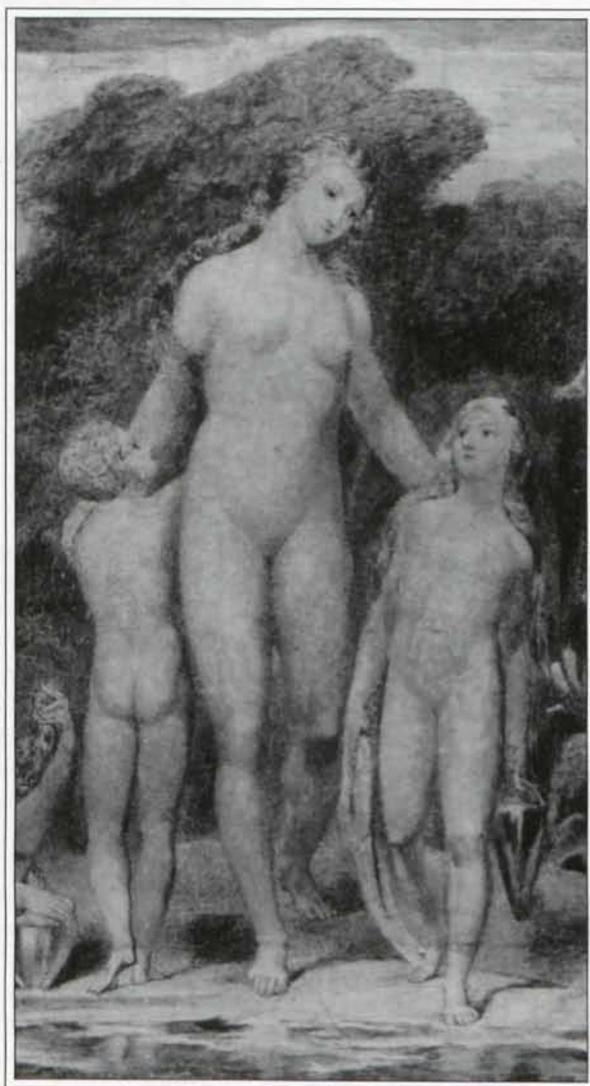


BLAKE

AN ILLUSTRATED QUARTERLY



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C O N T R I B U T O R S

G. E. BENTLEY, JR., writes about Blake's life and his books. The second edition of his *Blake Records* (1969), incorporating *Blake Records Supplement* (1988) and much added matter, and a slightly revised paperback edition of his *The Stranger from Paradise* are to be published by Yale (they say) in the winter of 2003.

CHRISTOPHER HEPPNER retired from McGill University several years ago, and now thinks and occasionally writes on a number of subjects, still including Blake.

NELSON HILTON continues to teach and to administrate English at the University of Georgia.

DAVID MINCKLER has been an admirer of Blake since his master's thesis in the early 70s. He continues to work on a web site (www.blakewalk.org/main.htm) tracing Blake's walks through London.

