as Morton Paley and David Bindman had suspected ("Phoenix" 366).1 Essick bases his argument on the bibliographical and technical features of the work, and not on the style of the poem or the provenance of the artifact, though he uses the provenance to support his conclusion. And therein lies a potential problem, for the provenance given to Keynes by the poem’s owner is impossible. A mistaken provenance does not necessarily mean that the artifact is bogus, but it does raise red flags. In this brief note, I argue that "The Phoenix" is authentic and the provenance mistaken because two families directly connected to Thomas Butts have been unknowingly conflated. Only one of these families, however, is known to Blake scholars, and thus, by correcting the provenance of a minor work, I hope also to shed light on Blake’s patron, his patron’s family, and the way in which works from the Butts collection were distributed. (These are the subjects of two forthcoming studies.)

Keynes, the first to record the provenance, identifies the owner ... [as] Mr Owen D. Long, resident in Wales. It came to him through his grandmother, whose maiden name was Mary Anne North, daughter of Mrs North, formerly Miss Cooper, who by her second marriage became Mrs Butts. I had not been aware that she, born Cooper, had made a previous marriage as Mrs North, and this is all that the owner knows of his descent, but it is quite plain that the document signed William Blake and addressed ‘To Mrs Butts’ has been traced to its authentic origin. (1021)

The idea that Mrs. Butts had been previously married may have been news to Keynes, but it was first noted in 1956 by Bentley in "Thomas Butts, White Collar Maecenas" (1053n7). Bentley infers the second marriage from the fact that Butts, in his will (p. 8), bequeathed rings and ten pounds to "Mary Ann the wife of my said son Thomas Butts a Ring of the value of nineteen pounds nineteen shillings and six pence ... to Mrs Maria North, the daughter-in-law of my said wife [Elizabeth], to Mr Charles Long, to Mrs Mary Anne Long his wife and who is a daughter of my wife." From this passage, specifically the mention of a daughter-in-law named North, Bentley reasonably inferred that Mrs. Butts was married to a Mr. North before marrying Butts.2 In the will, Butts does not mention his wife’s maiden or married name, but Burke’s and Ada Briggs identify her as Elizabeth Cooper (93).

The will implies that Butts married a woman who had previously been married. Bentley and Essick reasonably assumed that the will’s Elizabeth is Elizabeth Cooper and that she had married a Mr. North before marrying Butts and thus was the mother of the Butts children as well as the mother of the North children. But if her children with Mr. North came before those with Butts, then they were born before or no later than 1783, since Joseph Edward Butts, Butts’s eldest child, was born 4 February 1784 (Burke’s). If so, Owen Long’s math fails to add up. It is nearly impossible

1 William Blake, "The Phoenix / To Mrs Butts, c. 1800-03. Courtesy of the British Library.

2 Bentley records “Maria” as “Mary” (1053n7). Butts’s will was proved on 23 June 1845; it is #2019 in the Public Records Office, Chancery Lane, London. The 15 unnumbered pages of the document are here numbered for convenience.

3 Essick constructs the same lineage: "The 'Mary Ann Long' in that document is the 'Mary Anne North' (her maiden name) who Owen Long states was his grandmother from whom he inherited the 'Phoenix' manuscript. Mary Anne's husband and the grandfather of Owen Long was evidently Charles Long, the 'son-in-law' (i.e., the husband of one of his wife's daughters by her first marriage) to whom Butts lent

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1 William Blake, "The Phoenix / To Mrs Butts, c. 1800-03. Courtesy of the British Library.

Henry Baker and to Mrs Caroline Matilda Baker his wife, who is also a daughter of my wife." From this passage, specifically the mention of a daughter-in-law named North, Bentley reasonably inferred that Mrs. Butts was married to a Mr. North before marrying Butts.2 In the will, Butts does not mention his wife's maiden or married name, but Burke's and Ada Briggs identify her as Elizabeth Cooper (93).

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for a daughter of Mrs. Butts born before 1783 to have a grandchild living in 1881.4

At first glance, only Owen Long's math and not the lineage itself appears incorrect. Either Mary Ann Long was Owen Long's great grandmother—or she was her age when she died. The baptism register of St. Pancras, Euston Road, London. Her mother was Elizabeth Delanney, who married Thomas Butts on 15 June 1826 in the parish of St. Pancras, which, according to Butts's will (p. 6), is his parish. The record in the marriage register of St. Pancras provides the proof that the groom is Blake's patron:

Thomas Butts of this Parish Widower and Elizabeth Delanney of this Parish Widow were married in this Church by Licence . . . this fifteenth Day of June in the Year One thousand eight hundred and Twenty Six By me J. Brackenbury Curate. This Marriage was solemnized between us Thos. Butts [and] Eliz. Delauney In the presence of John G Fearn[,] Mary Ann Delauney[,] Caroline M Delauney

The names of the female witnesses prove that the widower is Blake's patron. As noted, in his will Butts identifies Mary Ann Long and Caroline Matilda Baker as "daughters of his wife," and Mary Ann's maiden name was Delauney (or Delaney). Further search through the IGI reveals that Caroline Matilda Delauney (or Delaney) married Henry Baker in the parish of St. Pancras, Euston Road, on 24 June 1837.6 Their mother, the widow Elizabeth Delauney, had married Peter Delauney in the church of St. George, Hanover Square, Westminster, on 25 October 1791. Elizabeth's maiden name was Davis. Her daughter Caroline's birth and christening dates are not recorded in IGI (which means that it most likely occurred in one of the many parishes that have yet to enter the IGI).

The "Elizabeth Butts" mentioned in Butts's will was his second wife and not Elizabeth Cooper, the mother of his children and the woman, according to Briggs, known as "Betsy." 7 This second marriage solves a minor mystery in Blake studies: Mrs. Butts's age at the time of her death and the place of her death. Her obituary in the Gentleman's Magazine for February 1852 records her date of death as 24 December 1851 at 81 years, implying a birth year of 1770. This is much too late for Elizabeth Cooper—unless she married Butts when she was still a child, or lied about her age when she died. The birth year, however, is consistent with Elizabeth Delauney. The obituary also records her dying outside her own home, "In Upper Gower St," despite being the "relict of Thomas Butts, esq. of Grafton-st." She apparently died at the home of her daughter Caroline Baker, who lived with her husband Henry, an architect, at 11 Upper Gower Street. In the 1840s, the Bakers lived at 25 Grafton Street, a few doors down from the Butts's at 17 Grafton. Upon Butts's death in 1845, Tommy Butts inherited the Grafton residence and, according to the will, Mrs. Butts was required to vacate the premises three months after her husband's death (p. 2). She apparently moved in with her daughter Caroline.

Mrs. Delauney, if 81 when she died, was around 56 when she married Butts. Butts has been mistakenly believed to have been born in 1757 (Bentley "Butts"1052) and thus Blake's exact contemporary. But he was the third son named Thomas born to Thomas Butts and Hannah Witham. The first was baptized on 13 March 1746, the second on 12 July 1756, and the third, born 15 December 1759, was baptized on 9 January 1760.8 Apparently, the first two children died in infancy.9 Hence, he was two years younger than Blake and

6 In addition to the IGI, see the more powerful CD-Rom Family Program (which is not available in England but is available in the NYPL and the Family Research Centers of The Church of Jesus Christ Latter Day Saints).

7 Briggs was the sister of Captain Butts's much younger second wife, whom he married in 1889. Her knowledge of the family a hundred years earlier is unreliable and seems based on family lore and the relics in her sister's house. She does not mention a second marriage for Butts and may be conflating histories. Her brother-in-law the Captain was born in 1833 and knew his grandfather's wife and not his biological grandmother.

8 The birth and baptism are recorded in the baptism register of the parish of St. Luke, Old Street, Finsbury, which is in the Greater London Records Office; the IGI records only the baptism year. Burke's records the correct day and year of birth.

9 Butts's parents were married on 19 May 1746 in St. Andrew by the Wardrobe, London (IGI). Infant mortality was high, as any cursory
was 66 years old at the time of his second marriage, with all of his children gone, but possibly with a new stepdaughter, Caroline Matilda Delauney, still at home.10

The second marriage of Butts supports—though only barely—Owen Long's claim that he inherited "The Phoenix" from his grandmother, Mary Ann Long, since she was born to Butts's second rather than first wife, in 1802 rather than before 1783.11 The second marriage, however, also refutes Long's lineage, because Elizabeth Delauney's maiden name was Davis and not North, and there is no record of her ever marrying a North between Peter Delauney (1791) and Thomas Butts (1826). She was remarried as Mrs. Delauney, and her daughter Mary Ann was also married as a Delauney.

Where, then, does Owen Long come up with the name Mary Ann North? Did Mr. Long know Bentley's article, which mentions that Mrs. Butts was born Elizabeth Cooper and was previously married to a Mr. North (1053n7)? Did he, in other words, deliberately construct a false provenance? Like Essick ("Phoenix" 376), I think this is unlikely, since Bentley recorded the long "I" of "Long" as an "S," which it very closely resembles, and thus identified the daughter-in-law as Mary Ann Song. If Owen Long read Bentley, then he would have not found the name Long. For that he would have had to examine the original will, and correct what the trained eye of one of Blake studies most astute scholars missed. No, we are not dealing with a very sophisticated forgery. Admittedly, my suspicion of the provenance made me suspect forgery and forced me to examine

examination of the burial registers of London parishes demonstrates. The repetition of the same name for children to the same parents in the IGI suggests the same. (Sometimes, however, male children would be given the father's name but be known by their middle name to increase the chances that the name on a leasehold dwelling would remain unchanged.) The Buttses also had two Elizabeths, baptized on 14 January 1750 and 26 September 1757. (For a genealogy of the Butts family, see Viscomi, "Green House."

10 I have not been able to locate the place and date for the death of Mrs. Cooper Butts. Unfortunately, the burial register for parish of St. Pancras, Euston Road, for the years 1810-17 are not available for consultation, and the microfilm of them in the Greater London Records Office is overexposed and much of it I could not read. The death may have been after 1816, for Tommy appears to have lived at home at least till then. His schoolboy friend Seymour Kirkup records visiting him and the Butts collection between 1810 and 1816 (Bentley, Blake Records 220-21). Kirkup refers to the "Buttases" and to "they," but he is not clear if he is referring to Mr. and Mrs. Butts, or to father and son. Would it be surprising if she had died c. 1810-11, when Butts appears to have stopped buying Blakes?

There are no letters between Blake and Butts after 1803, only receipts, the last extant one in December 1810. Blake mentions in an undated letter to Linnell, c. April 1826, that Butts visited him and purchased at discount (for lending the watercolors) a copy of the Book of Job (Erdman 777). Blake makes no mention of the forthcoming second marriage.

11 Mary Ann Long had two sons, Edwin Williams Long in 1832 and Charles Albert Long in 1829. For either man to have been Charles Long's father means he sired him very late in his own life. the will and the poem. I can verify that the surname is "Long" (as Bentley now also acknowledges) and, after a close inspection of the poem, that I believe it was written—both invented and executed on paper—by Blake. The only conclusion, then, is that Owen Long's memory played tricks on him, that he conflated various people in Butts's first and second families into one direct descendent. According to Keynes, the poem's provenance was "all that the owner knows of his descent." Apparently, Mr. Long knew even less than that.

Did his grandmother Mary Ann Long marry a Mr. North after 1845, the year Butts's will was proved? While possible, it seems too much of a coincidence that Mrs. Delauney Butts's "daughter-in-law," was also named Maria North. One possible explanation for Long's mixing up Long and North is suggested by the marriage of Cornelius Delaney and Mary Ann Mickeburg in the parish of St. Pancras, Euston Road, in 1829. This is the parish of Butts and the Delauney's, which suggests that Cornelius may have been a son of Elizabeth and Peter Delauney (the name was not common in any of its spellings). If so, then Mary Mickeburg would be Mrs. Delauney Butts's daughter-in-law, Mary (or Maria). She may have remarried a Mr. North before 1844, when Butts wrote his will, and have been referred to by her new married name. Owen Long may have confused his great aunt Mary Delaney-North with his grandmother, Mary Ann Delauney Long. If Long knew his grandmother, born in 1802, he would have been very young and she very old. It seems more likely that they had never met. Family lore may have conflated the two Marys, who were sister-in-laws. A similar kind of conflation has happened in Blake studies with the two Elizabeth Butts's, Ms. Cooper and Ms. Delauney.

