



# Blake

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### C O N T E N T S

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#### Article

"Dear Generous Cumberland": A Newly Discovered  
Letter and Poem by William Blake  
By Robert N. Essick and Morton D. Paley 4

#### Minute Particulars

Blake, the *Edinburgh Literary Journal*,  
and James Hogg  
by David Groves 14

The Orthodoxy of Blake Footnotes  
by Michael Ferber 16

#### Review

Helen P. Bruder, *William Blake and the  
Daughters of Albion*  
Reviewed by Nelson Hilton 20

#### Newsletter

Books Being Reviewed for *Blake* 23

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## I N F O R M A T I O N

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COVER ILLUSTRATION: Address and page 1 of Blake's letter to Cumberland, postmarked 1 September 1800. Collection of Robert N. Essick.

“Dear Generous Cumberland”: A  
Newly Discovered Letter and Poem by  
William Blake

BY ROBERT N. ESSICK AND MORTON D. PALEY

The discovery of a letter by William Blake to one of his more intimate correspondents is a rare and signal event. In the 1960s, two letters to William Hayley came to light. Both, however, had been recorded, with brief summaries and extracts, in a Sotheby's auction catalogue of 1878.<sup>1</sup> It has been many more decades since a wholly unrecorded letter has emerged. The present essay announces just such a discovery: a previously unknown letter by Blake to his friend of many years, George Cumberland, posted on 1 September 1800, just three weeks before Blake and his wife Catherine moved from the London suburb of Lambeth to Felpham on the Sussex coast. This letter was first brought to the attention of Morton D. Paley by its previous owner, a private British collector, in the summer of 1997. With the help of the San Francisco dealer John Windle, the letter was acquired by Robert N. Essick in November of the same year. A transcription follows:

[addressed as follows]

M<sup>r</sup> Cumberland  
Bishopsgate  
Windsor Great Park

[Written sideways in pencil at left in another hand] W<sup>m</sup>.  
Blake 1800

My Dear Cumberland

To have obtained your friendship is better than to have sold ten thousand books. I am now upon the verge of a happy alteration in my life which you will join with my London friends in Giving me joy of — It is an

<sup>1</sup> *Catalogue of a Valuable Collection of Autograph Letters, Forming the Hayley Correspondence*, Sotheby, Wilkinson, and Hodge, 20-22 May 1878, lot 21, letter of 16 July 1804 (£3.1s. to Naylor); and lot 26, letter of 4 December 1804 (£4 to Naylor). These two letters were first printed in full in George Mills Harper, “Blake's Lost Letter to Hayley, 4 December 1804,” *Studies in Philology* 61 (1964): 573-85; and Frederick W. Hilles, “A ‘New’ Blake Letter [of 16 July 1804],” *Yale Review* 57 (1967): 85-89.

alteration in my situation on the surface of this dull Planet I have taken a Cottage at Felpham on the Sea Shore of Sussex between Arundel & Chichester. M<sup>r</sup> Hayley the Poet is [next 3 words inserted] soon to be my neighbour he is now my friend. to him I owe the happy suggestion for it was on a visit to him that I fell in love with my Cottage. I have now better prospects than ever The little I want will be easily supplied he has given me a twelvemonths work already. & there is a great deal more in prospect I call myself now Independent. I can be Poet Painter & [written over f] Musician as the Inspiration comes. And now I take this first oppor [line break] -tunity to Invite you down to Felpham we lie on a Pleasant shore it is within a mile of Bognor to which our Fashionables resort My Cottage faces the South about a Quarter of a Mile from the Sea, only corn Fields between. tell M<sup>r</sup> Cumberland that my Wife thirsts for the opportunity to Entertain her at our Cottage

Your Vision of the Happy Sophis I have devourd. O most delicious book how canst thou Expect any thing but Envy in Londons accursed walls. You have my dear friend given me a task which I have endeavourd to fulfill I have given a sketch of your Propo[line break] -sal to the Editor of the Monthly Magazine desiring that he will [page ends] give it to the Public hope he will do so. I have shown your Bonasoni to M<sup>r</sup> Hawkins my friend desiring that he will place your Proposal to the account of its real author. wherever he goes

How Sorry I am that you should ever be Ill. it also gives me pain to hear that you intend to leave Bishopsgate & it would give me more pleasure to hear that Sussex was preferred by you to Somersetshire But wherever you Go God bless you.

Perhaps I ought to give you My Letter to the Editor of the Monthly Mag. It is this

Sir

Your Magazine being so universally Read induces me to recommend to your notice a Proposal made some years ago in a Life of Julio Bonasoni which Proposal ought to be given to the Public in Every work of the nature of yours. It is. For the Erection of National Galleries for the Reception of Casts in Plaster from all the Beautiful Antique. Statues Basso Relivos &c that can be procured at home or abroad. Which Galleries may be built & filled by Public Subscription To be open to The Public. Their Use would be To Correct & Determine Public Taste as well as to be Treasures of Study for Artists. If you think [page ends] that this Proposal is of the Consequence that it appears to me to be, You will Extract the Authors own words & give them in your valuable Magazine. The Work is Intituled “Some Anecdotes of the Life of Julio Bonasoni & [next 3 words inserted] by George Cumberland Publishd by Robinsons Paternoster Row 1793

Yours W. B.

I so little understand the way to get such things into  
Magazines or News papers that if I have done wrong  
in Merely delivering the Letter at the Publishers of the  
Magazine beg you will inform me  
My Wife joins with me in Love & Respect to yourself  
& family

I am Your devoted artist  
Will<sup>m</sup> Blake

PS. I hope to be Settled in Sussex before the End of Sep-  
tember it is certainly the sweetest country upon the face of  
the Earth

Dear Generous Cumberland nobly solicitous for a  
Friends welfare. Behold me  
Whom your Friendship has Magnified: Rending the  
manacles of Londons Dungeon dark  
I have rent the black net & escap'd. See My Cottage at  
Felpham in joy  
Beams over the Sea, a bright light over France, but the  
Web & the Veil I have left  
Behind me at London resists every beam of light; hang-  
ing from heaven to Earth  
Dropping with human gore. Lo! I have left it! I have  
torn it from my limbs  
I shake my wings ready to take my flight! Pale, Ghastly  
pale: stands the City in fear

The subject of this letter was a momentous one for Blake,  
a change in residence that would begin a new phase of his  
life. The references to Felpham in this letter are the first to  
appear in his writings. As is well known, he had decided to  
move there in order to be employed as an artist and en-  
graver for William Hayley's various projects, the most im-  
portant of which was his biography of William Cowper.  
Blake had come on an extended visit early in July 1800, and  
by 11 August we find Hayley writing that "the ingenious  
Blake . . . appeared the happiest of human Beings on his pros-  
pect of inhabiting a marine Cottage in this pleasant vil-  
lage. . . ." In a letter of 12 September, Blake would inform  
John Flaxman that "every thing is nearly completed for our  
removal [from] <to> Felpham."<sup>2</sup>

The move to Felpham was, as we see in Blake's letter, asso-  
ciated in his mind with artistic independence. He would  
begin with a commission from Hayley for "a twelvemonths  
work." This was probably the series of heads of poets for  
Hayley's library, on which Blake reported himself well en-

<sup>2</sup> Letter to John Hawkins, printed in G. E. Bentley, Jr., *Blake Records* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969) 72. This letter was previously published in a book of correspondence by and to Hawkins: *I am, my dear Sir. . .*, ed. Francis W. Steer (Chichester: privately printed, 1959) 4.

<sup>3</sup> *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, ed. David V. Erdman (Garden City, New York: rev. ed., 1988) 756. This edition is hereafter cited as E.

gaged on 26 November 1800.<sup>4</sup> Interestingly, in this passage Blake confers equal status to his activities as "Musician" to those as poet and painter. This both confirms the importance music had for Blake and establishes that he did compose music, though presumably he did not know musical notation. That Blake wrote music for his poems has long been reported. John Thomas Smith, author of *Nollekens and His Times* (1828), heard Blake sing his songs early in his career, when he frequented the gatherings of the Rev. and Mrs. Anthony Mathew:

Much about this time, Blake wrote many other songs, to which he also composed tunes. These he would occasionally sing to his friends; and though, according to his confession, he was entirely unacquainted with the science of music, his ear was so good, that his tunes were sometimes most singularly beautiful, and were noted down by musical professors.<sup>5</sup>

That Blake did indeed spend some of his time at Felpham as "Musician" when the "Inspiration" came is attested by the Oxford student Edward Garrard Marsh in a letter to William Hayley in which Marsh mentions "The hymn, which inspired our friend, whom I have some idea, I mistitled a poetical sculptor instead of a poetical engraver. . . ." This must refer to Blake, though the hymn that inspired may not have been written by Blake. However, Marsh goes on to say in the same letter:

I long to hear M<sup>r</sup> Blake's devotional air, though I should have been very awkward [*sic*] in the attempt to give notes to his music. His ingenuity will however (I doubt not) discover some method of preserving his compositions upon paper, though he is not very well versed in bars and crotchets.<sup>6</sup>