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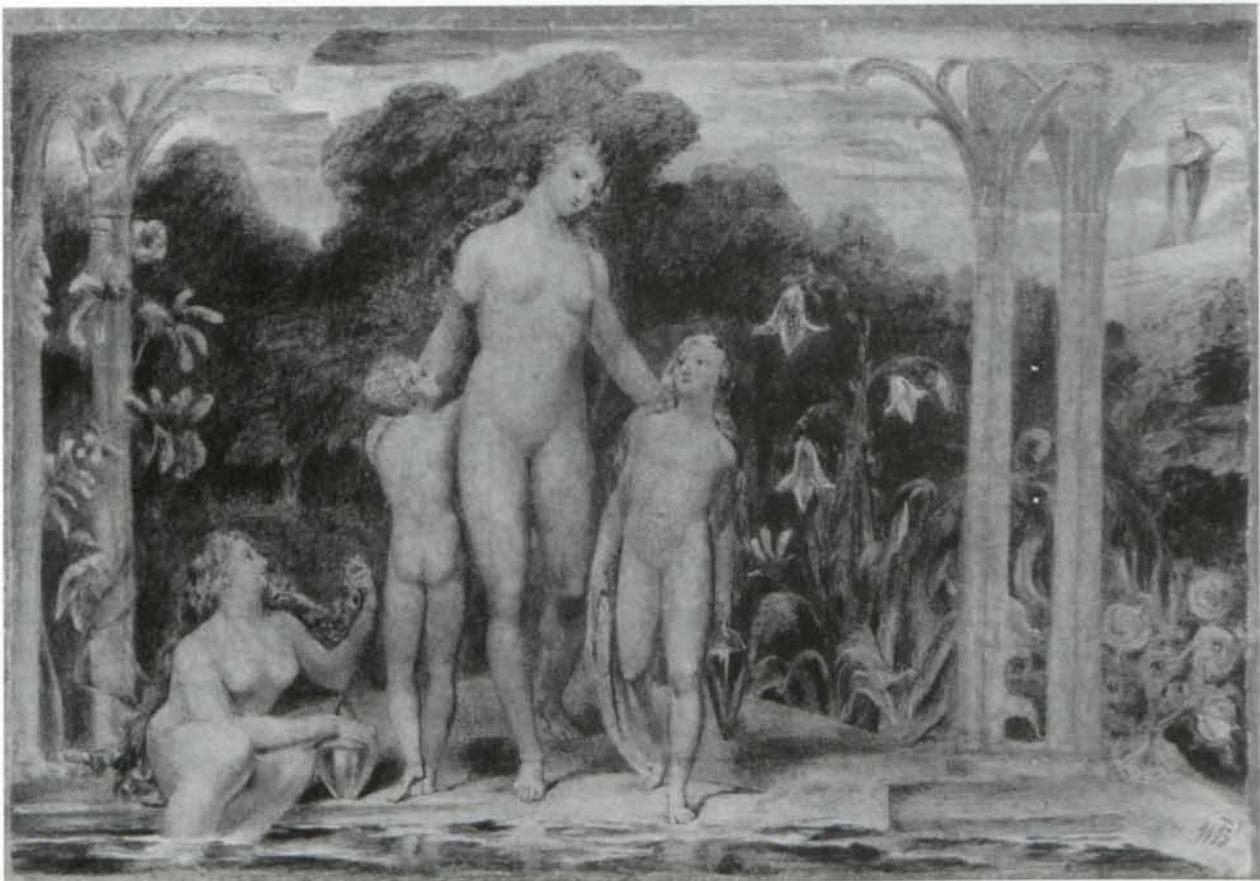
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Cover: Detail of William Blake, *Bathsheba at the Bath*. © Tate, London 2001.



1. William Blake, *Bathsheba at the Bath*. © Tate, London 2001.

Bathsheba Revisited

BY CHRISTOPHER HEPPNER

The present essay is prompted by two desires, the first to delete and overwrite what I now consider a mistaken reading offered some years ago of Blake's *Bathsheba at the Bath* (Tate, B 390; illus. 1),¹ and the second to revisit the complex interactions between already existing narratives and Blake's own thoughts and mythology, in a further effort to understand the process of invention that created such images. Associated with this latter aim is the desire to explore again the reasons for the resistance of many of Blake's designs, including this, to definitive interpretation.

Bathsheba has to date drawn little commentary, most of that little focused on questions of style. Bindman calls it "strikingly Venetian" in spirit, pointing to the "sensuality of the naked figures" as suggestive of Correggio, and to the "luxuriance of the palm trees by the pond" (has he mistaken the ornamental wooden pillars for trees?) as prompted

by "study of original paintings by Titian and perhaps Veronese."² Butlin's catalogue entry comments that "This particularly sensuous picture suggests the influence of Parmigianino or Correggio, whose work would have been known to Blake through engravings if not from actual paintings." Neither of these writers aims at a detailed reading of the design.

My first attempt to interpret the design focused on the anomalous presence of the two children; the Bible records no children born to Bathsheba before David's abduction, and no such children appear in previous illustrations of the episode. I proposed that this made it impossible to identify the central figure as Bathsheba, and that she must represent Maachah, a previous wife of David, with her two children Absalom and Tamar (1 Chronicles 3:2 and 2 Samuel 13). I identified the seated woman at our left as

1. Christopher Heppner, *Reading Blake's Designs* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) 175-78.

2. David Bindman, *Blake as an Artist* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1977) 127.

Bathsheba, despite her visually subordinate position. Though the presence of those children still presents a major problem, I now find unacceptable both the radical disjunction that reading created between the center of implied narrative interest and the center of visual attention, and the associated displacement of a slim and attractive young woman by a heavier, even Rubenesque figure of doubtful seductiveness in Blake's eyes. I retract that reading and try again, beginning with a brief sketch of some key moments in the interpretive history of the scene in order to foreground what is new and different in Blake's version of the episode.³

Medieval interpretation read the scene typologically as representing the marriage between David as Christ and Bathsheba as the Church, the latter washing herself in order to become worthy of her spouse.⁴ In late medieval times there was a shift from typology towards moralizing, Bathsheba often being used as an illustration of the dangerous seductiveness of female beauty, particularly when nakedly exposed.