Knowing that the Elizabeth of Butts's will is his second wife forces us to re-examine not only the poem's provenance but also its date. Was "The Phoenix / to Mrs Butts" written for the first Mrs. Butts, c. 1800-03, when he wrote the Butts's regularly and even composed another poem to Mrs. Butts (E 714)? Or was it addressed to the second Mrs. Butts, c. 1826-27—a comment on the second and resurrected marriage bed?

The poem's visual style does not rule out a late date. The text was written in blue ink and gone over in four colors, giving it a multi-colored appearance not unlike that of The Marriage of Heaven and Hell copy H, which was first printed in c. 1790 but finished in Blake's late coloring style with the text rewritten in colored inks, presumably in c. 1821 for John Linnell. No other work produced in the 1790s has this much rewriting in colored inks, but nearly all early copies of The Book of Thel and many plates in the early copies of Songs of Innocence have texts that were rewritten in matching and sometimes nonmatching colored inks to salvage a poorly printed line (see Viscomi, Book ch. 15). The lettering in the motto of early copies of Thel (e.g., B, E, and G, among others) was touched up in colored inks for purely
decoupage purposes. So the rewriting of text per se is not out of place c. 1800-03. Indeed, the poem, placed between a thin willowy tree and cascading tendrils, looks like a page from *Innocence* or *Thel* (illus. 1); the writing, drawing, and rewriting seem of a piece. The difference between this private poem and Blake's public works is that it was executed on paper and is truly a unique manuscript, and not on copper, where such poems exist as "printed manuscript" (Essick, *Language* 170).

Essick dates the poem c. 1794 not only because of its resemblance to early illuminated pages ("Phoenix" 377), but also because Gilchrist states that Butts probably met Blake as early as 1793 (1: 115). But Gilchrist offers no evidence for his claim, and a meeting this early seems very unlikely. The facts that four of Butts's 10 illuminated books were acquired from Cumberland's auction of 1835 (Bentley, *Blake Books* 657), that three of them were produced after 1810 (Milton, *Ghost of Abel*, and a posthumous copy of *Jerusalem*), that one, *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* copy E, was purchased in 1806, and that two early works, *Thel* copy L and *Marriage of Heaven and Hell* copy F, were acquired at unknown dates and are without receipts—and possibly not acquired by Butts (see Viscomi "Marketplace 1852")—strongly suggest that patron and artist had met after Blake's great period of illuminated printing, 1789-95. Blake's first reference to Butts is in a letter to Cumberland in 1799, where he is presumably the patron paying Blake one guinea apiece for the biblical temperas (Keynes, *Letters* 11). Blake began writing the Butts's only when he left London for Felpham, between 1800 and 1803. The poem was probably written during this period, when he wrote poems to Butts, Mrs. Butts, Flaxman, and Mrs. Flaxman (see Erdman 707-23, 733). Mr. Butts also wrote Blake a poem, included in a September 1800 letter, explicitly acknowledging his affection for Catherine Blake and Blake's affection for Mrs. Butts—acknowledgments not without double entendres (see Keynes, *Letters* 25-27). Perhaps it is not a coincidence that the couplets of Blake's other verses have three or five beats to the line, whereas those of "The Phoenix" have four, the same number of accents as in the couplets of Thomas Butts's poem to Blake (Keynes, *Letters* 26-27).

"The Phoenix" was probably written c. 1800-03 to Mrs. Cooper Butts. After she died, the poem appears to have come into the possession of Butts's second wife. In his will, he bequeaths "all articles of plate jewelry trinkets and furniture whether useful or ornamental whatsoever which belonged to her at the time of our marriage or which I may have since presented her with" (p. 1). Or perhaps the poem was simply "inherited" by or left over for the new Mrs. Butts, who gave it to her married daughter, Mary Ann Long, whom Owen Long misidentified as Mary Anne North, possibly confusing her with a great aunt. This minor poem's provenance reveals that Butts's family was more extended than previously realized and demonstrates how works of Blake's—especially those of little monetary value in the mid-nineteenth century, including watercolors selling at auction for less than or only slightly more than the original purchase price of one pound—could exit the Butts collection through members of Butts's second family and not solely through Thomas Butts, Jr. Knowing now that Mr. Long's claim may be a bit confused but at least plausible strengthens the argument that other works exited in like manner, including (as I discuss in the forthcoming articles, "Blake in the Marketplace 1852" and "A 'Green House' for Butts") a collection of Blake's illuminated books, illustrated books, and watercolors that was sold anonymously at Sotheby's in March 1852, and a collection of biblical watercolors and half the 1808 series of *Paradise Lost* that sold at Sotheby's in June 1852 as part of Charles Ford's collection.

### Works Cited

---. "A 'Green House' for Butts! New Information on Thomas Butts, his Residence, and Family." *Blake/An Illustrated Quarterly* (forthcoming).

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12 For a more detailed discussion of the first meeting of artist and patron, see my "Green House."
13 Keynes's TLS article was accompanied by an announcement that a longer version of the article and a color reproduction of Blake's manuscript poem, along with a note on the dating by Michael Phillips, was available for L14 (1022). Unfortunately, the pamphlet was not issued. On stylistic grounds, Phillips dates the work c. 1803 (private correspondence).
The Physiognomy of Lavater's Essays: False Imprints, "1789" and "1792"  
BY G. E. BENTLEY, JR.1

As to that false appearance which appears to the reasoner...it is a delusion of Ulro.
William Blake, Milton (1804-[?08?] pl. 28, II. 15-16

John Caspar Lavater's attempt to systematize his observations on human physiognomy into a kind of science in his Essays on Physiognomy created great excitement among his contemporaries. As The Gentleman's Magazine, LXXI (Feb. 1801): 184, commented:

In the enthusiasm with which they were studied and admired, they were thought as necessary in every family as even the Bible itself. A servant would, at one time, scarcely be hired till the descriptions and engravings of Lavater had been consulted, in careful comparison with the line and features of the young man's or woman's countenance.

The Captain of the "Beagle," it is said, almost rejected the young Darwin because of the shape of his nose; and "in many places, where the study of human character from the face became an epidemic, the people went masked through the streets."2

One of the handsomest works printed during the great age of the illustrated book in England was John Caspar Lavater's Essays on Physiognomy, translated by Henry Hunter.

It was "A sumptuous Edition"4 issues in five folio volumes with "more than eight hundred engravings... executed by, or under the inspection of Thomas Holloway," and published by John Murray, by the translator, and by the supervising engraver in 41 Fascicles over 11 years, from January 1789 to March 1799. (As the three titlepages are dated 1789, 1792, and 1798, this edition is identified here as that of 1789-98.)

The First Edition (1789-98)

It was recorded on its titlepages as:

ESSAYS ON PHYSIOGNOMY, DESIGNED TO PROMOTE THE KNOWLEDGE AND THE LOVE OF MANKIND. BY JOHN CASPAR LAZATER. CITIZEN OF ZURICH, AND MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL. ILLUSTRATED BY MORE THAN EIGHT HUNDRED ENGRAVINGS ACCURATELY COPIED; AND SOME DUPLICATES ADDED FROM ORIGINALS. EXECUTED BY, OR UNDER THE INSPECTION OF, THOMAS HOLLOWAY. TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH BY HENRY HUNTER, D.D. MINISTER OF THE SCOTS CHURCH, LONDON-WALL, &amp; GOD CREATED MAN AFTER HIS OWN IMAGE. [3 vols. but bound in five parts]


VOLUME III [bound in 2 parts]. [Vignette] LONDON, PRINTED FOR MURRAY AND HIGHLEY, NO. 32, FLEET-STREET; H. HUNTER, D.D. BETHNAL-GREEN ROAD ... MDCCXCII [1798].

The description on the titlepages of Vol. I (1789), Vol. II (1792), and Vol. III (1798) of "MORE THAN EIGHT HUNDRED ENGRAVINGS" was, however, greatly exaggerated, for, when the copperplates were sold in 1818 (see below), there were only 537 of them. However, the exaggeration was apparently not noticed until 1799, when a somewhat lame note on "Errata" was added to the Directions to the Binder (bound at the end of Vol. III, Part ii and generously pointed out to me by Mary Lynn Johnson):

In the Title pages, dele[re] "Upwards of Eight Hundred." This error was not discovered before the titles were printed off, and it was thought better to let it pass than deprive the purchasers of fine impressions of the Vignettes which they contain.

1 I am particularly grateful to Stewart Naunton, whose query initiated the enquiries on which this essay is based; to Robert Essick; to Detlef Dörrecker, who gave me, inter alia, a complete record of the watermarks in his copy of the 1789-98 edition; to Joseph Viscomi, who provided remarkably shrewd advice on an early draft of this essay; and to Mary Lynn Johnson, who is working on a long-term publishing history of Lavater's Physiognomy up to the first English editions and who generously shared her information with me.


3 By 1810, there were 16 versions of the Physiognomy in German, 15 in French, 2 in Italian, 2 in Russian, 1 in Dutch, 1 in Italian, 20 in English, and by the 1940s there had been 169 publications of it (298-99). Graham lists the Hunter folio editions as (1) 1789-98; (2) 1792-98; (3) 1789-1810, in which the second and third entries seem to me to be significantly inaccurate. On 27 March 1962, Graham wrote to me that the source of his information for the 1792-98 edition was "Auction, 1945-1950" and for the 1789-1810 edition was the catalogues of the Boston Public Library and the John Rylands Library.


1 J. C. Lavater, Essays on Physiognomy [first edition] Vol. II (1792) titlepage <GEB>. Note that in the imprint the first “H.” of “H. Hunter” is just above the “H” of “HOXTON.”

From its first appearance, the work was admired for the beauty of the printing and the engravings. It was described in The Monthly Magazine, VIII (Jan. 1800): 988, as “the finest print book that ever appeared in this or any other country,” and T. F. Dibdin said that “the copper plates . . . have scarcely been equalled.” It generated additional interest when the leaders of the Blake revival noticed that it had prints by William Blake. Blake’s part in it was recorded by, inter alia, William Haines in 1863, Alexander Gilchrist, Life of William Blake, “Pictor Igitur” (London: Macmillan, 1863) 2: 260 (catalogue of Blake’s engravings by William Haines, recording only two of the four Blake engravings; for the identity of the compiler, see Blake Books [1977] 815).


2 Lavater, Essays on Physiognomy [third edition] Vol. II (1792 [i.e., 1818]), titlepage <Princeton University Library>. Note that the first “H.” of “H. HUNTER” in the imprint is not just above the “H” of “HOXTON.”

The work suffered in a number of ways as it passed through the press. For one thing, the original publisher, John Murray [I] died on 6 November 1793, not long after the titlepage to the second volume had been issued (1792). During the minority of his son John Murray II (1778-1843) and for a few years beyond, the firm was known as Murray & Highley (1793-1803), and the only Lavater titlepage issued during this period (for Volume III) bears the names of Murray & Highley.

For another, the cost of the engravings, the major expense of the work, far exceeded the receipts from the subscriptions for the fascicles, at least for a time. The cost of engraving the copperplates must have been from £3 for small, simple outlines to more than £100 for large, ambitious plates. If the 174 large plates averaged only £40 each (an exceedingly modest estimate), they alone would have cost almost £7,000. When John Murray [I] died in November 1793, perhaps 60% of the engravings had been finished, but the firm still owed thousands of pounds to the engravers.

Most of the plates have no imprint, so it is very difficult to ascertain how many had been finished by November 1793.

In “the publication of Lavater’s work on Physiognomy, the engraving of the plates caused the principal part of the loss. The executors put the case to arbitration, and were eventually compelled to pay out of the estate the sum of £3,900” (Samuel Smiles, A Publisher and
Despite these difficulties, the work was finally finished in 1799, and a very handsome work it was. This was the only visage of the work with Blake’s prints known, or at least recorded, for many years.

Other Editions (“1792” and “1810”)

However, there are other two folio editions of Lavater’s Essays on Physiognomy as translated by Hunter, whose features are as handsome as those of the original.13 Only in 1977, more than a century after Blake’s part in Lavater’s Physiognomy was first noticed, or at least recorded, was it remarked in print that there are two other editions dated 1792 and 1810 of Lavater’s Essays on Physiognomy bearing Blake’s prints. And even then it was not noticed how odd it is to have a complete edition dated 1792 finished before the first edition of 1789-98 was accomplished. The somewhat feeble conclusion offered at the time was the “The 1792 issue was presumably for late subscribers, with the titlepage of Volume III ante-dated” (Blake Books [1977] 594).