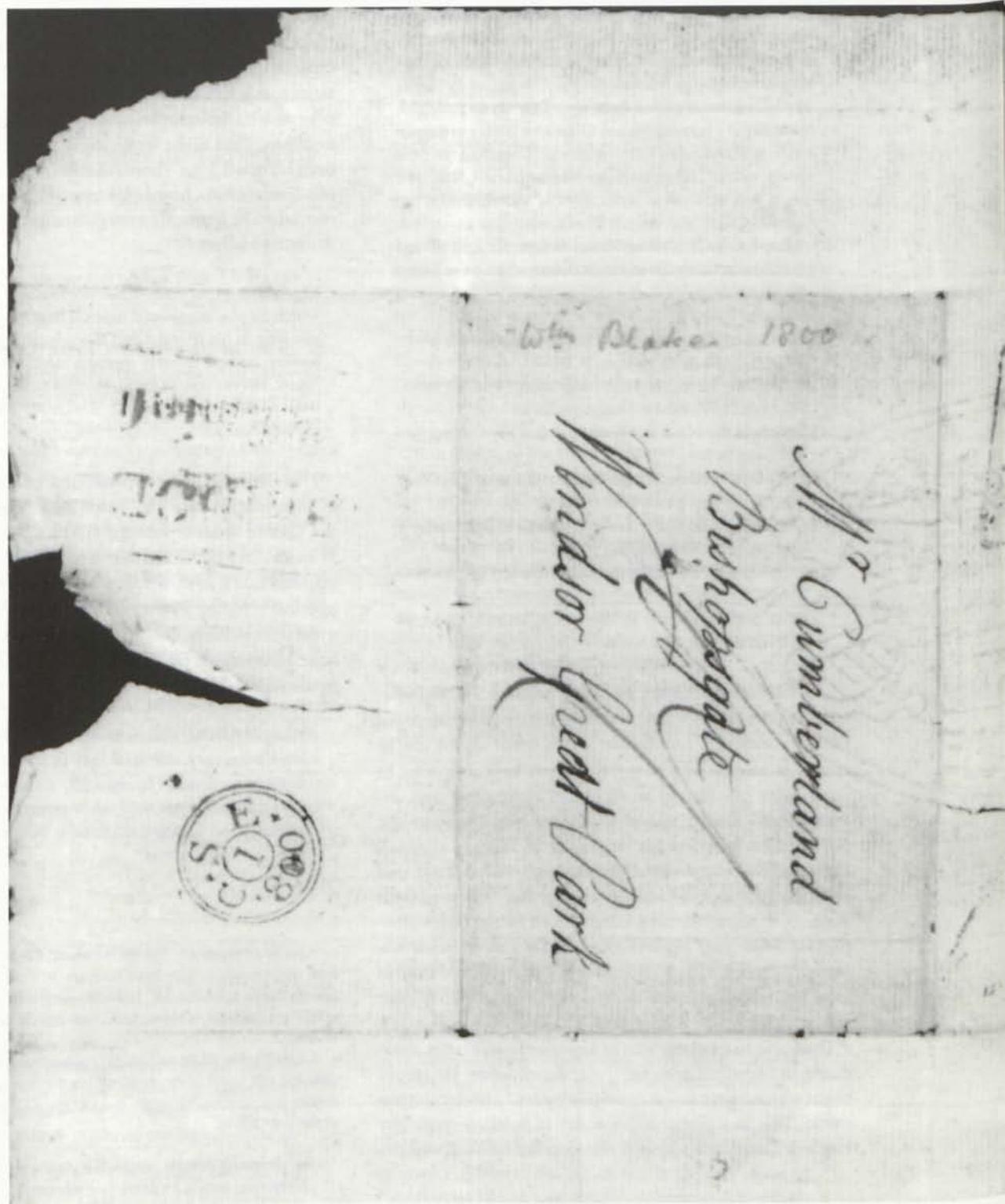
<sup>4</sup> Letter to Hayley, E 714. In the event, the 18 heads, interspersed with other projects, may have taken more than a year to complete. Martin Butlin dates them c. 1800-03; see *The Paintings and Drawings of William Blake* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981) 1: 297.

<sup>5</sup> Reprinted in *Blake Records* 457. Allan Cunningham (1784-1842), who did not know Blake, reported on the basis of an unknown authority that composing music was integral to Blake's creative process in the later 1780s:

In sketching designs, engraving plates, writing songs, and composing music, he employed his time. . . . As he drew the figure he meditated the song which was to accompany it, and the music to which the verse was to be sung, was the offspring of the same moment. Of his music there are no specimens . . .

—*Blake Records* 482, from *Lives of the Most Eminent British Painters, Sculptors, and Architects* (1830).

<sup>6</sup> Original letter in the collection of Robert N. Essick. First published in Essick, "Blake, Hayley, and Edward Garrard Marsh: 'An In-



1 Address and page 1 of Blake's letter to Cumberland, postmarked 1 September 1800. Collection of Robert N. Essick. Pen and ink, except for the later pencil inscription in another hand above the address, "Wm. Blake 1800." Laid paper, approx. 19.5 x 32 cm., chain lines 2.5 cm. apart, showing a large crown and shield watermark in the center of the sheet. The postmark lower left indicates the month, abbreviated as "S E," the day (1) in the inner circle, and the year as "[1]800." From 1800 through 1822, only the last 3 numbers of the year were given in English postmarks—see John G. Hendy, *The History of the Early Postmarks of the British Isles* (London: Gill, 1905) 6-7. The letter "C" designates the "table or division in the Inland [post office] branch where the letter was stamped"

My Dear Cumberland

To have obtained your friendship is better than to have sold ten thousand books. I am now upon the verge of a happy alteration in my life which you will join with my London friends in giving me joy of. It is an alteration in my situation on the surface of this dull Planet I have taken a Cottage at Felpham on the Sea Shore of Sussex between Arundel & Chichester. Mr Hayley the Poet is my neighbour <sup>now to be</sup> he is now my friend. to him I owe the happy suggestion for it was on a visit to him that I fell in love with my Cottage. I have now better prospects than ever. The little I want will be easily supplied he has given me a twelve months work already. & there is a great deal more in prospect I call myself now Independent. I can be Post Chamber Musician as the Inspiration comes. And now I take this first opportunity to Invite you down to Felpham we lie on a pleasant shore it is within a mile of Bognor to which our fashonables resort My Cottage faces the South about a Quarter of a Mile from the Sea, only corn fields between. tell Mrs Cumberland that my Wife thirsts for the opportunity to Entertain her at our Cottage

Your Vision of the Happy Sophis I have devour'd. O most delicious book how canst thou expect any thing but Envy in Londons accursed walls. You have my dear friend given me a task which I have endeavour'd to fulfill I have given a sketch of your Proposal to the Editor of the Monthly Magazine desiring that he will

(Hendy 6). The double outer rim of the mark indicates the "evening" (i.e., late afternoon) shift at the post office. Another, poorly-printed stamp can be seen about 4 cm. above the postmark; its right end, upside-down, appears just left of the fold between the address and the first page of the letter. We can decipher from this stamp only the letters G, E, S, e, and r. Fortunately, these fragments accord very closely with a clearly printed stamp, "BRIDGE/Westminster A.S.E.," on Blake's letter to Hayley of 16 September 1800, now in the Huntington Library. Bridge Street, running across Westminster Bridge over the Thames, was only a few blocks from Blake's home in Hercules Buildings, Lambeth.

give it to the Public hope he will do so. I have shown your Remonstrance  
to Mr. Hunkins my friend desiring that he will place your Proposal  
to the account of the real author. whenever he goes.

How sorry I am that you should ever be ill. It also gives  
me pain to hear that you intend to leave Bishopsgate & it would  
give me more pleasure to hear that Naples was preferred by you  
to Somersetshire. But whenever you go God bless you.

Perhaps I ought to give you My Letter to the Editor of the  
Monthly Mag. It is this

As your Magazine being so universally Read induces  
me to recommend to your notice a Proposal made some  
years ago in a Life of Julius Bonasoni which Proposal  
ought to be given to the Public in every work of the  
nature of yours. It is. For the Erection of National  
Galleries for the Reception of Casts in Plaster from  
all the Beautiful Antique Statues, Baso Relievs &  
that can be procured at home or abroad. Which  
Galleries may be built & filled by Public Subscription  
To be open to the Public. Their Use would be  
To Correct & Determine Public Taste as well  
as to be Treasures of Study for Artists. If you think

2 Pages 2 and 3 of Blake's letter to Cumberland, postmarked 1 September 1800. Collection of Robert N. Essick. The initials (page 3) at the conclusion of Blake's letter to the editor of the *Monthly Magazine* look at first glance like "A. B." But this letter within the letter to Cumberland is clearly Blake's, and thus we believe that a slip of the pen created the appearance of an "A" when "W" was

that this Proposal is of the Consequence that it  
appears to me to be. You will Extract the Authors own  
words & give them in your valuable Magazine. The  
Work is Intitl'd "Some Anecdotes of the Life  
of Julio Bonasoni <sup>by George Cumberland</sup> Published by Robinsons  
Palmerston Row 1793

Yours A. B.

I so little understand the way to get such things into Magazines  
or News papers that if I have done wrong in Merly delivering the  
Letter at the Publisher of the Magazine by you will inform me  
My Wife joins with me in love & Respect to yourself & family  
I am Your devoted artist

Wm Blake

P.S. Hope to be settled in Sussex before the End of September  
it is certainly the sweetest Country upon the face of the Earth

Dear Generous Cumberland withly I thank you for a Friends welfare. Behold me  
Whom your Friendship has Magnified: Rending the manacles of Londons Dungeon dark  
I have rent the black net of Escap'd. See My Cottage at Felpham in jolly  
Beams o'er the sea a bright light over France, but the Web & the Veil I have left  
Behind me at London resists every beam of light; hanging from heaven to earth  
Dropping with human gore. Lo! I have left it! I have torn it from my limbs  
I shake my wings ready to take my flight! Pale, Ghostly pale: stand, the City in fear

meant. Blake is not known to have used "A.B." as pseudonymous initials. Letters signed "A.B." were printed in the 1 October 1800, 1 December 1800, and 1 June 1801 issues of the the *Monthly Magazine*. These are on botanical and meteorological topics; the 1801 letter is addressed from "Portsea." They clearly have no connection with Blake.

Alexander Gilchrist, on the basis of information from John and Mary Ann Linnell, wrote of Blake at North End in 1825: "He himself still sang, in a voice tremulous with age, sometimes old ballads, sometimes his own songs, to melodies of his own."<sup>7</sup> George Richmond, who was present at Blake's death, wrote that "Just before he died . . . He burst out Singing of the things he saw in Heaven[.]"<sup>8</sup> Smith, Marsh, the Linnells, and Richmond are reliable witnesses, but up to now we have not had a statement by Blake himself expressing how important being a "Musician" along with "Poet" and "Painter" was to him. We can now see the personal element in the triadic arrangement of statements like that on plate 3 of *Jerusalem*: "Nations are Destroy'd, or Flourish, in proportion as Their Poetry Painting and Music, are Destroy'd or Flourish!"<sup>9</sup> Blake knew himself to be a creator of all three.