The subject was not common in the early Renaissance, but a little later Raphael created a version for the loggia of the Vatican, reproduced in several engravings, including one by Sisto Badalocchio. Raphael shows David in the background watching Bathsheba, who sits alone in the foreground on a raised terrace beside a large basin of water, combing out her hair, and naked apart from draped loins. Along the street separating Bathsheba from David run a multitude of armed soldiers, two or three of whom look at Bathsheba as they rush by, though the majority disregard such charming but for the moment irrelevant sights. The design implies that Bathsheba is being rather ostentatious in appearing in so public a space, but does not clear David from guilt, as his better disciplined soldiers show.

Giulio Romano designed (Rinaldo did the actual painting) a series of frescoes on the life of David for a loggia in the Palazzo del Te in Mantua. The *Toilet of Bathsheba* shows her tended by three young maidservants. The sequel, *David Spying upon Bathsheba*, shows a nude Bathsheba with her foot in a fountain; an attendant holds a drape up behind her, as if to protect her from the eyes of David, who looks across from a nearby window, accompanied by another man who points towards Bathsheba. There are flowers around the balustrade of the fountain, and trees in the background.⁵

3. See Elisabeth Kunoth-Leifels, *Über die Darstellungen der "Bathscha im Bade": Studien zur Geschichte des Bildthemas 4. bis 17. Jahrhundert* (Essen, 1962), for an overview of the iconographic history up to the late seventeenth century.

4. Louis Réau, *Iconographie De L'Art Chrétien* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1957) II.i.273. See also Edgar Wind, *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance* (New York: Norton, 1968) 27, for St. Gregory's allegory, that makes David innocent, and Uriah culpable.

5. The frescoes are reproduced in Frederick Hart, *Giulio Romano* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1958) vol. 2, #334, 335. See also Ernst Gombrich et al., *Giulio Romano* (Milan: Electa, 1989) 364.

Verheyen suggests that the fresco reflects Romano's desire to please his patron Federigo Il Gonzago, who hired Romano to build and decorate a splendid palace outside Mantua. Like David, Gonzago had loved another man's wife, and had caused the death of her husband; Romano may have intended to use the parallels to clear both David and Gonzago of serious wrongdoing: "What was lawful for the gods could not be wrong for Federigo; if he considered himself a second David, why then should he be ashamed of his love of someone else's wife?"⁶

The subject also attracted a few Venetian painters. Paris Bordone produced a version, now in Cologne, interesting for its Serlio-based perspective architecture and for the lemon bushes behind Bathsheba and her assistants, which suggest the possibility of a botanical allegory, since lemon trees were often interpreted as connoting the bittersweet nature of erotic experience.⁷ Veronese also painted a version, now at Lyons, notable for a fully dressed Bathsheba, who sits below a nude male sculpture and is addressed by a mature, bearded man who looks oddly out of character as he seems to plead David's case.⁸

The Flemish Hans Memling produced an interesting version in the second half of the fifteenth century, now in Stuttgart. This indoor scene shows a nude Bathsheba stepping out of an elaborate bath as she is helped into a white shift by a young servant. On the floor are waiting slippers, an empty plate, a pitcher, and a small dog. There is an open window through which can be seen the small figure of David watching intently from a distant balcony. He is very much a peeping-Tom intruder, while Bathsheba's modest behavior absolves her of any charge of provocative self-display. The decorously domestic atmosphere suggests that Memling may be responding to the text's implication that the washing observed by David may have been the ritual cleansing after menstruation: "for she was purified from her uncleanness" (2 Samuel 11:4).⁹

The northern Protestant tradition, developed in German and Netherlandish prints in the first half of the sixteenth century, placed Bathsheba among other unchaste or seductive women.¹⁰ Dürer's 1521 sketch for the council room at Nuremberg showing, in separate episodes, Bathsheba in the bath, Samson and Delilah, and Aristotle and Phyllis, is in

6. Egon Verheyen, *The Palazzo del Te in Mantua: Images of Love and Politics* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977) 33.