The chief printed distinctions between the first edition of the Hunter translation and its successors are little more than in the dates and the publishers on the titlepage (John Murray in 1789-92-98, John Murray in 1792, Thomas Stockdale in 1810). In general, the “1792” edition is more like the first edition of 1789-98 than is that of 1810, as one might expect. The titlepages of the first Hunter edition (see illus. 1) and those of “1792” (see illus. 2) claim to have “UPWARDS OF EIGHT HUNDRED PLATES,” whereas that dated 1810 omits “UPWARDS OF EIGHT HUNDRED PLATES” <see illus. 3>.14

There seemed, then, to be three folio editions of the Hunter translation of Lavater’s Essays on Physiognomy, the first issued in fascicles in 1789-99 with titlepages dated 1789 (Vol. I), 1792 (Vol. II), and 1798 (Vol. III), the second in 1792, and the third in 1810. And the Blake prints did not seem to change significantly in any of them.15 At last our understanding of Lavater’s book seemed to have stabilized.

“I discern thee other then thou seemst.” Milton, Paradise Regained, 1, 24816

18 Blake/AnIllustratedQuarterly


Then, when the last changes in the text of Blake Books Supplement were being sent off to the press in the autumn of 1993, I received a puzzled letter from Stewart Naunton (then unknown to me) who had been given a set of the 1792 Lavater, and, in making a more meticulous examination of it than any professional bibliographer apparently had done, Naunton had discovered that what he had was a rogue. Though the titlepage plainly said 1792 (or at least MDCCXCII), the leaves had watermarks of “1806,” “1812,” and “1817”—and none of the watermarks exhibited a date consonant with the “1792” on the titlepage.

This was very worrying. Was the “1792” set described an unique rogue?—but how could just one copy be printed thus? Were there other “1792” sets with anomalous watermarks? Perhaps all “1792” sets were in disguise like the one described to me, bastards of c. 1818? (just a few years after the legitimate 1810 edition) masquerading as legitimate heirs of the 1789-98 edition.

Further, the “1792” set reported to me used paper in a very curious pattern, rarely exhibiting more than a few sheets of the same paper together at a time. This seemed a remarkably irregular, not the say inefficient, way to use paper. Did other sets duplicate these oddities?
I immediately wrote off to all the institutions which are recorded in the Eighteenth-Century Short Title Catalogue and the National Union Catalog as having sets of the "1792" edition to enquire about their watermarks.

Of course making a record of all the watermarks in five fat volumes is immensely laborious—and a feat which apparently no bibliographer had previously attempted. I expected to receive from the libraries to which I had written no more than a sampling of watermarks to ascertain whether they were or were not consonant with the "1792" date on the titlepage, and this of course was what I received from most institutions which replied. But J. Samuel Hammond, Rare Book Librarian at Duke University, recorded every watermark in the first volume, including laid or wove paper without letters or numbers, and Karen Herbaugh, Student Assistant at the Kerr Library of Oregon State University, provided me with a list of watermarks on every leaf in all five volumes. I am deeply in the debt of all the librarians who responded so generously to my queries and especially to Hammond and Herbaugh.

The results are yet more curious than my first warning had led me to expect. In the first place, a very surprising variety of paper was used. The text is on paper watermarked "1 7" (4.5 cm apart, in the middle of the margin), "1801," "1804," "1806," "1809," "1817" plus "II" or "TH," "S," "WL," "95 LEOPARD," and "LEOPARD" (all wove paper except "LEOPARD," which has chain lines), and the prints are on paper watermarked "1806," "1812," "1813," "1814," "LEOPARD," "SMITH," "W SPEAR 1815," and "JWHATMAN," and "1794 | J WHATMAN." More than one of these post-1800 watermarks appear in sets of the "1792" edition in the libraries of the University of Chicago, the Cooper-Hewitt Museum, Duke University, Emory University, the University of Iowa, the University of Kentucky, Liverpool University, Oregon State University, Princeton University, and Stanford University, and there is every reason to expect that all sets have a similar pattern of watermarks. And none of


5 Lavater, Essays on Physiognomy [third edition] Vol. I (1792 [i.e., 1818?]), p. 31 <Princeton University Library>. The setting of type here is scarcely distinguishable from that in the first edition (1789) (see illus. 4).
the paper watermarked "1801," "1804," "1806," "1812," "1813," "1814," and "1817" can have been used at the time of the 1792 date on the titlepage.

In the genuine first edition of 1789-98, the only watermarks in the text are "LEPARD," "LEPARD," and "LW," with occasionally "17" and "95," all on laid paper (at least in my own set and that of the University of Toronto). In the 1810 edition, the only watermark in the text of my set is "1806" plus "II" once in every gathering of wove paper, and these watermarks too recur in the "1792" edition.

The second oddity is the way in which the paper was used. In the Princeton set of "1792," which I went down to examine myself, successive gatherings are often on distinctly different paper. For instance, in Volume I, gatherings P-T are on wove paper with "1804," "1806," "S," "1817," and without watermark, and laid paper without watermark. This is a very peculiar way to print, with a different kind of paper in the stack for each gathering.

But in fact, the situation is even odder than this, for apparently there were no stacks of "1804" and "1806" and "1817" paper. Instead, each stack of sheets was apparently of mixed watermarks for each gathering. For instance, the paper for four successive gatherings (G-K) in Volume I of the "1792" sets in Duke, Oregon State, and Princeton looked like this:

<p>| | | | | |</p>
<table>
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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Duke</td>
<td>1817</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>1817</td>
<td>1806</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oregon State</td>
<td>1801</td>
<td>1806</td>
<td>1806</td>
<td>1801</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Princeton</td>
<td>TH</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>wove</td>
<td>laid</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

And other gatherings show similar absence of pattern. Clearly the stack of sheets for each gathering were very mixed indeed as to watermark.

Such a mixed stock of paper would have been most unusual even in the shop of a small-scale jobbing printer. After all, one buys paper by the ream or by the pound all with the same watermark, and to mix the papers thus would have been troublesome. Fairly plainly, these are odd sheets left over from other jobs and mixed higgledy-piggledy to save space. But it is very surprising to find paper thus mixed up in the work of a fine printer like Bensley, apparently the printer of all three editions.

The question of who printed Lavater's Physiognomy, or rather of what types were used, is of some significance. A prospectus for the work of June 1787 said that the type was to be cast on purpose for it, and "The Letter-Press will be executed in the most superb Manner." Dibdin (ut supra) said that the five-volume Lavater (1789) was Bensley's "earliest attempt at fine printing," and the high quality of the type and printing seems to my typographically unsophisticated eye to be worthy of him. Further, as the titlepages of 1789-92-98, 1810, and 1792 indicated (see illus. 1-3), the same type seems to have been used for all three editions. Whoever the compositors were, they seem to have been using the same type in all three editions. And it seems very odd that such careful composition and printing should have been associated with such a casual use of paper.

The pattern of watermarks for all three editions may be seen below:

<p>| | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Text</td>
<td>Plates</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>laid paper</td>
<td>1794</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>95</td>
<td>laid paper</td>
<td>1802</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEPARD</td>
<td>laid paper</td>
<td>ADVIUNE</td>
<td>1784</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEPARD</td>
<td>laid paper</td>
<td>LEPARD</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEPARD 95</td>
<td>laid paper</td>
<td>LW</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LW</td>
<td>laid paper</td>
<td>JW</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WL 94</td>
<td>laid paper</td>
<td>J WHATMAN</td>
<td>1794</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

19 Collectanea: or, A Collection of Advertisements and Paragraphs from the Newspapers relating to various Subjects (Printed at Strawberry-Hill By Thomas Kirgate, for the Collector, Daniel Lysons), f. 81° <British Library: 1881 b 6>.
20 The 1802 watermark is found at Vol. II, Part i at 3Y2 and Vol. III, Part ii at 3R2 and 3U2 in the Huntington set, which has binder's flyleaves watermarked 1801.
21 The "LEPARD" watermark appears in two different positions in laid paper, one parallel to the chain lines and one at right angles to them, as Detlef Dörrebecker pointed out to me.
22 Mary Lynn Johnson and John Grant report that the lettering with "1784" in the University of Iowa copy is exceedingly difficult to decipher and that other plates there have different indecipherable watermarks.
23 N.b. With all copies save those I have examined myself for the purpose (i.e., GEB, Huntington, Princeton, and Toronto), I cannot be sure whether the watermark is "LEPARD" or "Lepard" or whether the paper is wove or laid.
6 Lavater, Essays on Physiognomy [first edition] Vol. I (1789) titlepage <GEB>. Note that the "U" of the author "HUNTER" is under the "B" of "BY."

1817 wove paper W. SPEAR 1815
II or TH wove paper J WHATMAN 1794 | J WHATMAN
LEPARD laid paper
95 LEPARD wove paper
WL wove paper

Note that all copies of a text-sheet must be printed at the same time (i.e., in one more or less continuous print-run), so that the type can then be distributed and used to set and print other sheets. If more copies of the text are needed after the type has been redistributed, for instance when a decision is made to increase the size of the print-run, the text must be composed and printed again.

However, the plates can be printed as the need arises, since the copperplates are scarcely affected by the act of printing. Further, it is far more expensive and laborious to print plates than to print type-set text, and consequently it is sensible to pull only as many prints as are manifestly needed at the moment, and to wait until sales demonstrate the need and provide the capital to print more copies. If, for instance, one had 500 subscribers and hoped to sell a thousand copies altogether, one might print a thousand copies of the text but pull only 600 copies of the prints, assuming that more copies of the prints might be pulled as demand warranted.

As a consequence, we should expect the text of all copies of an edition to reflect the date of printing and first issuing them; in the case of the 41 Fascicles of the first edition of Lavater's Physiognomy, this would be 1789-99—and the watermarks do reflect this, or at least do not contradict it. However, the last copies sold might well include prints pulled long after the last of the text had been printed, and in at least one copy of the first edition of Lavater's Physiognomy this is the case. In the Huntington set, three of the prints are paper watermarked "1802" (Vol. II, Part i, at 3Y2, and Vol. III, Part II, at 3R2 and 3U2), and the work was probably bound not long after the "1801" watermark in the binder's flyleaves.

This "1792" edition, then cannot be earlier than 1817, the latest date in the watermarked paper in all copies examined for watermarks, 25 years after the date on the titlepage. But did the compositors for the "1792" edition follow the text of the first edition of 1789-98, as they followed its titlepages (though dating them all "1792"), or did they follow that of 1810?

The printing is very careful and handsome in all three printings, but clearly they are separate editions rather than re-issues of the same sheets or re-impositions of the same type. The watermarks alone indicate that the third edition of "1792," with watermarks of 1817, cannot be the same sheets as in the first edition of 1789-98, with text-sheets watermarked 1794 and 1795.
Page-for-page and line-for-line the three editions are virtually identical in type, but there are significant differences in spacing in the second edition of 1810 and the third edition of "1792," indicating that they are different settings of type rather than reprinted from standing type. The precision with which the text was reset is, to me, astonishing. Taking as a test Vol. I, p. 31 (sig. L1') of the three editions of 1789, 1810 and "1792" (1818?), the ordinary tests demonstrate that the house style produced almost identical results for pages set some 30 years apart. For instance, if one lays a straight line, such as a ruler, across the page between two arbitrarily-chosen points, say the top left and bottom right corners of the text, the line intersects identical fragments of text in each edition, though they are printed on paper watermarked 1794, 1806, and 1817. Minute details of composition, such as the large space after the opening double quotations marks ("), the small one before a closing set, and the space before a semicolon, are uniform throughout all three editions. Since the compositor sees only one line as he loads his stick with type, the spacing within a line may be controlled very precisely, but the relationship of line to line is far more difficult to control and is far more a matter of chance. The near-identity of spacing throughout the page in each edition demonstrates an extraordinary uniformity of composing techniques and suggests to me that all three pages were set by the same rules of composition and probably by the same printing-house.