In his sanguine mood, Blake introduces the name of "M<sup>r</sup> Hawkins my friend," indicating the reappearance in his life of someone who had once tried to advance his career in a very significant way. John Hawkins (1758?-1841) was a wealthy art collector and a writer on antiquarian subjects.<sup>10</sup> Their original connection was John Flaxman. On 18 June 1783, Flaxman wrote to his wife, Nancy, that Hawkins "at my desire has employed Blake to make him a capital drawing for whose advantage in consideration of his great talents he seems desirous to employ his utmost interest."<sup>11</sup> Then, on 26 April 1784, Flaxman reported to William Hayley: "M<sup>r</sup>: Hawkins a Cornish Gentleman has shewn his taste & liberality in ordering Blake to make several drawings for him, & is so convinced of his uncommon talents that he is now endeavouring to raise a subscription to send him to finish [his] studies in Rome. . . ."<sup>12</sup> Being a younger son, Hawkins, as Flaxman explained, could not meet the entire expense himself; evidently he was unable to raise the necessary money, and Blake was not to have his time in Rome. Nevertheless, Blake obviously remembered Hawkins's interest with gratitude, and his fortuitous reappearance must have impressed Blake, always a believer in signs, as auspicious. Hawkins had met William Hayley at the Flaxmans' in Lon-

don only in May 1799, and he had then visited Hayley, who addressed a poem to him, at Eartham in September 1799.<sup>13</sup> On 11 August 1800, Hayley wrote to Hawkins that "that worthy Enthusiast, the ingenious Blake" would be made even happier if Hawkins should move to Sussex.<sup>14</sup> Hawkins was later to be associated in Blake's mind with one more significant event. Blake's account of his inner renewal the day after visiting the Truchsessian Gallery is immediately preceded by the words: "Our good and kind friend Hawkins is not yet in town — hope to soon have the pleasure of seeing him, with the courage of conscious industry, worthy of his former kindness to me."<sup>15</sup>

Much of the letter is devoted to the projects of George Cumberland, whose friendship with Blake may have begun as early as 1784.<sup>16</sup> Blake's mention of "Your Vision of the Happy Sophis" refers to Cumberland's novel *The Captive of the Castle of Sennaar*, printed in 1798.<sup>17</sup> Although *Sennaar* was suppressed by Cumberland in 1798 and only published in revised form in 1810, Cumberland sent copies of it to some of his friends, and this volume may have been the "kind present" for which Blake had previously neglected to thank Cumberland, an omission for which Blake apologized profusely in his letter to Cumberland dated 2 July 1800 (E 706). The core of the tale concerns Sophis, a utopian society in Africa where property is limited to immediate personal use, energy is considered the divine principle, there is no shame about the naked human body, and gold is despised except for its use in art.<sup>18</sup> Blake's remark that *Sennaar* has encountered "Envy in Londons accursed walls" may be a way of saying that even Cumberland's friends had considered the book too daring for publication.

Blake next takes up the proposal for a National Gallery, previously broached by Cumberland in his preface to *Some Anecdotes of the Life of Julio Bonasoni* (1793), entitled "A Plan for Improving the Arts in England." Blake's letter is an accurate representation of Cumberland's "Plan." The latter proposes "that a subscription be commenced . . . for the declared purposes . . . of commencing *two galleries*, and filling them, as fast as the interest accrues, with *plaister casts* from antique statues, bas-reliefs, . . . &c. collected not only from

sect of Parnassus," *Explorations: The Age of Enlightenment* 1 (1987): 58-94 (quotation cited from 66). The Blake references in this letter are also quoted in G. E. Bentley, Jr., *Blake Records Supplement* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988) 18-19.

<sup>7</sup> *Life of William Blake*, ed. Ruthven Todd (London: J. M. Dent, rev. ed., 1945) 297.

<sup>8</sup> *Blake Records* 347, from a letter to Samuel Palmer dated 15 August 1827.

<sup>9</sup> E 147. In *A Vision of the Last Judgment* "Poetry Painting & Music" are "the three Powers <in Man> of conversing with Paradise which the flood did not sweep away" (E 559).

<sup>10</sup> DNB 9: 221; and *I am, my dear Sir*, . . . ix-xxi.

<sup>11</sup> *Blake Records* 24. Neither this nor any of Hawkins's other commissions for Blake have been traced.

<sup>12</sup> *Blake Records* 27-28. Butlin suggests that three outline drawings after Blake that Flaxman drew from memory when in Rome may be based on the pictures mentioned. See *The Paintings and Drawings of William Blake* 1: 57-8 (no. 152), 2: plate 170.

<sup>13</sup> See Morchard Bishop, *Blake's Hayley* (London: Gollancz, 1951) 243, 245.

<sup>14</sup> *Blake Records* 72 and n1. As Bentley notes, Hawkins did eventually move to Sussex, but not until 1806.

<sup>15</sup> Letter to William Hayley, 23 October 1804, E 756. For the significance of this linkage, see Morton D. Paley, "The Truchsessian Gallery Revisited," *Studies in Romanticism* 16 (1977): 165-77.

<sup>16</sup> See Sir Geoffrey Keynes, "George Cumberland and William Blake," *Blake Studies: Essays on His Life and Work* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2nd ed., 1971) 230-52.

<sup>17</sup> For historical and bibliographic details, see G. E. Bentley, Jr., ed., *The Captive of the Castle of Sennaar* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1991).

<sup>18</sup> For a number of parallels between Blake's ideas and those in this novel, see Bentley's Introduction xxxvi-xli.

Italy, but from all parts of Europe."<sup>19</sup> Blake's advocacy of Cumberland's neoclassicism shows his continued high regard—although perhaps prompted more by friendship than by conviction—for that aesthetic. This letter makes clear that Blake's praise of "the immense flood of Grecian light & glory which is coming on Europe" (letter to Cumberland, 2 July 1800; E 706) continued at least until just before his removal to Felpham. For some reason unknown to us, Blake thought that Cumberland's plan was close to gaining acceptance in high places at this time. On 2 July 1800, he had even congratulated Cumberland "on your plan for a National Gallery being put into Execution" (E 706). His letter to the editor (John Aikin) of the *Monthly Magazine*<sup>20</sup> was part of a campaign that Blake (and presumably Cumberland) thought was close to fruition. The *Monthly Magazine* may have been chosen because Blake had an entrée there through Joseph Johnson, who has been characterized as the "mentor and assistant" of the *Monthly's* publisher, Richard Phillips.<sup>21</sup> Phillips's premises at no. 71 St. Paul's Churchyard were next door to Johnson's, and Phillips did publish a letter of Blake's a few years later.<sup>22</sup> However, neither Blake's letter to the editor nor Cumberland's proposal ever appeared in the magazine, and while Cumberland may have contributed to an atmosphere that nurtured the idea of a National Gallery, he had no role in the actual founding of the National Gallery, which may be dated from the acquisition of the Angerstein collection for the nation in 1824.

In several letters of 1800 to close friends just before and after his move to Felpham, Blake expressed his ebullient feelings in verse. This newly discovered letter contains the first in this cluster of epistolary poems. It is a brief but important addition to the corpus of Blake's poetry. In a letter to John Flaxman of 12 September (E 707-08), Blake included a poem in long lines of a type we also find in this poem, a type familiar to readers of Blake's "Prophetic" works from *Tiriel* (c. 1789) to *Jerusalem* (completed c. 1820). The next poem, included in a letter of 14 September from Mrs. Blake to Mrs. Flaxman, is in much shorter lines (E 708-09). The last extant text in this group, sent to Thomas Butts on 2 October, is in short, rhymed couplets (E 712-13). Only the poem addressed to John Flaxman directly invokes the "ter-

rors" and "horrors" (E 707-08) that are so much a part of the poem printed here for the first time. In their prosody and imagery, these seven lines are particularly evocative of the poem Blake was then writing under the title of *Vala*. The most regular line is the fourth, which comprises a spondee followed by six anapests:

--|w-|w-|w-|w-|w-|w-|

However, the only other seven-foot line is the first, which has only four anapests among its seven feet:

--|w-|w-|w-|w-|w-|w-|

These two lines have much in common with Blake's septenaries elsewhere, but in this passage as elsewhere Blake is frequently irregular in his long lines. As Alicia Ostriker remarks:

... Blake did not always confine himself to seven-beat lines. Alexandrines play an increasingly important dis-taff part in his verse, and octometer also becomes frequent. Sometimes there are lines of four or five beats, and sometimes there are lines nine beats long or longer.<sup>23</sup>

Lines 2, 3, 5 and 6 are octometric, while line 7 has nine feet. It is difficult to scan some of these lines because of their irregularity. Ostriker's observations are again pertinent:

The octometers and other line-lengths give more trouble. They, along with the alexandrines, are of course subject to as many rhythmical peculiarities as Blake imposes on his septenaries. And these odd-size lines appear unpredictably, so that we can never be certain how many beats a line is going to have until we finish reading it.<sup>24</sup>

Line 9, for example, is an anthology of poetic feet, beginning with two iambs followed by a dactyl and a trochee, then a spondee, a trochee, another spondee, an iamb and an anapest. Yet the passage as a whole is dominated by rising feet, anapest and iamb, a rhythmical pattern that matches the rising spirits expressed.

In its development of the theme of freedom from bondage the passage uses a number of images familiar to us from

<sup>19</sup> Cumberland, *Some Anecdotes of the Life of Julio Bonasoni* (London: G. G. J. and J. Robinson, 1793) 14-15.

<sup>20</sup> For Aikin's editorship from 1796 to c. 1806, see Lucy Aikin, *Memoir of John Aikin, M. D.* (Philadelphia: Abraham Small, 1824) 109-44. Lucy Aikin states that "all the original correspondence [to the magazine] came under his [John Aikin's] inspection; articles were inserted or rejected according to his judgment, and the proof sheets underwent his revision" (110).

<sup>21</sup> See Gerald P. Tyson, *Joseph Johnson: A Liberal Publisher* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1979) 168 and 258n81. Cumberland himself evidently had considerable direct correspondence with the *Monthly Magazine*, beginning in April 1800, and he published letters to the editor in the April 1800 and March 1803 issues. The first is

about sugar substitutes; the second is a defense of Cumberland's *Thoughts on Outline*, for which Blake had engraved some of the plates, and which contains a passing reference to Blake. (See G. E. Bentley, Jr., *A Bibliography of George Cumberland* [New York and London: Garland, 1975] 3n1 and 57).

<sup>22</sup> Published in the *Monthly Magazine* for 1 July 1801 (E 768-69), this letter defends Henry Fuseli against adverse critics. A subsequent letter (14 October 1807, E 769) to the *Monthly*, protesting against the arrest of an astrologer, was not published.

<sup>23</sup> *Vision and Verse in William Blake* (Madison and Milwaukee: University of Wisconsin Press, 1965) 137.