7. See Peter Daly, ed., *Andreas Alciatus*, 2 vols. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985) Emblem 207.

8. Both of these are illustrated and discussed by Kunoth-Leifels, *Darstellung illus.* 30 and 31, pp. 39-42.

9. The painting is reproduced, and very briefly discussed, in Bruce Bernard, *The Bible and its Painters* (New York: Macmillan, 1983) 99 and 284.

10. Eric Jan Sluiter, "Rembrandt's Bathsheba and the Conventions of a Seductive Theme," in Ann Jensen Adams, ed., *Rembrandt's "Bathscha Reading King David's Letter"* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998) 49.

this tradition.¹¹ Heinrich Aldegrever, praised by Blake as one of the "old original Engravers, who were great Masters in Painting and Designing" (*First Chaucer Prospectus*, E 567), produced an interesting print in 1532 (illus. 2).¹² This shows a naked and seated Bathsheba in full view of David. Her left arm suggests the gesture of the Medici *Venus pudica*, though her hand covers her shoulder rather than her breast; perhaps she is showing modesty before David's gaze. Another equally naked woman stands to our left; her relationship with Bathsheba is not made clear, though I see no implication that she is a maidservant. Maarten van Heemskerck produced an influential composition ca. 1566 made known through an engraving by Herman J. Muller distributed in several editions, including one signed by Hieronymus Cock. In this design, Bathsheba, tended by several maidservants, reaches out to receive a letter from David's messenger; an ointment jar, a jewel box, and a mirror emphasize that Bathsheba is preening herself, and evoke associations with such allegorical figures as Superbia and Vanity. The design is in fact the sixth in a series drawn by van Heemskerck to illustrate the Ten Commandments, and has the words "non moechaberis.exod.xx" ("Thou shalt not commit adultery") along the lower edge.¹³ In many of the northern versions an old woman appeared, regularly interpreted as a bawd, and often carrying a letter understood to be from David. In addition to the adulterous implications of this, the juxtaposition of old and young reflected both vanity and the transience of earthly beauty.¹⁴ The moral climate had become distinctly chilly for Bathsheba.



2. Heinrich Aldegrever, *Bathsheba at the Bath*. Courtesy British Museum, Department of Prints and Drawings.

Rembrandt produced two versions of the story; the first, dated 1643, "portrayed Bathsheba as a more or less 'active' seductress";¹⁵ his later (1654) and more famous Louvre version of *Bathsheba Reading King David's Letter* offers a more complex response to the story. It was in London by the early nineteenth century, but was not reproduced in a print before 1876, and was almost certainly unknown to Blake.¹⁶ This shows an older woman tending Bathsheba's foot, while

the latter holds a letter, already it seems read and now being digested; whether the older woman was also the bearer of the letter is unclear. Bathsheba is conspicuously bejewelled. The feelings passing over her face are complex and subtle, but taken together with the jewels suggest some degree of complicity or acceptance.

The last painting I shall mention is that by Rubens, now at Dresden, painted before Rembrandt's second version. Here Bathsheba sits beside a fountain, her breasts and thigh fetchingly exposed to the viewer though her loins are draped and her nearer arm is lightly veiled. Her hair is being combed by a young female attendant, while she looks over her shoulder at a black page who proffers a letter, evidently an invitation or summons from the David visible on the balcony of the palace behind the bathing scene. A pearl string is

draped around her left forearm, and hangs down between her fingers.

The iconographic history shows that Bathsheba was often seen as a woman of some wealth, proud of her appearance and grooming, and not averse to making a public display of her beauty. Many images imply that she shares in

11. Kunoth-Leifels, *Darstellung* illus. 25a and 25b, and p. 33.

12. Kunoth-Leifels, *Darstellung* 44-45.

13. Sluitjer, "Rembrandt's Bathsheba" 50, and Ilja M. Veldman (comp.), Ger Luyten (ed.), *The New Hollstein Dutch and Flemish Etchings, Engravings and Woodcuts, 1450-1700: Maarten van Heemskerck, Part I* (Roosendaal, Netherlands: Koninklijke von Poll, 1993) 66-67.

14. Sluitjer, "Rembrandt's Bathsheba" 52-53.

15. Sluitjer, "Rembrandt's Bathsheba" 81.

16. Gary Schwartz states that the painting, bought by William Young Ottley some time before 1811, was not mentioned in any published record before that date: "Though deficient in beauty": A Documentary History and Interpretation of Rembrandt's 1654 Painting of Bathsheba," in Adams, ed., *Rembrandt's "Bathsheba"* 176-80. Blake did not make Ottley's acquaintance until 1827—see G.E. Bentley, Jr., *Blake Records* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969) 341.