Similarly, ligatures (e.g., "fi," "si," "sh," "st," and "ct") are the same in each edition, and all three editions use the long "s," though in 1810 and 1818 this was an anachronism. The clearest of the tiny differences between the three editions of Vol. I, p. 31 are between the second edition of 1810 as compared to the first and third editions of 1789 and "1792" (1818?) (see illus. 4-5). For instance, in the last word of text ("sign?") there is a substantial space before the query in 1789 and "1792" (1818?), putting the query under the "g" of "energy" above it, while in 1810 the space before the query is markedly slimmer, and the query is beneath the "r" of "energy." Yet more strikingly, "energy" is followed by a colon in 1789 and "1792" (1818?) but by a semi-colon in 1810. Similarly, in Vol. I, p. 279 (sig. E1') in the second edition (1810), in the second series of asterisks the first asterisk is under the comma of "upon" but in the third edition ("1792") it is under the "n."25 In the first edition (1789-98), Vol. II, Part i, pp. 143-50 (Nn2-Ppl) are numbered correctly; in both the second edition (1810) and the third edition (1818?) they are mis-numbered as pp. 135-42. Since the third edition marked "1792" cannot have been printed earlier than 1817 (as shown by its watermarks), the compositor must have copied the text of the second edition (1810) rather than (as the titlepages would lead one to expect) the first edition of 1789-98.

The differences between 1789 and "1792" (1818?) are even smaller—and never, to me definitive (see illus. 4-5). I can persuade myself that there are minute, scarcely measurable differences of spacing, but a re-examination of the same spacing usually leaves doubts as to whether there are clear differences. The text in 1818? must have been re-set when it was printed on paper of 1817, some 30 years after the original type was distributed, but the facsimile is so close as to make it, to me, virtually undetectable. There can be little doubt that the 1818? edition was created with the intention to deceive, for though the text itself derives inconspicuously from that of 1810, the titlepages copy the wording of the first edition of 1789-98, with "UPWARDS OF EIGHT HUNDRED ENGRAVINGS", rather than that of 1810, which omits reference to the eight hundred.

I would be agreeable if these perplexities could be enlightened by reference to the records of the publisher, but unfortunately the firm of Murray, whose name appears prominently on the editions of 1789-98 and of "1792" and which still survives today, has no trace of Lavater's Essays on Physiognomy.26 The evidence seems unambiguous that the "1792" edition of Lavater's Essays on Physiognomy is a line-for-line reprint of the 1810 edition printed in or after 1817. But what was the incentive to print another edition so soon after the edition of 1810? If it took from 1789 until about 1810 to exhaust the stocks of the first edition (1789-98), it is unlikely that only about seven years would have sufficed to exhaust the stocks of the 1810 edition.

The answer may lie in the auction by Mr. Saunders of the 537 copperplates for Lavater's Essays on Physiognomy with Stockdale's stock which was announced in a prospectus of 2 January 1818.27 Perhaps the purchaser attempted to capitalize promptly upon his acquisition of the copperplates by publishing a new edition of Essays on Physiognomy. And if the new owner did not also own the copyright to Hunter's translation of Lavater's text, it may have seemed discrete to publish the work with a false imprint. In that case, the "1792" edition is not only a bastard but a piracy.
This of course does not identify the fraudulent publisher of the "1792" Lavater, but it does help to suggest an occasion and a motive for publishing the work with a false imprint 25 years or more after its apparent date.

Sheet-by-sheet examination of watermarks is extraordinarily tedious, keeping tallies of them is remarkably intricate, and in most cases what is learned is of trifling significance—the paper, even if it is dated, is almost invariably consistent with the date on the titlepage.28 Most bibliographers and editors probably check only a few sample sheets for watermarks, for "In doubtful questions 'tis the safest way / To learn what unsuspected ancients say,"29 and leave it at that.

The danger is when the ancients are wrongfully unsuspected. Only when there is reason to be suspicious will a full-scale examination be made—or at least that was plainly the case with the credulous W. T. Lowndes, William Haines, A. G. B. Russell, Geoffrey Keynes, G. E. Bentley, Jr., and R. N. Essick. Doubtless one lesson to be drawn from this problem is that we should all be somewhat more suspicious than a really nice nature would ordinarily permit.

But the problem with Lavater's Essays on Physiognomy is even more intricate than we have yet seen. We have thus far established that there were three editions, the first honestly dated 1789-98, the second honestly dated 1810, and the third marked 1792 but really of 1817 or later. Two or three libraries30 claim to have editions of 1789-1810, but these are clearly mixed sets of the first and second editions.

So I thought until I examined the University of Toronto set of the 1789-1810 edition. To my considerable dismay, I found that Vol. I ("1789") and Vol. II ("1792") have watermarks of "1804" and "1806"! (Vol. III [1810] also has watermarks of "1806," but of course these are not anachronistic.) Further, the titlepage and text have been reset with very remarkable fidelity to the first edition. For instance, on the titlepage of Vol. I the "U" of "HUNTER" is under the "B" of "BY" in the first edition (see illus. 6) but under the "Y" in the edition watermarked "1806" (see illus. 7). Since the watermarks of Vol. I ("1789") and Vol. II ("1792") with the 1810 Vol. III are the same as in the sets in which all three titlepages are dated 1810, it seems fairly plain that they are part of the 1810 edition and that in 1810 two titlepages each were printed for Vol. I (dated "1789" and 1810) and Vol. II (dated "1792" and 1810).

This gives us for Lavater's Essays on Physiognomy translated by Henry Hunter three Volume I titlepages dated 1789 (one honest, one of 1810, and one of 1817), three Volume II titlepages dated 1792 (one honest, one of 1810, and one of 1817), and three Volume III titlepages dated 1798 (honest), 1792 (i.e., 1818?), and 1810 (honest).

In the copies I have examined or which have been examined for me, sets with titlepages of 1789-98 and 1810 are apparently honest, while those in which the three volumes are dated 1792 or 1789-1810 are fraudulent (though Vol. III dated 1810 is apparently always honest).

But it does not bear thinking of how many of the apparently honest sets of 1789-98 are mixed sets, with Vol. I-II fraudulent and Vol. III honest. And of course there may be a Vol. III marked 1798 which is also fraudulent.

The final tally, or at any rate the tally to date (23 August 1995), for Lavater's Essays on Physiognomy translated by Hunter with the plates supervised by Holloway is:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Edition</th>
<th>Volume I</th>
<th>Volume II</th>
<th>Volume III</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First (1789-98)</td>
<td>1789</td>
<td>1792</td>
<td>1798</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second (1810)</td>
<td>1789 or 1810</td>
<td>1792 or 1810</td>
<td>1810</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third (1818?)</td>
<td>1789</td>
<td>1792</td>
<td>1798</td>
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And that's quite enough intricacy to be going on with, it seems to me. I at any rate will endeavor in the future to be as suspicious as a really nice nature will permit and will glance at watermarks regularly—but I bet nothing as devious and intricate as Lavater's Essays on Physiognomy turns up again.

28 Instructive exceptions are John Gay's Fables (Stockdale, 1793, also issued with watermarks of c. 1811), John Flaxman's designs to Homer's Iliad (1793), Odyssey (1793), Dante (1793), and Aeschylus (1795) which bear watermarks of a number of different countries and dates, and most of William Blake's works in illuminated printing which bear watermarks dated as much as 43 years later than those on the titlepages.
29 Dryden, Religio Laici.
30 E.g., Boston Public Library, Rylands Library of the University of Manchester, and the University of Toronto.
MINUTE PARTICULAR

The Arlington Court Picture
by Jacqueline E. M. Latham

David Bindman, discussing Blake’s Arlington Court Picture (Butlin no. 803) of 1821, found by chance in 1947 at Arlington Court, North Devon (Keynes 196-99), wrote that there was “no record of any association, however remote, between Blake and the Chichesters” (Bindman 207). There is, however, a possible association through Colonel Chichester’s third wife.

In 1822, Colonel John Palmer Chichester, owner of Arlington Court, which he was rebuilding, married in London by special license Sophia Catherine Ford, who was half his age. He had commanded the Cardiganshire Militia and had printed a small volume of “Rules and Regulations” with a short preface (Chichester 101). He died in November 1823 and, having in his will left his widow the jewels and trinkets he had given her during his life, he revoked the gift in a codicil, made three days before his death, leaving the jewels and trinkets to his daughter and £300 in lieu to his widow; there are no expressions of affection. Certainly, there seems little likelihood of any association with Blake.

The case for Sophia Chichester, however, is persuasive. She was born in 1795, the daughter of a Barbados plantation owner, Sir Francis Ford, Bart., and niece of Thomas Anson, the first Viscount and rising Whig grandee. In spite of the conventional upper class background, in the 1830s while she was living at Ebworth Park, her sister Georgiana’s country house in Gloucestershire, she supported by correspondence and with large sums of money many of the ultra-radical preachers and prophets who were trying to build a new society on the basis of counter-enlightenment modes of thinking and feeling. She is best known as the friend and patron of James Pierrepont Greaves, the mystic and “sacred socialist,” founder of the community and school at Alcott House, Ham Common, 1838-48, but she also, more controversially, supported and sought spiritual guidance from John “Zion” Ward, who had declared himself to be the redeemer Shiloh whom Joanna Southcott had expected to bear before her death in 1814. Ward died in 1837, corresponding with Sophia Chichester to the last, and at about the same time she was funding both James “Shepherd” Smith, who was preaching his new religion “Universalism,” and Richard Carlile, who had turned from Paineite freethought to a form of symbolic Christianity. (Greaves, Ward, Smith and Carlile are all to be found with their individual beliefs and anti-establishment views in the DNB.) In 1841, Sophia Chichester made her political position clear by translating from the French the socialist work of the Fourierist Madame Gatti de Gamond, The Phalanstery. In 1844, only three years before her death, she was diagnosing the breakdown of Henry James Senior, on a visit to England with his family, as a Swedenborgian “vastation” (Latham).

Sophia Chichester was clearly a woman searching for spiritual guidance, dissatisfied with the established church and its alliance with an oppressive state. Though nothing is known about her beliefs and attitudes in 1823, when the Blake painting is believed to have come into the Chichester family, judging by the evidence of her later activities, she shared with Blake an alienation from formal church structures and a need to embrace a more mystical and less conventional vision of reality, whether expressed in the varied tradition of dissent or the personal symbolism of Swedenborg. Like Blake, Sophia Chichester was excluded from the privileged classical education of the universities and never seems to have found a political or religious organization which fully met her inner needs. Unlike the genius Blake, however, she was not able to gain the satisfaction of creating and expressing her own symbolic truths.

We cannot know why The Arlington Court Picture was bought by the Chichesters. But it is possible to see that its much disputed subject, a choice involving spiritual revelation, as least finds an echo in what we know of Sophia Chichester’s later years. Whether she lived at Arlington Court after her husband’s 1823 death in Weymouth is not known, but if my hypothesis is correct, that the painting came into the family through Sophia Chichester, then it is surprising that she did not take it with her when she joined her sister at Ebworth Park. Perhaps the coldness of Colonel Chichester’s will suggests an explanation.

Works Cited


DISCUSSION

with intellectual spears & long winged arrows of thought

David Simpson’s suggestion that the bending figure in Blake’s color print Newton may be a conflation of Sir Isaac Newton and the Rev. John Newton, the reformed slave-trader, is indeed interesting. It leads by an almost irresistible imaginative progression to the further surmise that the “mighty Spirit ... Nam’d Newton” who “leap’d from the land of Albion” and seized from Orc the “Trump of the last doom”
in *Europe: a Prophecy* (13:1-5) may likewise be a conflation of those two (in many ways) seeming opposites. I have always been uneasy with Northrop Frye's explanation of what he refers to as "that curious passage in *Europe*" as representing Blake's doctrine that "the mental attitude represented by [Isaac] Newton moves toward a consolidation of error which could provoke an apocalypse" (*Fearful Symmetry* 254) and have felt that there must be still another way of interpreting the allusion. The passage seems to have a contemporaneous quality, with the preceding plate (which also mentions "the trump of the last doom") referring to Albion's Angel, "Great George street," Enitharmon's triumph, and so on. And of course the impromptu trumpet lesson the "mighty Spirit ... Nam'd Newton" gives the feckless Orc is followed by Enitharmon's awakening and the information that "eighteen hundred years were fled" (12:12-13:10), which sounds fairly specific.