<sup>24</sup> *Vision and Verse in William Blake* 137-38.

other contexts. Key words like manacles, Dungeon, net, Web, Veil, and gore, elsewhere applied to mythical or fictitious figures, are here used to display Blake's personal situation. The "manacles of Londons Dungeon dark" cannot fail to remind us of the "mind-forg'd manacles" of "London" (8, E 27) of *Songs of Experience*. "Rending the manacles," Blake is like Orc in *America*, whose shoulders "rend the links" that bind his wrists (2: 2, E 52), or the figure in "The Mental Traveller" who "rends up his Manacles" (23, E 484). Blake is also like "the inchained soul" of *America*, whose "dungeon doors are open" (6: 10, E 53). The "black net" is reminiscent of Urizen's "dark net of infection" in *The [First] Book of Urizen* 26: 30 (E 82), closely associated with the "Web dark and cold" that follows Urizen's footsteps (25: 14, E 82) and that reappears at the end of Night VI of *Vala*. "Veil," yoked with the "Web" and "Dropping with human gore," had not previously had the sense of the obfuscation of vision that it does here and in *Vala*. "Human gore" had appeared as early as in "An Imitation of Spens[er]" 32 (E 421) in *Poetical Sketches* (1783). These nightmarish images of fear and entrapment express the deep depression Blake had fallen into by the end of the 1790s. Counter-balancing them is Blake's cottage, which "Beams over the Sea, a bright light over France," behind which are perhaps Jesus's words from the Sermon on the Mount: "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid" (Matt. 5.14).

In its short compass the poem moves from the horrific sublime, embodied in the London that Blake was leaving, towards a renewed vision of light. Read with our retrospective knowledge of Blake's Felpham years and his misery under Hayley's condescending patronage, the lines strike in us a note of pathos. Blake's hopes were so high, their realization so unattained. London turned out to be only one objective correlative for Blake's inner demons and professional distresses. Despite his bold announcements to the contrary, "the Web & the Veil" followed him to Felpham and there took on the psychic and poetic forms populating "The Bard's Song" in *Milton a Poem*. In 1803 Blake returned to "Londons Dungeon dark," soon after rechristened "a City of Assassinations" (letter to Hayley, 28 May 1804; E 751). The letter to Cumberland enriches our sense of Blake's enthusiasm in the late summer and autumn of 1800, but it also provides a prelude to the disappointment and despair to come.

3 Detail of the poem, "Dear Generous Cumberland," page 3 of Blake's letter to Cumberland.

Dear Generous Cumberland nobly situated for a Friends welfare. Behold me  
Whom your Friendship has Magnified: Rending the manacles of Londons Dungeon dark  
I have rent the black net of Escap'd. See My Cottage at Felpham in joy  
Beams over the seas a bright light over France, but the Web & the Veil I have left  
Behind me at London resists every beam of light; hanging from heaven to earth  
Dropping with human gore. Lo! I have left it! I have torn it from my limbs  
I shake my wings ready to take my flight! Pale, Ghostly pale: stands the City in fear

## MINUTE PARTICULARS

### Blake, the *Edinburgh Literary Journal*, and James Hogg

BY DAVID GROVES

The *Edinburgh Literary Journal* was a weekly magazine of 1828-1832, founded by a 25-year-old law student named Henry Glassford Bell.<sup>1</sup> It normally ran to 14 pages plus advertisements, and it claimed a circulation of about 2000.<sup>2</sup> Published by the Constable firm, the *Edinburgh Literary Journal* was in some ways a continuation of Constable's defunct *Scots Magazine*, where an important review of Blake had appeared in 1808.<sup>3</sup> Although Bell's *Journal* has been largely ignored by scholars, it was a colorful, sprightly magazine, which carried short works by Shelley<sup>4</sup> and other British authors like John Lockhart (editor of London's *Quarterly Review*), Allan Cunningham (the friend of Thomas De Quincey), Robert Morehead (a former editor of the *Scots Magazine*), the dramatist James Sheridan Knowles, and poets Alexander Balfour and William Tennant.<sup>5</sup> The *Journal* became controversial among Scottish periodicals by its outspoken attacks on the Scots novelist John Galt,<sup>6</sup> and on *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* and the powerful Blackwood firm in general.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Bell (1803-74) edited the *Journal* until the middle of 1830 (see W. Norrie, *Edinburgh Newspapers Past and Present* [Edinburgh: Waverley, 1891] 19). From 1830 to 1839, Bell worked as a lawyer, and from then to 1868 he was Sheriff-Substitute in Glasgow. His correspondence would likely be interesting, if it could be found. The best account of his life is an obituary in the *Journal of Jurisprudence* (18 [1874]: 97-103; see also anon., *Memoirs and Portraits of One Hundred Glasgow Men*, 2 vols. [Glasgow; Maclehose, 1886] 1: 29-32).

<sup>2</sup> "The circulation of every number has ... exceeded fifteen hundred copies, whilst that of several has extended to ... twenty-five hundred" (anon., "A Few Words Concerning our own Affairs," *Edinburgh Literary Journal*, 1 [14 March 1829]: 241-43).

<sup>3</sup> A review in the *Journal* of 27 February 1830 describes the Constable firm as "our own publishers" (3:123n.). The 1808 review of Blake in Constable's *Scots Magazine* is reprinted in my article, "Blake, *The Grave*, and *Edinburgh Literary Society*" (*Blake* 24 [1991] 251-52).

<sup>4</sup> The link with Shelley illustrates the *Journal's* ties with the old *Scots Magazine*. In 1810, Shelley sent his poem "A Wandering Jew" to Archibald Constable, but it was still unpublished when the *Scots Magazine* folded in 1826. Somehow the poem was transferred to Bell's *Journal*, where excerpts from it appeared on 27 June 1829 (2: 43-45). See *The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley* ed. F. L. Jones (Oxford: Clarendon, 1964) 1: 17n-18n. This connection between the two journals may perhaps shed light on the coincidence of their two articles on Blake, separated by almost the same long interval.

<sup>5</sup> A list of contributors appeared in the article cited in note 2 (above).

<sup>6</sup> The attacks reached a zenith in 1830, when the *Journal* charged Galt with "disgrac(ing) the history of English literature" (4:165). Dislike of Galt's pedestrian prose may help to explain the *Journal's* interest in Blake and Hogg.

<sup>7</sup> In the article cited in note 2 (above), readers were told that William Blackwood declined sending "any further review copies of his

But the *Journal's* most famous contributor was the poet and novelist James Hogg, "the Ettrick Shepherd." Although Hogg would turn 60 in 1830, he was a close friend of Bell's,<sup>8</sup> and his tales, poems, and essays made Hogg the *Journal's* most frequent contributor of signed works. During the three-and-a-quarter years of its existence, the *Edinburgh Literary Journal* published more pieces by Hogg than did any other publication.

There are reasons to suspect that the "Ettrick Shepherd" played something of an advisory or quasi-editorial role in the *Journal*. Henry Bell's youth, and the fact that he was never again an editor, nor at any time a figure of much literary importance, invites the suspicion that Hogg was a guiding spirit. Moreover, the *Journal's* very first issue carried a letter of support from Hogg, praising its independence, and promising to support it with his writings.<sup>9</sup> The new periodical probably owed much of its success to this and other contributions by Hogg.

In 1830, the *Edinburgh Literary Journal* published three favorable, anonymous reviews of the second and third volumes of Allan Cunningham's *Lives of the Most Eminent British Painters, Sculptors, and Architects*. The second of the three discusses Cunningham's account of the painters Benjamin West, James Barry, and William Blake. Although the remarks on Blake are not illuminating, they at least show that he was a figure of some interest in literary Edinburgh:

To Barry succeeds Blake—a poet-painter, whose enthusiastic imagination taught him to believe that he held converse with the world of spirits, and who painted not so much from existing nature, as from the shapes which were continually presenting themselves to him in his daydreams. He was nevertheless one of the happiest of his race; and, whether it be singular or not, this happiness is mainly to be attributed to his wife, concerning whom we have the following particulars: ...<sup>10</sup>

This excellent woman—whose character partly re-

books to the *Journal*; "unless we consent to praise every one of (his) publications," the *Journal* added sarcastically, "we shall receive no support from him!"

<sup>8</sup> Their friendship is discussed in my booklet, *James Hogg and the St Ronan's Border Club* (Dollar [Scotland]: Mack, 1987).

<sup>9</sup> The letter also criticized *Blackwood's Magazine* for being "devoted to party, not only in politics," but also "in literature" ("A Letter from Yarrow; The Ettrick Shepherd to the Editor," 1 [15 Nov. 1828]: 9-10). At the time, Hogg needed an ally in his simmering dispute with Blackwood. John Wilson, who was the chief writer for *Blackwood's*, told Blackwood that Hogg "deserved punishment" for siding with the "enemy," Bell; "I would see [Hogg] damned before I ever again printed one article of his" (undated letter, National Library of Scotland MS 4028, folio 333; cited by permission of the Trustees of the NLS). Hogg perhaps needed to keep his behind-the-scenes influence with the *Journal* a secret, in order to avoid a final rift with Blackwood.

<sup>10</sup> An excerpt consisting of two paragraphs from Cunningham's book follows--The excerpt begins, "When he was six-and-twenty years," and ends, "whenever he chose to see them" (see *Lives of the Most Eminent British Painters, Sculptors, and Architects*, 6 vols. [London: Murray,

minds us of Klopstock's Meeta—was true to him to the last, and, after a long life of mutual affection, we find her soothing him on his death-bed: . . .<sup>11</sup>

The affection and fortitude of Mrs Blake, entitle her to much respect. "She shared her husband's lot," says Mr Cunningham, "without a murmur,—set her heart solely upon his family and soothed him in those hours of misgiving and despondency, which are not unknown to the strongest intellects. She still lives to lament the loss of Blake, and feel it."<sup>12</sup>

No one will learn much about Blake's art here. But the comments are interesting for their sympathetic account of his temperament, "enthusiastic imagination," and spiritual beliefs. The information that Blake was both poet and painter, may have been news to some northern readers in 1830.

Nothing in the review betrays the identity of its author. Bell himself was probably the *Journal's* most frequent critic,<sup>13</sup> and a likely candidate, therefore, for the authorship of this one. But some external evidence suggests that James Hogg may have played a part, either in writing the notices of Cunningham, or at least in seeing that they appeared in the *Journal*. Hogg was certainly one of the *Journal's* reviewers,<sup>14</sup> and, unlike Bell and its other regulars, he had been a friend and correspondent of Allan Cunningham's for almost three decades.<sup>15</sup> The evidence which seems to link Hogg to the lines on Blake begins with an accusation, by an English critic in 1831, that Hogg was in the habit of supplying the *Journal* with anonymous panegyrics for Cunningham. The accusation was as follows: "See Hogg's praise of Cunningham in the *Edinburgh Literary Journal*, &c.; and Allan's praise of the

Shepherd [i.e., Hogg] in the [London] Athenaeum, etc."<sup>16</sup>

Although the *Journal* denied this hint, it did so in a rather ingenious way, by pretending that the charge referred solely to a paragraph about a public dinner given to Cunningham.<sup>17</sup> "Hogg did not write the paragraph," the *Journal* replied; "his accuser could have no reason to believe that he did, but his own dirty suspicions."<sup>18</sup> That statement raises more questions than it answers. It does not by any means refute the claim that Hogg used his influence in the *Journal* to praise Allan Cunningham. Moreover, the paragraph about Cunningham's dinner was merely an impartial account,—whereas the complaint from England referred explicitly to "praise" and "panegyric"<sup>19</sup> of Cunningham. In pretending that the English critic was referring to this paragraph, the *Journal* side-stepped his challenge, in a way that seems a little suspicious. A reply so evasive leaves us free to wonder if Hogg did indeed have a hand in the paragraphs about Blake.