David's guilt by her self-exposure, triggering his desire to possess her. She is frequently shown with attendants, who are often tainted with the suspicion of acting as bawds to David's desires, a function sometimes made explicit by the non-biblical motif of the bearing of a letter of assignation. Such implications of female complicity or worse in Bathsheba's fate have aroused such feminist commentary as that embodied in the collection of essays edited by Ann Jensen Adams and in Mieke Bal's *Lethal Love* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987).

Blake may have known a few of these versions through prints, but his version has very little in common with any of them, except in showing David as a small and distant figure, and in possibly following Aldegrever's addition of a second standing nude woman, though Blake has as I now think reversed the positions of the two, making Bathsheba, very unusually, the standing figure. Blake's tempera surprises also in the prominence of the flowers that surround the bath, and in the unexampled children accompanying Bathsheba, whose presence confirms the probability that Blake is pursuing themes rather different from those proposed by previous versions.

A search for Blake's intentions can begin with what the biblical account tells about David and Bathsheba and their meeting. Bathsheba is one of the female ancestors of Jesus in Matthew's genealogy: "And Jesse begat David the king; and David the king begat Solomon of her that had been the wife of Urias" (Matthew 1:6). Luke traces a different line: "Matthatha, which was the son of Nathan, which was the son of David, Which was the son of Jesse" (Luke 3: 31-32), cutting out both Bathsheba and Solomon. Nathan was the prophet who promised David an eternal dynasty, but then rebuked him for adultery with Bathsheba, threatening him with a divinely sanctioned death, which upon David's repentance was shifted to the first child born of the adulterous union.

In the story in 2 Samuel, Bathsheba is identified by one of David's servants or friends (doubtless the other man in Giulio Romano's version), who comes back with the news or rumor "Is this not Bathsheba the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?" (2 Samuel 11:3). Eliam was the son of Ahithophel the Gilonite (2 Samuel 23:34), one of David's counselors, who joined Absalom's rebellion and advised Absalom to allow Ahithophel and twelve thousand men to put to flight David's men and then kill the king himself (2 Samuel 17:1-3); his counsel was undermined by Hushai "to the intent that the Lord might bring evil upon Absalom" (2 Samuel 17:14), and Ahithophel finally hung himself upon seeing "that his counsel was not followed" (2 Samuel 17:23). This raises the possibility that David's seizure of Bathsheba represented an act of revenge against the dead Ahithophel, Bathsheba's grandfather, but there are no signs that such an interpretation is at play in any representation of David and Bathsheba known to me.

David, like Bathsheba, figures in the genealogy of Jesus as father of Solomon. In Christian interpretation David is not only an ancestor (Matthew 22:42, Mark 12:35, etc.) but also a type of Jesus in his roles as poet, shepherd and prince (Ezekiel 34:23-24). Though a hero, he committed great errors and even crimes. Nathan sums up the contradiction in the parable of the rich man and the poor man; the rich man, visited by a traveller, and wishing to provide a feast, kills not one of his own numerous flock, but the ewe lamb of the poor man. Nathan, speaking on behalf of God, applies the parable to David:

I gave thee thy master's house, and thy master's wives into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and of Judah. . . . Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in his sight? thou hast killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and hast taken his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon. Now therefore the sword shall never depart from thine house; because thou hast despised me, and hast taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be thy wife. (2 Samuel 12:8-10)

This is the double face of David: rich in gifts and power, but unable to resist the temptation to abuse both on occasion, to the detriment of both Israel and himself. Despite founding the kingship of Israel, he was destined never to fulfill the ambition to build a better house for the ark of God than the "curtains" within which it dwelled (2 Samuel 7:2); God confirmed to David via Nathan that it would be left to the "seed . . . which shall proceed out of thy bowels" (i.e. Solomon) to "build an house for my name" (2 Samuel 7:12-13).