If Blake is referring, at least in part, to the Rev. John Newton here, he would seem to be anticipating the shift of emphasis in his evolving myth from Orc to Los, writ large in *The Book of Los* and *The Song of Los*, of which John Newton's famous conversion, evangelical fervor and anti-slavery work would be suitable, if partial, symbols, all of which find counterparts elsewhere in Blake's poetry.

As for Professor Simpson's reference to Martin Butlin's account of the recent controversy over Sir Eduardo Paolozzi's sculpture adapted from Blake's *Newton* intended for the British Library, no doubt Butlin is right to warn us against imposing "too strictly a Blakean interpretation" on a different work of art; but judging from his description and the accompanying photograph (admittedly a risky business), I would have to say that Paolozzi's *Newton* looks very nearly the antithesis of Blake's, wherein the lightness and delicacy of the medium is artfully contrasted to the heaviness of the design, enhancing the satirical effect. To my bad eye, Paolozzi's *Newton* resembles nothing so much as a defecating armadillo. Cast in bronze twelve feet high, and mounted on a podium of similar height, it could only represent (if taken in the way Butlin warns us against) a perversion of Blake's design into a travesty of unutterable ugliness and monumental stupidity. One can only hope that it isn't as bad as it looks.

Warren Stevenson

Reviewed by Stephen C. Behrendt


We have all seen them: those late-night television commercials for knives that cut through lead pipes, pennies, wooden beams, and cement blocks—when all we want to do is slice a tomato. There is something of that quality about Gerda Norvig's impressive study of Blake's much-neglected watercolor designs for Bunyan's most famous allegorical tale. This is a learned and meticulous book, as evidenced in part by the fact that the 213 pages of primary text discussion are followed by 68 pages of notes and 14 of "Works Cited." Moreover, the book is splendidly illustrated. We are treated to all 28 of Blake's designs (about which number, more later), well reproduced in reasonably faithful color in a gathering of plates bound in the middle of the book, plus another 42 related pictures and diagrams in black and white. In addition, the several appendices provide 58 additional reproductions of previous *Pilgrim's Progress* illustrations up through the trend-altering designs of Blake's erstwhile friend and colleague Thomas Stothard, whose elliptical designs of 1788 brought to the illustration of Bunyan's tale a wholly different visual sensibility steeped in the visual conventions and mechanical devices of the sentimental in art. This book is, in short, a trove of valuable visual information, and it cannot but help facilitate still further exploration of Blake's remarkable designs. That fact alone makes its publication both timely and important.

Why then the analogy of the knife-cum-everything? It's partly a matter of the actual experience of reading the book. For one thing, in working through the text a reader may become uncomfortably aware of the inherent difficulty an author faces in structuring a book in which the reader is continually reminded of how much preliminary ground ostensibly needs to be surveyed before the discussion can get to "the main event." This is especially so in that the author undertakes several complex tasks, several of which seem always to be going forward at the same moment. By her own account she offers "a thorough case study of Blake's *Progress* illustrations along with an analysis of his changing relationship to Bunyan's persona, Bunyan's ideology, and Bunyan's poetics [sic] over a period of more than thirty years" (4). At the same time, she sets out to codify a way of reading Blake's Bunyan designs (and presumably his designs to other authors like Milton and Dante, though Norvig does not say so) in terms of a process of "visionary hermeneutics," a process based less in simply undermining or reinforcing the
originating text than in a sort of "primary revision" that is neither more nor less derivative from some originary internal (or Eternal) artistic vision than is the initial originating work of art (4-5). In this respect Norvig's discussion is heavily influenced by recent poststructuralist theories about the virtuality of texts, as both the body of the text and the bibliographical citations make clear.

The first half (roughly—117 pages) of Dark Figures fills us in on a variety of verbal and visual materials we are given to understand we will need in order to read the Bunyan designs aight. For example, Norvig furnishes an extended psychological reading of Blake's proto-emblem series, The Gates of Paradise, in which she discusses what she regards as a significant pairing of designs that reveals "the dialectical principle of alteration" that governs the series, a pairing most obvious in the facing plates of The Traveller Hasteth in the Evening and Death's Door. Norvig reads in the series as a whole a tale of the contrary operations of expansion and contraction, and she observes about these two plates most particularly that "they attract each other by the energy of their implied movement toward each other, and they repulse by the opposition of their attitudes—psychological and figural—regarding the ultimate goal" (72-73). Her point is that the image of a journey that governs the sequential images in The Gates indicates to the perceptive reader a psychological and spiritual journey whose objective is the Jungian goal of individuation, a point she makes in more systematic and detailed fashion about the later designs to Bunyan, in which the image of the journey is again central. Indeed, Norvig's overall interpretation of Blake's Bunyan designs—as of Bunyan's tale and of The Gates and much else—is principally Jungian, a perspective particularly compatible with her account of the internal journey she sees Blake tracing in his designs toward the individuation not just of the central character(s) of the narrative but indeed of the central agent and object of the "real" action: the reader/viewer who interacts with both Bunyan's verbal text and Blake's visual one.

As much as anything, Norvig sees in Blake's designs an exercise in reorienting the reader/viewer—particularly in light of the findings of modern depth psychology—into a new way of "seeing," a new way of regarding both the verbal text of Pilgrim's Progress and the activity of reading it. This is why the long discussion of The Gates is here: it furnishes both an analogy and a paradigmatic precursor for what the author sees taking place in Blake's reading of The Pilgrim's Progress. And yet Norvig frankly admits that the emblems in The Gates "are not about The Pilgrim's Progress per se, and the unravelling of conflated allusions leads just as insistently to other literary 'sources'" (73). But the manner in which these emblems are treated here, as happens also with other verbal and visual texts (by Blake and by others) which are introduced especially in the first two chapters, inherently imputes to them a disproportionate significance which no disclaimers to the contrary can entirely mitigate. One cannot have it both ways. Questions of "sources" and "indebtedness" are always intellectual minefields, of course, and it is never any great surprise when explosions occur. Staying with The Gates for a moment, let me cite a further example of how such difficulties can unfold. In discussing two familiar plates, I Want! I Want! and Help! Help!, Norvig revisits the relationship of Blake's images to Gillray's well-known print, The Sough of Despond; Vide the Patriot's Progress, for evidence that Blake is rereading both Gillray and Bunyan. Reminding us of David Erdman's original discussion of the particular visual connection suggested by the presence of a ladder in Gillray's print and in I Want! I Want!, Norvig adds a new element to the discussion: "Yet when Blake adopts and adapts the ladder imagery, he is not only attacking Gillray; he is also, and perhaps more importantly, defending Bunyan by stressing the value (and problems) of a thematic concern for human aspiration, which is at the root of the Progress" (62). This is rather a lot to base upon the evidence of apparently recurrent images, and the manner of the assertion implies that we are meant to accept, with very little question, suggestions and inferences (however attractive or credible) as interpretive certainties.

I am less and less convinced that we ought quite so readily to credit Blake with the sort of conscious and deliberate multilevel, multivalent allusions and revisions that go along with statements of this sort, even though I have occasionally fallen into the trap myself over the years. For this whole business of source-hunting with regard to Blake (indeed, with regard to any creative artist) tends often to place the artist at the mercy of the interpreter, who may see connections that are not in fact there—or perhaps not there in the sense in which the interpreter believes (or wants) them to be. In this case, while Norvig argues convincingly for the connection between the Gillray (where the first two words in the "speech balloon" above Charles James Fox's head are "Help! Help!") and the drowning figure in Blake's Help! Help!, she fails to consider the comparably raised hand (raised, too, from amid similar waves) of the central figure in John Singleton Copley's 1778 painting, Watson and the Shark, which created a sensation when it was exhibited at the Royal Academy in that year. The inability to respond to available help (which is literally "at hand"), which lies at the intellectual and emotional center of Copley's painting, is perhaps as relevant thematically to Blake's emblem, at last, as the details of the Gillray print.

I mention this minute particular because it is precisely the sort of thing that causes trouble at a number of points along the way in Dark Figures. A particularly characteristic example involves an image which Norvig introduces in her interesting discussion (58-59) of Blake's print of The Man Sweeping the Interpreter's Parlor, a print clearly related both to Bunyan's tale and to Blake's subsequent identity among his young followers as "the Interpreter." Norvig includes a
copy of a print by Anton Wierix called *Jesu Cor Expurgans*, which image she, following Roger Sharrock, claims directly influenced Bunyan’s scenes of the Interpreter’s rooms. Norvig says that “Bunyan’s version of the parable is already a partial caricature of” that print and that, further, “Blake borrowed that pose [of Wierix’s Jesus] for his representation of the Interpreter’s Mosaic Law.” “It might have seemed a specially noteworthy irony to Blake,” Norvig continues, that Bunyan replaced Jesus with two menials. “And if he did know the earlier print,” she goes on, then the little creatures Blake depicts swirling about in the dust in his plate “could be intended as allusions to the lost religion of Jesus that Wierix’s model of the devout heart tried to embody. Thus the design of Blake’s engraving becomes an attempt to restore, by ironic revision, a sense of the heart’s virile, imaginative integrity” (59; my emphases). Finally, some 10 pages later, the Wierix and the Gillray prints meet up in the same sentence: “One could say Blake has rescued Bunyan from Gillray in these emblems [in *The Gates*] as he rescued the vision of Wierix from Bunyan in the ‘Interpreter’s Parlor’ print” (68).

Rather a lot is made to hinge on several ifs here, and it is not at all clear that matters have to hinge in quite so tenuous a fashion in order for the argument to be mounted, especially since Norvig herself reminds us in the midst of all of this of “the frequent reuse and widespread availability of such popular illustrations in Blake’s day” (58): My point is simply that by tying one’s argument in needlessly restrictive or exclusive fashion to particular images, particular artists, and particular prints, one sometimes strains credibility unnecessarily and makes far too much rest upon a shaky foundation of supposition, when it might well be sufficient to acknowledge the common currency of the apparently “borrowed” image and reject the temptation to claim (or to imply) that Blake was working with that particular image and that he was performing this particular significant variation upon it and it alone. At the same time, it is surely no fault in an author to attempt to give us as much information as possible so that we may make our own decisions about (possible) influence in the most informed fashion. While Norvig occasionally seems to want to have it both ways, she also credits us, generally, with both the innate sense and the critical acumen to make such decisions.

Still, the rigidity (or narrowness) of interpretation that emerges at times here occasionally interferes with the reader’s critical freedom—an irony itself in that we are reminded throughout of Blake’s intellectual and aesthetic program of liberating the reader from the tyranny of text. But this rigidity almost certainly results in part from the author’s efforts to marshall and discipline a great deal of material within a study that seeks at once to introduce, describe, interpret, and contextualize a large series of loosely organized (i.e., neither bound nor attached by explicit textual citation to the verbal text) visual responses to *The Pilgrim’s Progress*. Indeed, we might most profitably think about Blake’s designs as part of a dialogue in which Bunyan’s text supplies the other component. Thinking about the designs and the dynamic of the reader/viewer’s responses to them is in fact clearly part of Norvig’s plan, for she stresses more than once a Hegelian model reflective of the Spirit’s drive “to redeem itself by repossessing its own lost and sundered self in an ultimate recognition of its own identity” (117, quoting M. H. Abrams from *Natural Supernaturalism*). Interestingly, Lorraine Clark has only recently claimed (Blake, Kierkegaard, and the Spectre of Dialectic, 1991) that in the years following his Felpham sojourn Blake rejected the paradigm of the Hegelian dialectic in favor of an apocalyptic embrace of Truth and an annihilation of Error. That shift from the pattern defined earlier by the Conflict of Contraries suggests a different model of spiritual development than that which Norvig proposes here, and yet the two are not finally incompatible.