Some readers of Bell's *Journal* may have noticed that much of the passage on Blake would have applied with equal justice to the *Journal's* own main poet, James Hogg. Hogg, too, maintained (as the review says of Blake) "that he held converse with the world of spirits." In a poem of the same year, Hogg inveighed against the rationalism that was turning "people now-a-days" into "mere machines,"

Pruned vegetables—flowers of formal cut;  
A class of nature wholly by itself;  
And *not* as relatives of heaven and hell,  
And all the mighty energies between . . .<sup>20</sup>

Hogg also enjoyed (as the review says of Blake) a happy marriage. His good spirits (again like Blake, according to the review) were almost proverbial, in spite of discouraging treatment from publishers and critics. Finally, Hogg somewhat resembled Blake in cultivating an image of himself as a writer unrestrained by "cold ungenial rules," and free to explore the "boundless wilderness" of existence, like a "meteor of the wild":

To gleam to tremble and to die  
'Tis Nature's error—so am I.<sup>21</sup>

whom were much younger, and little-known outside Scotland). Hogg's reminiscence, "My first Interview with Allan Cunningham," appeared in the *Journal* on 16 May 1829 (1: 374-75).

<sup>16</sup> Alaric A. Watts, note to his poem "The Conversazione," in *The Literary Souvenir* for 1832, ed. Watts (London: Longman, 1831) 224n.

<sup>17</sup> The untitled, unsigned paragraph appeared in the "Literary Chit-Chat and Varieties" column, 6 (30 July 1831): 71.

<sup>18</sup> Anon., "Mr Alaric Watts," *Edinburgh Literary Journal* 6 (29 Oct. 1831): 260.

<sup>19</sup> Watts, note to "The Conversazione" 223n.

<sup>20</sup> "A Real Vision: By the Ettrick Shepherd," *Blackwood's* 28 (July 1830): 63-65.

<sup>21</sup> "To Miss M.A.C. — E" (1832; rpt. in *James Hogg: Selected Poems and Songs*, ed. D. Groves [Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, [1986]: 203-04 (204).

[1829], 2: 147-48). In the review, the excerpt is given the title "BLAKE'S COURTSHIP AND MARRIAGE." Each of the excerpts in this review has minor changes of punctuation and capitalization.

<sup>11</sup> An excerpt of three paragraphs from Cunningham follows. It begins, "He had now reached," and ends "when he ceased breathing" (*Lives*, 2: 175-76). In the review, the excerpt is entitled "BLAKE'S LAST ILLNESS AND DEATH." "Meeta" was the wife of the Danish poet Immanuel Klopstock.

<sup>12</sup> Anon. rev. in *The Edinburgh Literary Journal: Or, Weekly Register of Criticism and Belles Lettres*, 2 (20 Feb. 1830): 112-15 (113-14).

The quotation about Catherine Blake is from Cunningham's *Lives* (2: 179). The other reviews of Cunningham's *Lives* appeared in the *Journal* on 25 July 1829 (2: 101-04), 13 Feb. 1830 (3: 101-02), 12 June 1830 (4: 338-39), and 12 Feb. 1831 (6: 106-07). No other volumes by Cunningham received comparable attention in the *Journal*.

<sup>13</sup> Bell "did the editorial work" for the *Journal*, and his "contributions . . . in prose . . . were constant and varied" (Obituary, cited in note 1 [above] 98). A contemporary review of the *Journal* found that "Mr Bell [has] few rivals" "In the critical department" (anon., *Edinburgh Observer*, 1 Jan. 1830 (p. 41).

<sup>14</sup> Its review of *The Life of Alexander Alexander*, "By the Ettrick Shepherd" (4 [1830] 280-82) was the *Journal's* only signed review.

<sup>15</sup> Cunningham (1784-1832) moved to London around 1810. He never returned to Scotland, until his visit to Hogg in 1831. It is unlikely that Cunningham knew many of the *Journal's* writers (most of

If any readers in 1830 considered these affinities between Blake and Hogg, they may also have recalled the cryptic allusion to "W — m B — e, a great original," in the ending of Hogg's greatest novel, six years earlier.<sup>22</sup>

Yet in spite of tempting evidence, none of the reviews of Cunningham in the *Edinburgh Literary Journal* can be proved to be Hogg's. The most that may safely be claimed is that Hogg probably saw, and enjoyed, those reviews, and he probably read their comments on Blake. Like some readers of the *Journal*, he may also have noticed the similarities between himself and Blake which that passage seems to suggest.

## The Orthodoxy of Blake Footnotes

BY MICHAEL FERBER

The disheartening experience of reading the footnotes to Blake's poems in recent student anthologies has launched little theories in my head. Is it a case of *horror vacui*? Some annotators seem unable to let a proper name go by without attaching an "explanation" to it; any explanation will serve, it seems, but preferably an "etymology." Or is it the return of the repressed? Many of these notes have been refuted or strongly questioned for many years now. Is it a medieval deference to "authority"? If so, it is a selective deference, only to those with a loud, confident manner, such as Harold Bloom. Is it mere laziness? We need a note on "northern bar" so let's see what the last couple of anthologies said about it . . . oh, yes, the *Odyssey* and the neoplatonists—that'll do. It's as if, once they get into the anthologies, the notes have a momentum of their own. They clone themselves among the petri dishes of anthologies. Whatever the reason for them, an orthodoxy of footnotes (and endnotes) has emerged and congealed. It deserves a good roar from Rintrah.

I've looked at these editions:

M. H. Abrams, et al, ed. *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, Sixth Edition, Vol. 2. New York: Norton, 1993. (Hereafter "Norton.")

Mary Lynn Johnson and John E. Grant, ed. *Blake's Poetry and Designs* (Norton Critical edition). New York: Norton, 1979. (Hereafter "Johnson-Grant.") I include this edition, well-established and deservedly so, for the sake of completeness, though it is in a different category from the others.

Michael Mason, ed. *William Blake* (Oxford Poetry Library). Oxford: Oxford UP, 1994. (Hereafter "Mason.")

Anne K. Mellor and Richard E. Matlak, ed. *British Literature 1780-1830*. Fort Worth, Texas, Harcourt Brace, 1996. (Hereafter "Mellor-Matlak.")

David Perkins, ed. *English Romantic Writers*, Second Edition. Fort Worth, Texas: Harcourt Brace, 1995. (Hereafter "Perkins.")

Duncan Wu, ed. *Romanticism: An Anthology*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1994. (Hereafter "Wu-1.")

Duncan Wu, ed. *Romanticism: An Anthology*. Second Edition. Oxford: Blackwell, 1998. (Hereafter "Wu-2.")

Among the footnotes that irritate me most (I shall call them "footnotions") are the ones that explain the supposed meaning of the name "Thel." "Thel—her name probably

<sup>22</sup> Hogg, *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, ed. D. Groves (Edinburgh, Canongate, 1991) 202. Some connections between Blake and Hogg are suggested in my articles "Blake, Thomas Boston, and the Fourfold Vision" (*Blake* 19 [1986]: 142) and "W — m B — e, a Great Original"; William Blake, The Grave, and James Hogg's *Confessions*" (*Scottish Literary Journal*, 18 [1991]: 27-45).

derives from a Greek word for 'wish' or 'will' and suggests the timid failure of a desire to fulfill itself" (Norton 42). Thel "may be derived from a Greek word meaning 'wish' or 'will'" (Johnson-Grant 61). "In Greek this is the root element in the vocabulary of wishing and willing" (Mason 275). "Thel is derived from Greek *thelo*, will or desire" (Mellor-Matlak 284). "The name Thel is derived from a Greek root meaning 'desire'" (Perkins 100). Wu-1 has no note. Wu-2 says, "various meanings have been suggested, including 'will,' 'wish' or 'desire' (from the Greek [*thelo*])" (57).

The first to think of this Greek source seems to have been Peter Fisher: "The name 'Thel' may come from Greek *thelo*, the shortened form of *ethelo*, meaning 'will' or 'wish'" (*The Valley of Vision* (Toronto: Toronto UP, 1961) 205n35). At least he says "may." Two years later Harold Bloom, with his usual breezy self-confidence (though he doesn't know Greek), cites Fisher, but drops the "may": "Thel's name is from the Greek for 'wish' or 'will'" (*Blake's Apocalypse* [Garden City: Doubleday, 1963] 48); likewise in his commentary to the Erdman edition. Wu-2 is noncommittal, while Norton retreats to "probably" and Johnson-Grant to "may," but the others (except for Wu-1) follow Bloom.

I think "Thel" has nothing to do with *thelo* and we should try to get rid of it. First of all, to say a word "comes from" or "derives from" a word or root is to use the terminology of historical linguistics. But "Thel" is not a word in a natural language with an etymology that might cast light on its meaning and form. Blake made it up. It may have a source, but it has no etymology, and yet our footnoters seem to think there is a community of people that have spoken Blakish for thousands of years.

Even if we suppose *thelo* is the source, and Blake "had it in mind" when he coined the name, what follows? I think precisely nothing. Surely after all the discussion of the "intentional fallacy" beginning in the 1940s we are not still equating source with meaning. (Even in a natural language the etymology of a word is not the same as its meaning.) The relevant question is: What, if anything, in the English culture of 1789 might "Thel" allude to or evoke? A few who knew Greek might have thought of *thelo*, but that hardly bears on the question: the Greek root has left no presence in English except very obscurely in "thelemite," which comes from Rabelais' Abbey of *Thélème*, where you could do whatever you wished.