As Norvig sees it, Blake seems to have believed that Bunyan’s tale “was largely about the visionary aim of the dreamer’s unconscious to dream the dream awake, thereby exemplifying a typological process of psychological individuation.” Bunyan, she says, saw it differently, virtually ignoring “the narrator’s role as shaper of the dream” and unfolding the tale “as a psychobiography not of the dreamer, but of Christian” (129). Put another way, Blake brings the reader into the action by pairing that reader with Bunyan’s dream-narrator and having both of them explore the dream. In a sense one might argue, then, that the Hegelian dialectic is preserved in the implicit separation (even opposition) Blake posits between the dreamer-narrator-reader and the shared dream, on the one hand, and the narrative content of that dream—the plot through which Christian moves. And yet the apocalyptic resolution toward which Blake moves the reader/viewer gradually eliminates entirely the narrow, time-bound, merely allegorical tale, replacing it with an expanded visionary consciousness. Interestingly, Norvig suggests that Bunyan intentionally left latent “the intimations that his fable contained about the curative, self-regulatory structure of the dreamer’s imaginal life” (129). Whether Bunyan actually left this salutary substance latent by conscious decision, or whether it is simply not there in Bunyan’s tale, is, however, more difficult to determine.

I do not wish, in ventilating these various issues and questions, to slight either the attempt or the execution in *Dark Figures*, for this is going to remain a significant book, not just because of the rich pictorial archive with which it provides us but also because of the important issues it raises about Blake’s mature view of the nature of the imaginative life. It is worth thinking, in this respect, about other series of illustrations in which Blake examines the relations that inhere between literary predecessors like Milton or Gray, their works, and the “dreams” that mediate between them. The most immediately obvious parallels lie in the designs to *L’Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*. The final design for the former,
"The Young Poet's Dream," offers a scenario whose visual conception is not unlike that of The Dreamer Dreams a Dream (Progress 1), except that the young Miltonic poet is actually writing in a book. More immediately like the Bunyan is Il Penseroso 5, "Milton's Dream," in which the supine Milton is surrounded by the dream borne to him both by Sleep and by his own expansive visionary capacity. What is different about these Milton designs is that in them Milton is a participant in both the dreams and the waking activities the designs depict, whereas Bunyan appears only in the first design, as "the Dreamer," and is never part of the activity represented in subsequent designs. Nor are we told explicitly that the latter dreamer is Bunyan, although the hairstyle and mustache are decidedly Bunyanesque.

The Dreamer Dreams a Dream is at once predictive and synoptic, gathering as it does the chief elements of the entire tale--including the narrative frame--into a single initial design. The "progress" moves from left to right in the "natural" visual reading order that replicates even as it anticipates the narrative order of the verbal text. At the same time, the physical placement of this arch of tableaux over the dreamer signals to us that the whole "sequence" is also simultaneous--or perhaps instantaneous--in the dreamer's visionary consciousness, within the dream itself, although it will take the following 27 designs (in which, significantly, the dreamer is seen no more) to "draw out" what is here already present in the sleeping mind.

Given my remarks above about interpretive impositions, I hesitate to say anything about the number of designs--28—that Blake's series comprises. But in light of the way in which, beginning in Milton, Blake repeatedly treats the number 27 as a figure of relative incompletion and the number 28 as a "complete" or visionarily fulfilled one, I find it interesting that only by including the initial design of the dreamer is the set raised to the full complement of 28 designs. Was Blake perhaps suggesting here that it is the presence of the dreamer (a commanding presence, in that he both appears in and visually dominates the very first design) that furnishes the crucial element in "completing" the vision encapsulated in the dream? And if so, would that fact serve to indicate to a viewer sufficiently informed by and in the Blakean way of seeing that it is likewise the involved activity of the reader/viewer that brings both Bunyan's tale and Blake's designs to fruition? While I find the possibility tempting, especially in terms of the process of individuation involved for the reader/viewer in reading the tale and viewing the designs, I offer it as nothing more than a suggestion. Besides, to claim that the series is complete in 28 rather than 29 designs is to exclude a drawing variously titled Christian Takes Leave of His Companions (Norvig), Christian with the Shield of Faith, Taking Leave of His Companions (Butlin), and A Warrior with Angels (its "old" title). While Martin Butlin claims that this design rightfully belongs within the full set of designs, Norvig regards the drawing as "an alternate reading and a trial resolution of the repressive implications of Bunyan's passage" (181). She suggests that the ultimate narrative and thematic resolution suggested by this design is premature, since the incident occurs before Christian's confrontation with Apollyon, and on this basis she proposes that the drawing was intentionally diverted by Blake from the current set of Progress drawings to stand or fall on its own merit" (182), a reasonable and convenient way of resolving the difficulty, but one which seems just a bit too definitive.

Norvig's meticulous discussion of the actual Bunyan designs deftly interweaves Bunyan, Blake, Jung, and the author's own reading of the aim and scope of the separate projects undertaken by Bunyan and Blake. It is hard, finally, not to respect her contention that in the designs Blake subtly shifts the focus of Bunyan's tale away from the history of Christian's own spiritual development and instead onto the process of individuation undergone by the dreamer and represented in the 27 images contained in his dreams. As I mentioned above, Norvig proposes that Blake's designs trace for us a quasi-Hegelian sketch of the dream psyche, presenting us with a visual record of the development and ultimate near-resolution of what she calls a state of "expectant evolution" (207). Interestingly, Norvig reminds us of the profound difference between the conclusion Bunyan wrote and the final design Blake supplied. Where Bunyan ends on a "discordant and disruptive" note, with a strong authorial assertion of the absolute distinction between the book's narrator and the protagonist of the dream, Blake draws the two together, superimposing them finally in the character of the dreamer who is the reader/viewer's representative in the designs. The difference, as Norvig puts it, lies in the fact that Bunyan concludes by stressing the narrator's exclusion from the "Desired Country," while Blake formulates a conclusion that is insistently inclusive. Bunyan ends not with Christian's triumphant entry into the Celestial City, but rather with "the cautionary tale of Ignorance's defeat"; Blake's dreamer "imagines an apotheosis of the imagination as the fitting signal of an awakening in and from the dream" (209-10).

It is hard, in any event, not to want Blake's designs to be a creative, revolutionary reworking of Bunyan's allegories, for we instinctively want Blake's art to take us above and beyond the apparent reductivist simplicities of moral allegory. And so we happily "discover" that Blake rescues precursor artists (and their visions) from various failings of vision or of spirit. And perhaps he does; certainly his designs to the works of other authors always constitute a compelling part of an intellectual and aesthetic dialogue whose minute particulars it behooves us always to labor carefully. The inherent danger in such labors is, of course, an over-particularity that occasionally traps us into absolutist, exclusive claims that are themselves a tyranny of sorts. Like many studies (and not just of Blake) that have labored to extract complicated intellectual agendas from often elusive and always complex visual statements, Dark Figures in the Desired Country
occasionally takes rather a harder, more inflexible critical line than one might wish. At the same time, as Blake was fond of reminding us, hard, wiry bounding lines do have their place, if only in serving to delineate figures (or intellectual positions) so that we may encounter them and argue with them. Gerda Norvig’s book seems to me an immense fond of reminding us, hard, wiry bounding lines do have intellectual positions) so that we may encounter them and argue with them. Bunyan’s originating narrative, and the century and a half of intellectual, spiritual, cultural, and aesthetic evolution that separated them. She has given us much to think about, much to talk about, and much to write about. For that, we are in her debt.


Reviewed by David Punter

David Riede in this book seeks to trace the notion of romantic authority, to explore, in other words, why and how it was that Romantic poets felt that they could speak with apparent certainty on a range of issues literary, societal, and psychological. He simultaneously, as it were, traces the thanatic fate of this assumption of authority by arguing that in the cases of each of the three writers with whom he deals—Blake, Wordsworth, and Coleridge—this structure of authority comes to loom so large over their texts that it in effect transmutes them into the sources of a new cultural authoritarianism, which is in each case avidly seized upon by other writers and critics who wish to convert their forebears into a “church,” an unquestionable touchstone of knowledge and feeling: and that this “worship” of Romantic attitudes persists through literary criticism and pedagogy to the present day.

Blake, Wordsworth and Coleridge, then, are the main figures here; in his final chapter Riede turns more briefly to the second generation of romantics, principally in order to differentiate their work from their predecessors’ and to bring out the readiness with which they questioned all authority, in response first to a prevailing sense of political betrayal and second to the perceived “treachery” of some of the earlier poets themselves; the argument here touches on and usefully recontextualises wider issues of Romantic irony.

This is a book of extreme meticulousness, full of detail and of close reading, but I have to confess that, although I was gripped from page to page, in the end I found it oddly unsatisfying. There were two principal reasons for this. The first was the sheer amount of argument from other critics Riede uses to buttress his points, argument which perhaps might be necessary if one were to assume a reader unversed in criticism of the romantics, but to my mind somewhat redundant in view of the likely readership of the book.

But my other problem was more substantial, and has to do with the use Riede makes of his central term, “authority.” In part this follows from a passage from Hannah Arendt which he quotes, to the effect that true authority “is incompatible with persuasion, which presupposes equality and works through a process of argumentation. Where arguments are used, authority is left in abeyance. Against the egalitarian order of persuasion stands the authoritarian order, which is always hierarchical” (20).

The problem here is that Arendt slides effortlessly between “authority” and the “authoritarian.” This is an easy linguistic trope; but it is nonetheless incorrect. The notion of the authoritarian has to do with unjustifiable authority arbitrarily exercised; without some alternative notion of authority we have no means even to describe familial or educational process. There can be no development or pedagogy without authority, correctly exercised and subjected to appropriate questioning and testing. Such a notion of “correctness” may well be endlessly challengeable in practice, but that does not mean that it can be removed from political or psychological agenda.

Furthermore, it is not clear to me what poetry—or writing, or text—would look like in the absence of a sense of authority, whether we regard this as in some sense integral or as reader-induced. Riede suggests that the second generation of romantics were “anti-authoritarian” but that “Byron, Shelley, and Keats still struggled in various ways to establish their own poetic authority, and consequently the authority of poetry generally.” Well, of course they did: I do not see how you can write anything without founding it upon some notion of authority, even if it is a matter of taking on the authority to satirize, to destroy, to rip down. All of these are forms of authority, even if their relations to the dominant formations of culture may be various. To Riede, it seems that this is not so:

The problem with our inherited models of Romantic authority, with the continuing Romantic assumptions of much of our criticism, is that the ideals of an authoritative culture are ultimately authoritarian, and that the practical effects of a self-validating but self-enclosed cultural minority are extremely limited. (278)

I have already said that I do not believe that an authoritative stance necessarily leads to authoritarianism; I would want to add that the issue of the effects of a cultural minority will depend on far greater political complexities than those spelled out here, complexities in the ideological positioning of that minority and in the overall sociopolitical fab-
ric of the formation under discussion. Some cultural minorities have guns; others brandish veils.

This is a complex book, and to engage with the argument in more detail I shall pick out a single thread in relation to each of the poets. Riede begins his chapter on Blake as follows:

William Blake is probably the most extreme case in the English literary tradition of a poet claiming and representing the authority of absolute originality, of the inspired imaginative mind or, as he would put it, of the "Poetic Genius." (33)

In one sense an unexceptionable statement; yet if we look closely we can see this notion of authority already deconstructing itself. Did Blake, who knew a great deal about the futility of a discourse of origins, claim "absolute originality?" He may have claimed a unique connection to a realm of the imagination, but with what contents was that realm already stocked? Can the relationship with Milton, which Riede goes on to discuss at some length, be considered to have left Blake's imagination in a pristine condition, or the inheritance from Boehme or Michelangelo, or most important of all from the Bible? If we are to talk about authority here, we should surely be thinking of it in terms not of originality but of access: we may consider every writer as a mediator—just like any priest—yet even here it would not be clear to me that Blake consistently regarded himself as on the end of a unique hotline; or, even when he did, whether he consistently thought that the messages coming down it were of much use to the world at large.

For Riede, "the inescapable irony of Blake's career is that his work," being "disseminated at a time when 'literature' was in various ways being constituted as an authoritative cultural discourse ... became a part of the institutionalised canon of literature." This comment, claiming as it does that the fate of Blake's work is inextricably embedded in the "authoritarian" requirements of the romantic canon, depends in turn for its validity on what we think of a point of Foucault's which Riede mentions earlier, namely, that "literature" emerged in response to the profound skepticism of the Enlightenment, to the death of God and the consequent loss of "that primary, that absolutely initial, word upon which the infinite movement of discourse was founded and by which it was limited." Henceforth, Foucault continues, "language was to grow with no point of departure, no end, and no promise. It is the traversal of this futile yet fundamental space that the text of literature traces from day to day."

The "literary," then, is a substitute discourse and the romanticism are the pioneers of the "scrawl over the abyss." I think the problem here is one of hypostasization: this is an interesting point only when one's concern is to identify the cultural construct we call "literature." If our concern is at all broader, with the interrelations between, say, literature, religion, and authority, then we have a larger field to traverse, one where Milton might again assume a critical importance, one where oral as well as written traditions take their part in this vast series of displacements which indeed embraces in a particular way the whole articulated field of writing and the religious sense.

There is something more to be said. Even if we are to agree with Nietzsche and Foucault about the collapse of logos, it does not appear to me that the resultant (re)appearance of the abyss is unpopulated; certainly the abyss in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell is not. When authoritarian monotheisms go into inevitable crisis, what is left in the detritus may nevertheless be a host of little gods, the emergence of polytheism and animism, a freed god behind every tree, or in some cases locked inside, a populous world of which Blake, Wordsworth, and later Yeats were certainly aware. When Mohammed came to Mecca to institute an organized Arab state, he cleared the central place of worship of its hundreds of tribal gods; only thus could the authoritarian state at that historical moment be instituted, and only in the iteration that there is one god could it survive the pressing world of dissolutions, the counter-"authorities" from which alone we might expect salvation from the violence and fossilization of the state apparatus.

On Wordsworth, Riede has fascinating things to say on the motif of wandering, and on suffering and sympathy, but his general argument is perhaps best summarized when he says that Wordsworth's participation in the invention of the vast shadowy terrain of an autonomous self as at once the object and subject of literature is part of the invention of "literature" as an autonomous yet somehow authoritative discourse, of literature as an entity transcending history. (162)

Here Riede is following, as he says, Clifford Siskin's admirable identification of romanticism with "a penetrating gaze revealing, actually making, the depths within"; but I would still want to be wary of the notion that such a terrain can be "invented" rather than, shall we say, "reconfigured." The "making" of the unitary self cannot be a formation ab initio; rather, it comes to be in an already existent field of alternative constructions, just as does monotheism, in this case a field including many versions of the self, including ones which rely on multiplicity, plurality of selves, in the sense developed by Deleuze and Guattari's so-called "schizanalysis." This, of course, is one of the haunting fears of romanticism, where the continuing existence of "multiplicity" exerts constant pressure on the formation of the unitary self, which itself can be seen to come to fill the space left by the disappearance of the singleness of god. Riede's earlier comments on the ambiguities of madness in romanticism are very much to the point.

On Coleridge perhaps I can also supply a single quotation which seems to me to show the tenor of Riede's approach:
Coleridge never succeeded in finding an adequate poetic authority for himself, but from around 1800 to his death he sought ways to justify a poetic authority for others—for Wordsworth, Milton, Shakespeare—on the basis of a fully integrated self that retained its free agency, yet somehow spoke, as the Ancient Mariner did, with an inspiration that transcended personal experience. (171)

This brings us back again to the "fully integrated self" as a site of endeavor and danger, yet in the course of doing so it seems to me to obliterate the notion of writing as a matter of undecidability. There is no space here to discuss the ambiguities of the concept of "success" or "achievement" in the context of Coleridge, nor even to open the question as to whether it is appropriate to use the name-of-Coleridge as the overarching sign for an "engagement" with authority and the self which was clearly writ in much larger cultural terms around the figure of the individual suffering poet/philosopher; but what can, I think, be said is that the notion of an inspiration that transcends personal experience is an expression of an inescapable paradox; the paradox which we have sometimes, through many historical windings and across many cultures, called "soul." Our engagements with such a concept, such an experience which in itself always points beyond experience, will always be hovering, they will always catch us at thresholds, the thresholds which Coleridge approaches with such courage and despair in "Christabel" and "Kubla Khan"; whether the inability to pass over a threshold which would "alter everything" represents a lack of success is perhaps an imponderable question, for under every threshold is buried a forgotten god who will exact a price in personal and textual transformation for our projected hubris.

The field which Riede traverses is a crucial one; it appears to me that in the context of the romantic writers a supplementary approach might be through the notion of inner and outer worlds and the problematic flow of authority between them. An emblematic text might be "The Mental Traveller": whence springs the observer's authority here? From walking, we might say, on the wild side; but also and with painful simultaneity from suffering the necessity of transferring these insights across an awesome threshold of communication. The perception, the pathos, we might say, is clothed in words, indeed in the garments of lamentation insofar as they invariably represent loss of authenticity, of authority; and the result is always worse than we could imagine, because as the frail vessel emerges from the reeds it often seems as though there is nothing left inside the clothing, we see a "signature" with no document, presumed authority with nothing left to authorize, an already self-consumed artefact. If there is any truth in this, then it would apply in differing ways to all writing; when we look at the romanticists in particular, perhaps the difference we sense is not in this basic structure of loss, which is the ground of all searchings for authority, but in its reassimilation into the text, in the manifestation of a certain agonizing level of self-awareness; a certainty that authority is problematic, floating only temporarily on a dark sea while other, unnameable sails rise over the horizon.


Reviewed by Alexander S. Gourlay

When Robert N. Essick's William Blake, Printmaker came out 14 years ago, it seemed to me the last possible word on most of Blake's workshop techniques, and it certainly was a vast improvement on all that had been said about them before. Joseph Viscomi's new account of the processes used in the illuminated books, the first of two planned studies about Blake and printing, carries the discussion beyond the methods themselves into their consequences in the entire illuminated canon and their theoretical implications for understanding Blake's art. It constitutes a Grand Unified Theory of illuminated printing and publishing, revealing important new patterns in the vast sea of data about Blake's books that Keynes, Wolf, Erdman, Bentley and others have compiled so lovingly. A few points in this ambitious book will no doubt be further refined, and it will not make Bentley's Blake Books or the forthcoming supplement to it obsolete, but for the foreseeable future Blake and the Idea of the Book will be just as indispensable for everyone who writes about Blake's illuminated books and his other graphic works. Even those disputing Viscomi will do so in the terms of his arguments.

Viscomi writes very clearly and carefully, though his emphatic, enthusiastic style can be trying, even when one agrees with him—sometimes it's like being shouted at . . . or prophesied to. But most readers will appreciate his exhilarating distrust of all received opinion and everyone will profit from his extraordinary ability to synthesize complex information in new ways. His most unusual asset in this undertaking is his extensive practical experience with processes virtually identical to Blake's, some of which he acquired in co-publishing the Manchester Etching Workshop facsimile edition of the Songs: impressions from reproductions of some of Blake's relief printing plates were hand-colored, producing pages that look even more like Blake's than the collotype and stencil facsimiles by the Trianon Press. His participation in this venture afforded essential knowledge about the presswork involved in printing relief plates and the process of finishing them. Viscomi has also thoroughly researched the history of graphic techniques and conducted careful experiments with transfer methods, resists, etching and en-
graving techniques, and then thought deeply about the combined implications of this information. He included with the Manchester Etching Workshop facsimile a much shorter version of a few of the present arguments, but the searching thoroughness in *Blake and the Idea of the Book* distinguishes them here.

The first part of the book is organized according to the steps of the process of illuminated publishing, with excursions into variant methods and collateral questions as they arise. Several themes run through these discussions, but three seem especially important. First, Viscomi sees Blake's methods in general as variations upon conventional techniques in etching and engraving rather than completely unprecedented inventions. Second, the chief distinguishing characteristic of illuminated printing is that it minimizes divisions between idea and execution, between text and image—divisions that are enforced by conventional technology and that continue to be reflected in critical thinking about Blake's books. And third, although Blake's publishing enterprise was always inefficient and its products more varied than those of conventional printers, much of the process was mechanical and determined by the need for efficiency in small-scale mass production; only later in Blake's career were illuminated books deliberately differentiated as unique artifacts.

Viscomi begins by arguing that Blake usually created the text and design directly on the plate with only preliminary drafting of both, rather than completely settling the text and designs and laying out the pages in advance. Thus Blake usually did not employ the techniques for transferring designs that he must have used in much of his other graphic work. Viscomi shows how these transfer processes work, especially in the complex process of configuring the *Night Thoughts* drawings, and explains why such methods weren't used in most illuminated pages. I found the digression as useful as the main argument, for the description of transfer methods cleared up a question that has troubled me for years. Blake occasionally made mysterious errors in his conventional etching/engravings which suggest that he somehow forgot the function of a given line within a drawing, as if myopia, a mechanical process, or a singularly obtuse assistant had intervened between a preliminary drawing and the preparation of the plate. For instance, in the stipple engraving of the Laocoön group for Ree's *Cyclopedia* (reproduced in Essick, *Commercial* fig. 278), Blake mistook a pair of lines delineating one fold of the serpent and the inside of Laocoön's right leg for an extra teardrop-shaped loop of serpent next to the scrotum, an error that he had not made in the related pencil drawing or in his later annotated engraving of the subject.

If Blake used squaring to reduce the images and counterproofing to transfer them to the *Cyclopedia* plate, the lines that appeared on the copper should have been expressive enough to prevent gross errors. At one point I hypothesized that Blake might have used a pantograph or some similar device to reduce the image in his drawing to fit the layout of the plate, thereby creating lines so inexpressive that they could lead to such a mistake. (Even if a pantograph makes a line in exactly the right place, which it usually doesn't, the line often lacks the critical variations in tone and thickness that allow us to understand what it represents.) But I found no evidence that Blake or other engravers used pantographs regularly, perhaps because these devices weren't sophisticated enough to do such delicate copying. If his eyesight was worse than the eyeglasses preserved at the Fitzwilliam suggest, I thought next, Blake might have resorted to a loupe, which would have restricted his field of vision so severely that he couldn't see what he was working on in context.

After reading *Blake and the Idea of the Book* I understand that Blake must have used squaring to make reductions, but that he then used some combination of calking (which is a little like using carbon paper), tracing, reversed tracing, and/or counterproofing to transfer designs to the plate. Both calking and tracing tend to produce somewhat inexpressive lines—called lines are particularly likely to mislead, in that they are inexact in both position and strength. Blake probably lost track of the lines of Laocoön's leg at the calking stage, just as a calked image of a mournful angel must have suggested an owl at an early phase in engraving page 23 of *Night Thoughts* (In Grant, et al., the drawing is NT44, the finished plate NT13E; the owl proof is reproduced as page 13E in the Proofs section of Volume 2).

One reason why Viscomi goes to so much trouble to show that Blake did not (or, in some cases could not) use transfer methods to create most relief plates for illuminated printing is in order to debunk once again the persistent fallacy that Blake wrote his texts forward and then mechanically reversed them onto the plate so that they would print forward. This is not the occasion for reiterating the debate on this point—it has been over for 14 years, despite Bo Ossian Lindberg's attempt to revive it in his review of Essick's *Printmaker*—but Viscomi goes beyond beating the dead horse to argue that the continued presence of the aromatic carcass of the transfer theory has kept us from understanding why as well as how Blake made illuminated books. Transfer theories, in Viscomi's view, reflect the widespread eighteenth-century assumption that all printmaking processes are essentially reproductive—that is, mere mechanisms for replicating art that "really" exists in another medium—and they misrepresent illuminated printing by separating composition from production, illumination from text, visual art from verbal, inspiration from execution. Viscomi argues that relief etching offered an unpremeditated, autographic and organic alternative to existing reproductive and mechanistic media. It is essentially drawing and writing (backward) on copper—a medium in which the artist composes text, lays out the page, and illustrates it, working directly on the copper without a final draft of texts or designs on paper (obviously the *Songs* were mostly or completely written in advance, but Viscomi thinks they are exceptional rather than typical).
In *Printmaker*, Essick suggested that Blake used a fine brush and a combination of oil and tallow to write his texts and draw his designs on the copper. Viscomi argues persuasively that this mixture would be difficult to use for writing text and unsatisfactory as a resist. He instead follows Linnell, who reported that Blake used a version of ordinary stopping solution, probably thickened asphaltum varnish, ground with linseed oil and diluted with turpentine. Viscomi also contends that Blake used a quill pen rather than a brush to write his texts, but I am skeptical on this point. I can't make a quill write anything like a Blakean script, whether it is cut with a sharp spreading point or a square or oblique one, whether writing backward or forward; judging from the quill-written facsimile texts that Viscomi offers, he can't quite do it either. Blake's characteristic fluent cursive script and even the larger examples of his fussier upright Roman display an immensely complex pattern of thick and thins that seems most consistent with Essick's pointed brush; the texts written by Viscomi often duplicate the basic letterforms of Blake's texts but the strokes appear to be uniform in thickness. I will not be surprised if it turns out that Blake used more than one tool to write with, just as he used several different scripts. A quill might well have produced the tiny letters (without noticeable thicks and thins) of some of the *Songs of Innocence*. But until someone demonstrates true Blakean scripts that have been etched in copper and printed, we won't know for certain how Blake did them.