More available in English, as scholars have noted for several decades now, is the Greek root *thel-* (with an eta rather than an epsilon), which is found in words meaning "female," "gentle," and "nipple." In English the root showed up in poems by Maddan and Cowper having to do with female ruin, not irrelevant to *Thel*, and it might have been used by physicians and others ("epithelium," used by Hartley, has this root). So anyone who knew Greek might have thought of "female" just as readily as "will." For what it's worth, however, I can testify that even after majoring in Greek I did not

think of any Greek root when I first saw "Thel." It just doesn't look Greek.<sup>1</sup>

If Blake had wanted to trigger the notion of "will" through a Greek name he would have called her Thelo. The *-o* is a common ending in Greek female names (not the same as the *-o* in the verb Fisher cites, which means "I will/wish"). If he had wanted "will" and didn't care about Greek he might have called her "Wylle" or something like it (the "Female Will"). But he didn't. He chose a name with no clear connotations in English.

For those who question my separation between source and meaning there is of course the further argument that Blake didn't know Greek in 1789.

To sum up, there is no evidence for *thelo*, there is a somewhat likelier source (more than one, actually), and it is all unnecessary: "Thel" doesn't have to have a source at all. If *thelo* is short for *ethelo*, "Thel" can be short for "Ethel," or maybe "Thelma."

What's the harm in naming a Greek root, one might ask, even if it is unlikely? Aside from it's being false, it drags the red herring of "will" and "wish" across the poem. Beginning with Fisher himself many commentators have offered not unintelligent readings on the assumption that Thel is wishful but weak, wistful but lacking will, willful but unwilling, or the like. I doubt, however, that anyone would have come up with these without the putative etymology. If Fisher had said "Thel" comes from a Greek word for "lament" or "morning" or "sleep" or "virgin" or "dew" we would have seen thoughtful essays exploiting those meanings. But "wish" and "will" just don't seem to be all that salient in the poem itself, at least not more than a dozen other themes.

Another harm is the impression given to students that the editors, and their professor, know all the answers. They've been initiated into the Blakean mysteries; they've been to Camp Golgonooza and learned the secret code. I don't need to stress the importance of getting rid of this idea.

And finally there is harm in having ruled out the possibility that the name is not an allusion at all or in any way symbolic. It is difficult, of course, for any name to come without trailing a little nimbus of meanings, but I think Blake more or less achieved just that. He was constructing a new mythology and, in many of his names, he wanted to convey

<sup>1</sup> The note in Wu-2 adds the possibility that "Thel" is from "Thalia (from [sic: *thalleiu*], "blossoming"), the Greek muse of pastoral poetry." This is lifted directly from the commentary in Eaves, Essick, and Viscomi, *The Early Illuminated Books* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1994) 79, where it is attributed to me (in *The Poetry of William Blake* [54-55]). I did suggest Thalia, amidst a discussion where I questioned all sources and allusions, but the rest of the Greek is a mess for which I am not responsible. There should be an "n" for the "u," it is an infinitive not a participle, and the noun "Thalia" does not come from the verb "thallein." It perfectly illustrates my point about note-cloning that Wu-2 should exactly reprint the confusions and typographical error in the Princeton volume.

the effect of primordially or originality. Whether I am right about this allusion-free effect or not, a footnoted "explanation" makes it much harder for a student to consider it, for he or she must first try to erase an authoritative-sounding claim.

So Wu-1 has the best note on "Thel." The next best option, though it is too long for student editions, is to do what Eaves, Essick, and Visconti do in their introduction to the poem (*The Early Illuminated Books* [Princeton: Princeton UP, 1993] 79), which is to canvass all the possible sources so they more or less cancel each other out, though it would have been even better if they had canvassed the notion of "source" itself.

"Thel's Motto" usually comes with another footnote. "Can wisdom be put in a silver rod, / Or love in a golden bowl?" seems to allude to something, and so we get "Cf. Ecclesiastes 12:6" in Mellor-Matlak (284) and Perkins (100) and longer notes in Mason and Norton. Norton quotes part of Ecclesiastes 12.5 as well as 12.6—"fears shall be in the way . . . and desire shall fail: because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets: Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken"—and adds, "Blake presumably changes the silver cord to a rod in order to make it, with the golden bowl, a sexual symbol" (Norton 42). Johnson-Grant quotes 12.6 and adds, "The substitution of 'rod' for 'cord' brings out masculine sexual implications" (61). Wu-1 has no note, but Wu-2 cites 12.6 and adds, "a 'silver cord' and 'golden bowl' are images of mortality" (57).

Michael Tolley and I broke a rod over this supposed source in these pages over 20 years ago (*Blake Newsletter* 34 (1975) and 37 (1976), and I won't rehearse my arguments here. I will only say I think it is manifest that by the time Blake changes "cord" to "rod," so that the meaning is now "sexual," and throws in "wisdom" and "love," which are not in the biblical passage any more than sex is, there is nothing left of the original meaning. Since it is to enrich meaning that one makes allusions, this supposed allusion to Ecclesiastes entirely fails. In Ecclesiastes the cord and bowl are the two parts of an oil lamp; when the cord is loosed or the bowl broken the fire goes out; that is, one dies. There is nothing sexual about this bowl, nothing about love or wisdom, and no rod in sight. It is an emblem of dying, as the preceding verse makes clear (and as Wu-2 observes). Death, the "long home," fears and mourning—these may be relevant to *Thel*. But Blake's mysterious lines are not about death at all. They are about wisdom and love and how they cannot be contained or preserved as precious objects but must be given away, as the self-sacrificing creatures demonstrate to Thel. If Blake, then, "had in mind" the Ecclesiastes passage, but then changed it so drastically as to obliterate any semblance in meaning or symbolism, then we should not plant it in the minds of our students and leave them staring stupefied

at the Bible. Wu-1 once again wins the prize; it's too bad Wu-2 has lost his nerve.

(What, by the way, is sexual about a bowl? No doubt students enjoy Freudian symbol-hunting. But only if you believe everything concave or convex is female and everything long, hard, or pointed is male will this symbolism satisfy you.)

As for the "northern bar" (*Thel* 6:1), Mellor-Matlak has "from the *Odyssey* 13:109-12, where the cave of the Naiads has two gates, the northern one for mortals, the southern one for gods" (286). Norton has virtually the same sentence, and adds, "The neoplatonist Porphyro [sic] had allegorized it as an account of the descent of the soul into matter and then its return" (45). Mason makes the same reference and adds, "There was some tradition of interpreting this cave as an image of mortal life. Twin gates, and the 'porter' or gatekeeper, are further tenuous links with Spenser's Garden of Adonis" (276).

"Tenuous" is the word to describe this whole complex allusion. Note, first of all, that there is nothing in the Blake passage about two gates or twin gates; indeed everywhere else in Blake (except at *Milton* 26:13-22) wherever there are gates there are four of them, not two.

Secondly, the allusion to the *Odyssey* rests solely on there being a single northern bar/gate (in the *Odyssey* it is called the gate "toward Boreas"). There is nothing in the *Odyssey* about a porter, as there is in Blake. Nor does the cave of the Naiads remotely resemble what Thel encounters when she enters the gate. Only if you take your Homer with Porphyry do you get anything pertinent to *Thel*, and then you also get a layer of neoplatonic metaphysics not warranted, in my opinion, by anything else in the poem. (The relation of neoplatonism to the *Milton* passage is another matter.) On such slender threads hangs Kathleen Raine's land of Perennial Philosophy, which only distracts students from figuring out Blake. A point each to Perkins and Wu-1, who are silent at the bar. Half a point to Johnson-Grant for a long note which gives with one hand and takes away with the other: it offers many sources or parallels—Milton, Spenser, Blake's own *Milton*, and the *Odyssey* via Pope's notes (which cite the neoplatonists)—and then makes the correct claim that "There is no evidence, however, that Thel is discarnate before her descent," a claim which eliminates those pesky Naiads and their neoplatonic cave (67). And half a point to Wu-2, who offers this: "the exact meaning is unclear [Yes! Cheers from grateful undergraduates!], although many interpretations have been offered. The porter is variously identified as Pluto, god of the underworld [visiting Har for the first time], or as Death, among others" (59). This does little harm, if little good.

I'll conclude with two footnotions from *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*. In the "Argument," the speaker, pre-

sumably Oothoon, "hid in Leutha's vale!" and "plucked Leutha's flower." Perkins says Leutha "embodies sexual shyness" (110), while Mellor-Matlak says it "signifies female sexual desire" (294), an intriguing difference. Their common editor at Harcourt Brace should introduce them. Here Wu-1 finally weighs in with "Leutha symbolizes sex under law, or the sense of guilt or sin" (88). No note in Mason.

I don't know quite what to do with "Leutha" here, but are these comments really explanations? Even if they agreed with each other, they do not identify an allusion or even a "source." They are interpretations, perhaps helpful, perhaps not, but in either case not really the business of brief notes. Mellor-Matlak adds that the name is, coined by Blake, and that is probably all a student needs to know. Norton makes a different sort of comment: "In some poems by Blake, Leutha is represented as a female figure who is beautiful and seductive, but treacherous" (47); Johnson-Grant has a fuller version of that reference (70). It is true enough, and probably harmless. It might even set a student going into Blake's later poems, though it also seems to imply that the later poems will provide a key to the earlier ones. That question, at least, is a good one to take up in class.

Wu-2 has repented of his note in Wu-1, and now writes: "symbolic of an attempt to acquire sexual experience" (94). This seems fine by itself, but hardly necessary, since it is a commonplace since Hesiod and the Homeric Hymns that girls get plucked while plucking flowers. He goes on: "Leutha has a number of sources, including Lutha, a stream in Ossian's *Berathon*, and Leucothea, goddess of the dawn in Greek myth." He adds that "her significance is very difficult to pin down." I won't repeat my point about the misleadingness of the notion of "sources"; here the confusion is twice confounded by claiming two sources, or even more, that are all somehow simultaneously at work, yet no claim is made that these are allusions—that we are to think "Ossianic stream" and "dawn goddess" as we read "Leutha"—and thus bear on its significance. Pinning down the significance may not be the point, after all; "Leutha" may have no significance, like "Thel."

Then there are "Theotormons Eagles" whom Oothoon summons to "Rend away this defiled bosom that I may reflect. / The image of Theotormon on my pure transparent breast" (VDA 36-39). The "allusion" here, of course, is to Prometheus. The eagles are "alluding to the myth of Prometheus, who was chained to a rock and whose liver was daily devoured by eagles [sic]" (Perkins 111). "A part of Prometheus' punishment for defying Zeus was to be perpetually devoured by an eagle (or a vulture)" (Johnson-Grant 73). "The implied parallel is to Zeus's punishment of Prometheus for befriending the human race, by setting an eagle to devour his liver" (Norton 48). Here I take heart from the fact that some of the other editors are silent. Eaves, Essick, and Viscomi think the passage is "an obvious allusion to the myth of Prometheus" (276), but Mellor-Matlak, Mason, and

Wu-1 seem to disagree—or else they think it is so obvious that they can leave it to the reader. Wu-2 gives in, however, and now talks of Prometheus' liver (95).

Certainly many students will come up with the allusion themselves, so there is no way to banish it, but I don't think it should be promoted in the notes. The Prometheus myth differs so sharply and in so many particulars from the Oothoon story that to follow out the allusion is to wander perplexed in an endless maze. What they have in common is eagle(s) preying on a person, like the design on plate 13 of *America*. But Oothoon has a different sex, it is several eagles and not one (*pace* Perkins), they are preying on a different organ, they are not eating it but removing it to lay bare something inside (her pure breast or soul), she summons the eagles in the first place, they belong to her lover (not Bromion, who more resembles Zeus), she has committed no crime (though Eaves, Essick, and Viscomi ingeniously suggest that plucking a marygold is like stealing fire) and feels no guilt. It is Theotormon himself who somewhat resembles Prometheus, weeping and eating his heart out over the rape. There are many more differences, most of them obvious.

Of course one can find a few ways in which Oothoon and Prometheus resemble each other (they are both rebels, for instance), but I don't think the Prometheus myth adds anything to the meaning of Oothoon's story and, if it is taken at all seriously, it subtracts quite a lot. To take account of the differences between Oothoon and Prometheus is to see that they are not "internal" differences, not pointed contrasts, as Leopold Bloom, say, differs from Odysseus; developing them does not lead a student deeper into Blake. I don't think Blake had Prometheus "in mind" when he wrote, though I don't much care if he did. He ought to have realized that his readers would think of Prometheus, but if he had, he may have decided that to alter the passage would defeat his purposes, which were well served by this symbolic re-enactment of the rape by Bromion. Oothoon cannot get Theotormon himself to make love with her, it seems, so she calls down his eagles; the result is that she no longer bears Bromion's stamp but now reflects Theotormon (or his ideal image) in her soul. This is rather cryptic, but how does the Prometheus myth help us understand any of it?

Those are some of my nominees for the memory hole. I propose that a few of us Blake scholars form a posse, mount our chariots, and launch intellectual arrows of annihilation at the textbooks.

Helen P. Bruder, *William Blake and the Daughters of Albion*. London: Macmillan and New York: St. Martin's, 1997. xi + 291 pp.; index; 8 ills. \$59.95.

REVIEWED BY NELSON HILTON

An at times interesting and provocative study, *William Blake and the Daughters of Albion* claims to marry "a discursively sensitive historicist methodology to a politically engaged feminist critique" (22) in order to focus on some works of Blake which "engage with the unresolved questions" of years "pivotal in the history of thinking about the nature, rights and role of women" (181); the overall result however—at least to a reader whom the work accuses of having been "instrumental in the marginalizing of feminist contributions" (11)—seems likely to be a missed opportunity owing to the single-minded focus on a "partisan" (126) agenda and the pervading "combative attitude" (32) and tone which is "insistent, fervently so in places" (179).

The book opens with "A Critical Survey of Blake Studies," then considers in its ensuing four chapters and brief conclusion the results of "an attempt to attain 'particular' knowledge of just six of [Blake's] poems" (33): *Thel*, *Visions*, *Marriage*, *America* and *Europe* (the identity of the sixth particularly known text is not clear). The first chapter looks in turn "at the Blake Industry, at the tradition of left-wing scholarship on Blake and at feminist studies of his work" (8) and finds "serious deficiencies" (8) in all areas with regard to appreciating "Blake's sensitivity to issues of gender" (16); this serves to "illustrate the need for a historically sensitive feminist reading of Blake's text" (8), indeed "the quite pressing need for a work like this one" (22). The "chauvinist priorities" (9) of Blake studies, Bruder writes, have "not considered gender a topic worthy of serious consideration" (12) since "other subjects are considered of more pressing importance" (188); "it is this kind of intellectualized logic which needs to be exposed and discarded" (12)—"the kind of intellectualist and elitist imperative behind these judgements needs to be refuted not simply because of its tacit sexism, but also because it denies the social nature of language" (180).

In her only reference to Blake's wife and sister, Bruder criticizes the reluctance of Ackroyd's recent biography "to address what are for feminists the central questions. Biographically, the text has nothing new to say about Blake's wife Catherine, it has nothing at all to say about Blake's sister" (14). The author scorns those male critics who "offer feminists 'help' with our studies" (13) or who seem to be "colonizing our struggle" (18—just as they "colonized the poet" [32]) only to wonder:

Why, we might ask, hasn't Terry Eagleton (who clearly fancies himself as something of a critical cross-dresser after his brushes with the Brontës [sic] and Clarissa) developed his comments on Blake .... Or perhaps more to the point, why hasn't David Erdman supplemented his work in light of the revolutionary impact of feminism on both historical and literary studies? (19)

In a world of evidently obvious answers, even Diana Hume George's contention that "'Blake was as hard on women as on men for the mess that history is'" reveals, implicitly, one more "denial that patriarchy ever existed" (28).

The second chapter, "The Sins of the Fathers: Patriarchal Criticism and *The Book of Thel*" proposes to demonstrate how Blake exposes the impulse behind "the huge flood of didactic books for ladies that started to build up in the 1780s" (40, quoting William St. Clair) and how *Thel* "therefore aligns itself with those feminist writers who were arguing for more expansive and liberating opportunities for women" (34). Blake's effort thus "addresses a specific historical problem," though this, "[s]adly, Blake critics usually deny" (54). In this "luminously woman-centered poem" (54) Bruder recovers a "courageous" (51) and "determined young woman" whose skeptical enquiries "thoroughly unmask patriarchal ideology, an ideology which promised women that heterosexual romantic and maternal roles equalled heavenly fulfilment, but which *Thel* discovers amount to nothing less than death" (44). What *Thel* hears in "the land unknown" is "a biting honest account of what her life as a woman will be like in an environment where males ... invade her senses," and this, moreover, is "precisely the situation that exists in the vales of Har" (52). The footnotes—which average more than four per page through the text—here supply a variety of references from contemporary authorities such as Hannah More, James Fordyce and John Gregory to exemplify the account.

One curious aspect of Bruder's historicizing method is that the constructs of Blake's text are regarded almost as if they were historical people, complete with invocation of "*Thel*'s biography" (55), anger over insults to "*Thel*'s intellectual and perceptual capacities" (202n43), and anger at aspersions cast on the "sexuality" of "a young woman struggling towards a sense of identity" (39, 34, cf. 181). If one agrees with Barthes (*S/Z*, sect. xxviii) that "character" in literature is an illusion or projection fixed by a few semes passing through a name, then *Thel* and the rest are fictions more on the order of signs and figures than flesh and blood. Bruder claims to "rely heavily upon Bakhtin's view of language" and quotes from "a passage which is central to [her] work" his notion that "[c]ountless ideological threads running through all areas of social intercourse register effect in the word" (2). Hence Bruder writes that she will pay "close attention to the life of certain ideologically loaded signs" wherein "many threads of meaning coexist" (3). Are such social signs that different from ones the individual artist ap-

propriates and fashions to suture diverse textual strands? "Thel" itself can link to many signifieds, some of which, though not preoccupied with sexuality or gender, seem to have convincing relevance to the text.

Bruder's zeal to contest patriarchal criticism, however, organizes everything to her own agenda. So, for instance, to argue that the critical consensus that Thel's "main concern is with mortality and the transience of life ... simply is not correct" (45) the author turns to Thel's opening lament. "Once the torrential flow of similes begins," she suggests, "we become aware that something rather more subversive is going on." Blake is, she writes, "exploding stereotypical notions of youthful femininity by pushing them to their limits and hence revealing their absurdity" (45). Without quoting them, she states that "[t]hese lines can be read as a kind of satire on Burke's highly influential, and roughly contemporaneous notion of female beauty with its stress on smallness, delicacy and weakness" (45). She does quote five sentences from Burke's "key intertext, whose philosophy Blake exposes" (45). A reconsideration of the lines in which Thel is ostensibly "parodying stereotypical notions of female beauty" (46) may at least suggest why some readers have inferred other concerns:

Ah! Thel is like a wat'ry bow, and like a parting cloud;  
Like a reflection in a glass; like shadows in the water;  
Like dreams of infants, like a smile upon an infant's  
face;  
Like the dove's voice; like transient day; like music in  
the air.

Like a Lyca, in another contemporaneous, apparently woman-centered poem, Thel's subversion seems to concern figuration as much as physical figure.

The third chapter, "Slip-Sliding Away: Some Problems with 'Crying Love' in the 1790s," pairs a discussion of "Sexual Ideology in the 1790s" with a reading of *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* (and nods, one supposes, to a song by Paul Simon). Building on recent scholarship such as Lynn Hunt's collection *The Invention of Pornography* (1993) which shows clearly "that the 1790s were definitive in setting modern trends in pornographic writing" (58), Bruder argues that Blake's poem attempts "to undo the reductive sexualization of women" while also trying "to redeem their desires from contemporary slurs of devouring bestiality" (66). Turning to visual art in order to make more sense than have other critics of the work's pointed graphic quotations of the "masculinist" (69) Fuseli, Bruder discusses Blake's "experimental and innovatory depictions of female and male bodies" (66) to suggest that Blake's "feminist agenda" (57) prompts "an androgynous figure style" (72). She quotes from art historian Margaret Walters the appealing formulation that "[n]ever denying sexual difference, [Blake] sees clearly how the exaggeration of that difference by society imprisons man and woman in mutual and destructive misery" (72).

Bruder's consideration of the text proper returns to mimetic fallacy with the argument that "Oothoon rejects the idea that she should be the passive object of male desire and instead claims the right to be the subject of her own libidinous inclination: 'I loved Theotormon / And I was not ashamed'" (74). Who then shall we see through the "I" here—the inclination or its speaking subject? And if the "loved" object is *the otor mon* (*/woman*), other than what one takes it to be (as Theotormon certainly proves for Oothoon), then perhaps that "I" envisions only a "foolish puppy" of kind "love" (cf. "An Island in the Moon" ch.1). While Bruder finds my effort to ground *Visions* in the "text" of the relationship between Fuseli and Wollstonecraft to be "patronizing" and "pseudo-feminist" (229n167; 11), she sees elsewhere that "it took the sting of intimate insult to fully animate [Wollstonecraft's] feminist convictions" (109)—even so, one can hardly imagine her regarding Blake and Wollstonecraft in the light she does the poet and Swedenborg: "of course Blake isn't fair in his treatment of the Swedish seer, but why should he be?" (119).