In addition to writing and drawing in resist, Blake worked on illuminated plates in several other ways, some of which involved transferring designs (not texts). Even in the early illuminated books Blake employed a variety of means for modifying the designs drawn in resist upon the plate. In most cases he simply treated the applied resist as if it were a conventional etching ground and scratched through it before the plate was etched, which usually printed as narrow white lines in the midst of the black areas created by the resist. Elsewhere he worked with a burin on the plate surface after etching the design; the effect is similar, but it may produce distinctive white lines running through the border left by the etching dam.

Blake also used two processes that Viscomi identifies with the confusing memoranda on the techniques of “woodcut on pewter” and “woodcut on copper” (Erdman 694). Both are means of producing white lines or white spaces on a full ground and underlying metal to produce a design composed of white areas surrounded by black (the ground here is not a resist but rather facilitates transferring the design and heightening the contrast between scraped and unscraped metal). Similarly, Viscomi argues that Blake’s “woodcut on copper” is the equivalent of modern white-line etching, and involves scraping or scratching away at a resist on copper and then etching the exposed metal to print whites (rather than blacks as in conventional intaglio etching).

These two processes are mechanically similar to Blake’s techniques for modifying designs drawn in resist, described above, but (and I think I’m getting this right) they are distinguishable because they employ an area of full ground, they necessarily involve a preliminary design (though it can be sketched on the plate itself rather than transferred), they require slightly different tools, and their white lines and spaces delineate primary forms. Although Viscomi’s case is fairly persuasive that these techniques are those called “woodcut on pewter” and “woodcut on copper” in Blake’s elliptical memoranda, I hope this terminology does not catch on outside of this book: here it helps to make important distinctions between the various white-line techniques, and wrenches some sense out of the memoranda, but the terms would be needlessly confusing in most other contexts, and even Viscomi sometimes uses them in ways that invite misunderstanding.

Once the copper printing plate was etched and otherwise satisfactory Blake could make major changes in the appearance of the image it generated by employing color-printing. For relief-printed illuminated books, this involved painting viscous colored inks on the raised and/or etched surfaces of the plate with a stump brush and printing all colors at once. Viscomi thus treats Blake’s color-printing as a relief-printing variant upon a common eighteenth-century mode of color-printing, the single-plate intaglio process called *à la poupee*, in which colored inks were applied (often rather approximately) to different areas of the intaglio plate.

In his discussion of the various printing processes used to create illuminated books from etched plates, Viscomi ingenuously reconstructs the presswork involved in printing specific books. He shows that in many cases Blake must have printed several copies of each book at a time. Most Blake scholars (including me) have underestimated the amount of work involved in setting up the press to print, and therefore assumed that Blake could have done so casually, whenever he felt like it, or when he got an order for a book. Viscomi argues persuasively, citing both practical experience and the evidence of the books themselves, that in most cases Blake must have printed the books in small editions of 10 or so, rather than one at a time. This a major discovery, but in his enthusiastic pursuit of the demon Error, Viscomi is a little too hard on others who have written about the subject. Several times, he cites someone as another dastardly perpetrator of the canard that each copy was printed separately, when the unfortunate citee merely implied this in arguing that each copy was unique in an editorially significant sense, that copies were finished differently, or that they were finished at different times.

Viscomi is so zealously attentive to his argument that he doesn’t always seem to recall something he clearly knows very well: in Blake’s case, printing a copy of an illuminated
book is not the same as producing a copy of it, which for colored copies must include the entire process of assembling and finishing with pen, brush, ink and watercolors. Collective finishing as well as printing appears to have occurred, but unlike printing, finishing and assembling could take place at any time, and revisions, reassembling, and refinishing were always possible. Strictly speaking, editors must be prepared to weigh the authority of each instance in which Blake was apparently satisfied that his work on any feature, even a "blur or mark," was complete or complete enough, and that may include hundreds of distinguishable instances in the production of a single page of a single copy of a single book. We will have to decide which differences are important and which are not. But even without dwelling on the infinite regression of "completeness," editors of illuminated books can't afford to put undue emphasis on "editions" when they are as small and as various as these. Even uncolored copies printed at the same time in the same ink on the same paper and bound in the same order will manifest differences that may be significant from an editorial point of view: the printed punctuation (at least) always varies, and textual editors and those discussing illuminations will have to continue to think about as many copies as possible even if many of them were printed at the same time. Overemphasizing the uniqueness of copies encourages certain kinds of critical foolishness, as Viscomi shows, but he also shows that critics have been wrong in other ways when they thought about too few copies.

Even if this prophet isn't always gracious with Error, he seems to be on good terms with Truth: the evidence for small "editions" is abundant and various, now that he has pointed it out. Viscomi's account of the ways in which the work of printing, finishing, and assembling books must have proceeded or could have proceeded is detailed and plausible. Everyone who writes about the illuminated books will have to reckon with this theory. Most of the time Blake, working with Catherine as his "printer's devil," must have printed multiple copies of each page (often in pairs); then the two of them colored the pages together en masse (often perfunctorily) and only later assembled them into books. Casually finished books might subsequently be touched up or even elaborately refinished at another time, as some late copies of Songs were, but most pages of most books were never the object of sustained individual attention and their collective effect in a particular book may or may not have been in the mind of the colorist (who may or may not have been Blake himself). The account of Blake's publishing process here has profound consequences for all those who think about editing illuminated books; what was already one of the most difficult of editorial problems is made even more richly problematic. Although Viscomi's instinct for polemic in these chapters is sometimes distracting, he has provided the groundwork and much of the framework for the next, more sophisticated phases of editorial theory about Blake.

In the second half of the book Viscomi discusses recoverable printing history for each of the illuminated books in detail; in every instance his account makes new sense out of old puzzles, and often the puzzles melt away entirely. Some of the information in these chapters has already been summarized in the new Blake Trust facsimiles that Viscomi helped to edit, but much of it is entirely new. He leaves few applecarts unturned, redating almost the entire illuminated canon in various ways, and he indicates the consequences of his theories for editors and even biographers. All of this is important and some of it is even exciting, but as one might expect, several of the arguments make heavy reading if you aren't immediately engaged in the questions they address, as in the latter part of Chapter 32, "The Production and Evolution of Milton: 1804-1818," which uncovers this complicated process in exhausting (but not exhaustive) detail. A very useful five-page Appendix charts the hypothetical publishing history of all 21 illuminated books from 1788 to the posthumous copies, identifying the approximate date of printing (not finishing) for each copy. Most readers will find themselves referring to this chart regularly whenever they are working on illuminated books.

Blake and the Idea of the Book is handsomely laid out and sturdily constructed in an oblong format, perhaps in deliberate imitation of Erdman's Illuminated Blake. It is generously illustrated with 312 good-quality monochrome halftones that convey as much information as such illustrations can, which is to say barely enough, and includes 13 color plates that do only a little better. It would have been impossible to publish this book for less than $50 if more or better color had been used, and I doubt that Princeton will make much money even as things are; the problem is that many of Viscomi's arguments necessarily depend on attending to phenomena that aren't easily seen even in good offset reproductions. Perhaps when all the pages of all copies of the illuminated books are available in color-corrected, high-resolution digital images, as envisioned by the scholars working on the electronic Blake archive, Viscomi will assemble an elegant illustrated hypertext version of the publication chart in Appendix A that will make everything as clear to us as it is to him.

Works Cited


**NEWSLETTER**

**FIRST ANNUAL VINCENT A. DE LUCA MEMORIAL LECTURE**

On Monday, 27 February 1995, Robert N. Essick delivered the first annual Vincent A. De Luca Memorial Lecture at the University of Toronto. The lecture was entitled "Representation, Anxiety, and the Bibliographic Sublime."

"IN ... CAMBRIDGE & IN OXFORD, PLACES OF THOUGHT"

As an addendum to his earlier bibliocritical reports on publications concerning with "Blake and His Circle," D. W. Dorrbecker has recently compiled a list of Blake-related theses which were submitted for academic degrees between 1950 and 1994 to universities in the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland. This checklist, which, apart from some 75 main entries also contains a few corrigenda to the winter 1992-93 issue of *Blake*, has now been privately printed at the University of Trier, and a limited number of copies is available from the author (write to D. W. Dorrbecker, Department of Art History, FBIII, The University of Trier, D-54286, Trier, Germany).

**ON THE FORMATION OF A SECULAR JEWISH SATURDAY SCHOOL IN BROOKLYN**

"The parent-workers didn't want their children to go to the conservative religious schools, but they did want them to learn Jewish history and socialism. They offered to pay the rent for several meeting rooms every Saturday morning and to provide petty cash—not petty to them—for minimal school supplies. All three friends were enthusiastic about the project, and my mother was asked to plan a curriculum. It proved to consist of the Communist Manifesto, poetry by Blake, Shelley, and Walt Whitman, some Old Testament material (largely 'Exodus' and the more troublesome prophets) and (rather surprisingly) Henry Morgan's anthropology."—in: Rubinstein, Annette T. "Socialist Sunday Schools," *Science & Society* 58 (1994): 331-32. (Submitted by Ralph Dumain to the online Blake group, blake@albion.com.)

**THE BLAKE SOCIETY AT ST. JAMES'S PICADILLY: EVENTS IN 1995**

Sunday, 13 August, 12 noon:
Visit to Bunhill Fields (site of Blake's grave)
Wednesday, 27 September, 7:30 pm:
Peter Ackroyd, "Blake the Londoner"
Wednesday, 11 October, 7:30 pm:
David Worrall, "Recent Trends in Blake Criticism"
Tuesday, 7 November, 7:30 pm:
David Punter, "'His shadowy Animals': The Idea of Living Creatures in Blake"
Tuesday, 5 December, 7:30 pm:
A general meeting of the Blake Society

**WORDSWORTH-COLERIDGE ASSOCIATION NEWS**

In honor of the 25th anniversary of *The Wordsworth Circle* and the Wordsworth-Coleridge Association is sponsoring two panels at the 1995 meeting of MLA: "The Profession of Romanticism" and "The Collected Coleridge."

**NEW BLAKE JOURNAL**

*The Journal of The Blake Society at St. James* is now available. The first issue is free to members of the Society. For non-members the charge is UK £4 (includes postage) or USA $15 (includes airmail delivery). Please send remittances to Jim Dewhurst, Broomey Leys, 20 Stoneleigh Close, Stoneleigh, Coventry, CV8 3DE, UK.

**URTHONA**

*Urthona* is a new arts magazine that "takes Blake as its guiding spirit." It "aims to look at the arts from a spiritual perspective, and is particularly interested in the overlaps between the work of the great artists of the west, such as Blake, and the spiritual traditions of Buddhism. The current issue has several articles on Blake ..." Subscriptions are £5 for two issues. Send checks to *Urthona*, 19 Newmarket Road, Cambridge, CB5 8EG.

**BLAKE OPERA**

Dana Harden has been working on a new opera based on William Blake's *Milton*. There will be two semi-staged productions of part 1 (The Bard's Song) of the opera, at 3 pm, 25 and 26 November 1995 at the Boulder Public Library Auditorium in Boulder, Colorado.

Along with Harden's score and libretto, Blake's art work and original set designs will be projected on a 20 x 20 foot screen behind the singers and actors. Blake's language of gestures will be incorporated into the choreography. Funding is needed to further stage this production and the rest of *Milton* next year. This will include developing "Virtual Sets" based on Blake's artwork and creating the libretto and staging. Audio and video recordings of the upcoming November performance will be available upon request. Please contact Dana Harden at (303) 530-7617, Golgonooza Productions, PO Box 19614, Boulder, CO, 80301-2614 or by email at womansway@aol.com (soon to be golgonooza@aol.com).

**KEATS-SHELLEY JOURNAL**

The Keats-Shelley Journal has a web page on the world wide web. The address is http://www.luc.edu/publications/keats-shelley/ksjweb.htm. Blake hopes to have a web page sometime soon.