As with the discussion of *Thel*, the fixing of some textual signs can feel rather forced: with regard to Oothoon's "seeking flowers to comfort her," Bruder argues that these are "sexual flowers" (124) and "what she finds in the plucking of the duplicitous symbol is her own potential for multiple and recurrent orgasm. This is the 'soul of sweet delight' that 'Can never pass away'" (75), for "eroticized sensual liberty ... finds its apotheosis in triumphant female orgasm" (154). The "nymph" the flower becomes discloses another "duplicitous symbol" (76) because of "other discourses" in which that word appeared—"most importantly brothel catalogues displayed their youthful wares under this sign" (76). Bruder's is a world where work long thought to be influential, even by an author personally known to Blake—and Wollstonecraft—like Thomas Taylor's edition of Porphyry's *Concerning the Cave of the Nymphs*, does not exist as an other discourse for Blake (notwithstanding the approving quotation of David Aers's argument that "any attempt to understand a text should include an attempt to replace it in the web of discourses and social practice where it was made" [10]). As for the "flowers," one would have thought that a critic sensitive to the protagonist's "wildly exuberant sexual rhetoric" (56; see also 79, 88) and her struggle with "an exploitative sign system only too happy to consume 'figures' like her" (84) would include the denotation of "embellishment or ornament (of speech)" among aspects of the *flowers'* duplicity. There is in fact a teasing later eighteenth-century tradition of "plucking" such "Pierian flowers" or "wild and simple flowers of Poesy" which reaches back to Marlowe's "immortall flowers of Poesy," and the soon-to-be-famous radical John Thelwall, in his collection of poems, *The Peripatetic*, published in April of 1793,<sup>1</sup> also imagines a muse who "pluck'd" wild flowers.

<sup>1</sup>My thanks to Prof. Judith Thompson of Dalhousie University for communicating this information from her forthcoming work on Thelwall.

Discussion of Blake's *Visions* raises the question of who, exactly, are the "Daughters of Albion" joined with Blake in Bruder's title. She writes, for instance, that Blake's poem "spins on an axis rather than progressing because the Daughters of Albion were not in any way on the move at the time" (87), which would seem to suggest that they are contemporary Englishwomen (though not, as noted already, any with whom Blake lived intimately). Elsewhere Bruder links "Oothoon and all the other Daughters of Albion" (105), but almost as soon observes the "great problem" of Oothoon's having "no female audience" (108). A search of the Chadwyck-Healey Literary Database finds the phrase used only three times before 1793—all in the preceding three decades and all conventional formulations, the most notable by Akenside. Curiously, Thelwall's *Peripatetic* offers a poem titled "Daughters of Albion's gay enlightened hour" which emphasizes the phrase three times. Thelwall's "Daughters" epitomize the radical's abjection and fantasy of aristocratic women who "with feeble step and mincing tone / Pretend to softness, delicacy, love!" and who are invited, at the poem's close, to "Lisp forth, to those by whom 'twill be believ'd, / Your tender feeling's exquisite excess!" However the respective 1793 dates for the two works may sort out, the closeness these Daughters bear to Blake's 37 other uses of the phrase outside of *Visions* (unnoticed here) bears consideration.

Another particular, for a text which deplors "sloppy scholarship" (18), concerns the characterization of Oithóna, "the heroine of Blake's Ossianic source poem" as one "who secretly arms herself to do battle with her rapist before dying [and so] exhibits a punitive and outraged aspect which the ever sexy Oothoon wholly lacks" (79). In the argument to "Oithóna" Macpherson indeed relates how Gaul arrived on Tromáthon to rescue Oithóna from Dunrommath and urged her to retire: "She seemingly obeyed; but she secretly armed herself, rushed into the thickest of the battle, and was mortally wounded." In the text of the piece, however, Oithóna three times attempts to flee from Gaul, twice asks him why he has come, and states that she will never leave Tromáthon. She also relates how, when she was seized, she could do nothing: "My arm was weak; it could not lift the spear." Utilizing a technology Dunrommath is not shown to possess, Gaul sets out with three archers to do battle while "a troubled joy rose on [Oithóna's] mind .... Her soul was resolved." Gaul triumphs over Dunrommath and his warriors, and Macpherson's Ossian tells that "The arrows of Morven pursued them: ten fell on the mossy rocks." It is at this point that Gaul moves toward the cave of Oithóna and sees "a youth leaning against a rock. An arrow had pierced his side." This is, of course, Oithóna: "She had armed herself in the cave, and came in search of death." Her dying regret that her "father shall blush in his hall" seems to confirm the picture of one more victim of internalized guilt who chooses death rather than a life of imagined dishonor.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> See James Macpherson, *The Poems of Ossian and Related Works*,

The fourth chapter, "Blake, the Rights of Man and Political Feminism in the 1790s" sounds a recurrent note of sadness as it considers Catherine Macaulay Graham, Mary Hayes, Mary Wollstonecraft, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, and *America*. Paine's *Rights of Man* "represents ... a great lost opportunity" (98); in its failure "to enfranchise, and largely even to represent women," Blake's *Marriage* "is a missed opportunity as striking as Tom Paine's" (122); and while the 1790s could have been the decade when "a century's interested chatter about the woman questions burst into a firm-voiced manifesto of radical demands for women's rights," it "missed its moment" (115). That Paine could "make no mention of women is certainly a great indictment of the radical cultures of the 1790s" (98), and he is taken to task both for stressing that "Male and Female are the distinctions of nature" (97) and for his linguistic "blindness"—shared by Blake and Thomas Spence—of using the word "man" to denote both men and women (99). Regret enters also with the reader's assent to the author's reflection on "a very valid objection which could be made ... namely that my definition of feminism is too narrowly political and monolithically interested in republican partisans. That it ignores other loci of pro-woman thought, and disregards contexts which enabled female activism and self-empowerment. In some senses these charges cannot be resisted" (113). The conclusion of the chapter reveals that "what makes Blake worth studying from a feminist perspective is that the trajectory of his radical career is uneasy in its course; it is stalled, deflected, even occasionally halted by an *intermittent* awareness that other power bases exist, other forms of exploitation operate, that it isn't just 'warlike' men who engage with the political" (132; emphasis added). That his vision is not always fourfold or threefold Blake himself testifies—but to assume that even twofold vision could have such a naive view of "the political" seems rather singular.

The title of the fifth chapter, "Go Tell the Human Race that Woman's Love is Sin: Sexual Politics and History in Blake's *Europe—a Prophecy*" foregrounds the "pivotal passage" and "resonant phrase" (182) which Bruder contextualizes with discussions of "British Perception of Women in Pre-Revolutionary France," "Sexual Politics and Women's Protest in Revolutionary France," "Marie Antoinette: Queen of the 'Heavens of Europe,'" "British Perceptions of Women in Revolutionary France," and "The Women in Blake's *Europe/Europe*." The interesting part of the argument here turns on the remarkable trajectory in media and popular imagination of the figure of the Queen of France, Blake's one direct reference in the *Notebook* notwithstanding. Bruder rightly rereads one of the memorable paragraphs in *Reflections on the Revolution in France* to suggest how, for Burke,

ed. Howard Gaskill, intro. Fiona Stafford (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996) 183-86; 469.

the revolutionary "new conquering empire of light and reason" threatens to shine on the essence of womanhood and reveal its bestiality. This may seem to be an overly polemical assessment but the word is not too strong—for though Burke worries that egalitarian levelling will reveal the king to be "but a man," a few more clauses are added to his account of the revelation of Marie Antoinette: "a queen is but a woman; a woman is but an animal, and an animal not of the highest order." (166)

She then tracks the way in which, as "the leading character in the eighteenth-century's greatest patriarchal moral fable" (145), the queen came to epitomize "monstrous" female appetites (147) only to be re-revised into a female martyr with her execution in October of 1793. Bruder argues that with these later events Blake begins to see the queen "more as a scapegoat and victim than a tyrant" (163) and so to conceive his later concept of "the female will, that complex of manipulative feminine strategies developed and employed by women to obtain power in an oppressive and resisting patriarchal context" (163). Enitharmon, then, is the figure through which Blake "enters most directly into a discussion of women's roles and fate in the French Revolution" (162), and the crucial aspect of her speech, with the resonant phrase included in the chapter title, is how Blake reveals that it "isn't issued from a position of power but is a response to the position in which patriarchy places women" (170).

Appealing as these suggestions are, their practical application is not without difficulty. Of the illustration on plate 3, for instance, Bruder writes that here "Blake faces up to Marie Antoinette's execution directly: occupying most of *Europe—A Prophecy's* skyline floats an immense female figure, her hair falling down over her face as she vigorously clutches the back of her neck—preparing herself, evidently, for the inevitable blow" (163). Concerning that figure's enormous wings the author is less confident, suggesting parenthetically that with them "Blake perhaps alludes" to the queen's posthumous transformation to aristocratic angel (163)—and concerning the figure's relation to the orbbed, fiery embryo dropped from her hair, she has nothing to say. At the end one agrees with the author that "despite all that [she's] tried to contend and convey in this chapter, *Europe* is still a problematic poem" (176).

As the book concludes, the author appears several times to comment on how her work has lacked the "benefit of genuine critical dialogue" (177) and "sustaining critical dialogue" (181). At the same time she states that her kind of work "most powerfully demonstrates that feminist readings are not simply 'another perspective' that can be neatly lined up amongst a range of alternative options (especially not within Blake studies as I perceive it). This kind of writing disrupts and refutes critical orthodoxies, and so far this iconoclastic enterprise is only in its most embryonic phase"

(181). The effect of such personal references scattered throughout is nicely captured by her own comment on another critic's "lengthy exercise in soul-baring [which] has very little impact upon the body of the text and is more likely to embarrass than illuminate the reader" (11).

## N E W S L E T T E R

### Books Being Reviewed for *Blake*

The following is a list from Nelson Hilton, our Review Editor, of books currently being reviewed for *Blake*.

*Prints and Engraved Illustrations by and After Henry Fuseli: A Catalogue Raisonné*

D. H. Weinglass (Scholar Press)

*Blake Books Supplement*

G. E. Bentley, Jr. (Oxford University Press)

*Ideology and Utopia in the Poetry of William Blake*

Nicholas M. Williams (Cambridge University Press, 1998)

*Blake's Altering Aesthetic*

William Richey (University of Missouri Press, 1998)

*Locke and Blake: A Conversation across the Eighteenth Century*

Wayne Glausser (University of Florida Press, 1998)

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