Blake left some evidence for his views of David and Bathsheba. His one textual reference to Bathsheba¹⁷ again reflects Matthew's genealogy rather than Luke's (though with a large difference):

I see the Maternal Line, I behold the Seed of Woman!
Cainah, & Ada & Zillah & Naamah Wife of Noah.
Shuahs daughter & Tamar & Rahab the Canaanites:
Ruth the Moabite & Bathsheba of the daughters of Heth
Naamah the Ammonite, Zibeah the Philistine, & Mary
These are the Daughters of Vala, Mother of the Body
of death[.] (*Jerusalem* 62, E 213)

These female ancestors of Jesus were of considerable interest to Blake, and he pictured several of them: Ada and Zillah in the large color print of *Lamech and His Two Wives* (B 297), Ruth in the print of *Naomi Entreating Ruth and Orpah* (B

17. There is a "Visionary Head of Bathsheba with Uriah" (B 699); see Robert N. Essick, *The Works of William Blake in the Huntington Collections* (San Marino: The Huntington Library, 1985) 84. Essick records that Rossetti described this Bathsheba as "sweet, soft, yielding, witty"; this comment on a drawing done at least twenty years after the tempera offers no interpretive guidance here.

299—despite the name given to the print, all of Blake's references to the subject name Ruth rather than Naomi as the focus), Bathsheba in the present design, and Mary in many designs.

S. Foster Damon (s.v. "Maternal Line") comments on the passage cited above:

the traceable female ancestry of Mary, and hence of Jesus. As the genealogies given by Matthew and Luke both trace his ancestry (surprisingly) through Joseph, Blake accepted the Roman theory that Mary was Joseph's cousin; and as he believed that all she gave her son was this mortal and sinful body, it seemed appropriate to him that her female ancestry included some of the worst characters in the Old Testament.

Morton D. Paley repeats the notion that Blake's "Maternal Line" represents the ancestry of Mary, crediting Sloss and Wallis as well as Damon.¹⁸ However, Damon has misread Sloss and Wallis, who wrote that Blake "sets out to trace the ancestry of Jesus on the maternal side in such a manner as to stress the element of 'feminine delusion' noticed elsewhere in his use of the term 'maternal'"; they then annotate the names listed, showing that all are involved in the descent from Adam to Jesus.¹⁹

Blake is listing not the ancestry of Mary, which is nowhere given in the Bible beyond the statement that she was a cousin of Elizabeth "of the daughters of Aaron" (Luke 1:5), but rather some of the women who were wives or consorts of the male ancestors of Jesus; I do not know Damon's evidence for the theory that Blake used a Roman notion that Mary was Joseph's cousin. Cainah was presumably invented as the wife needed to make Cainan an ancestor of Jesus, as he is in Luke 3:36; Ada and Zillah were the wives of Lamech, the father of Noah, and thus one of them was Noah's mother; Naamah's role is clear; Shuah's daughter is the wife of Judah, also in Luke's list (3:30); Tamar is almost certainly the woman with whom Judah lies in Genesis 38 (cf. Ruth 4:12), begetting the Pharez who appears in both lists (Matthew 1:3, Luke 3:33). Rahab is problematical, but there is a Rachab upon whom Solomon begat Booz in Matthew 1:5, and the story of Rahab the harlot ends with her and all her family being integrated into Israel, so that "she dwelleth in Israel even unto this day" (Joshua 6:25)—Blake may have assumed that her blood entered into the ancestry of Jesus in some general way, while she added to the strain of outsiders and transgressors among the female ancestors: "If [Jesus] intended to take on Sin / The Mother should an Harlot been" (E 877). Ruth, a Moabite, and Bathsheba, "of the daughters of Heth" (i.e. a Hittite) add further outsider

blood to the mix. Damon suggests that Zibeah the Philistine is the Zibiah of Beersheba listed as the mother of Jehoash (or Joash) in 2 Kings 12:1, though since he is not in the lineage given by either evangelist, it remains unclear why Blake has included Zibeah—perhaps as mother of a king of Israel she can be assumed to have participated in the ongoing process of incarnating Israel.

These women are described by Blake both as a "Line," implying successiveness, and as sisters, "Daughters of Vala," implying that they are sibling collaborators in the continuing process of the creation of the "Body of death." Blake uses this phrase in several other contexts, as in *The Four Zoas*, where Enitharmon taunts Los: "Howl thou over the body of death tis thine" (E 323), and in plate 13 of *Milton*: "For then the Body of Death was perfected in hypocrite holiness, / Around the Lamb, a Female Tabernacle woven in Cathedrons Looms" (E 107). On plate 9 of *Jerusalem* we find Los testifying that he saw "disease forming a Body of Death around the Lamb / Of God, to destroy Jerusalem, & to devour the body of Albion" (E 152). Robert N. Essick and Joseph Viscomi suggest that the phrase may refer to the doctrine of the virgin birth or a false notion of the incarnation;²⁰ more generally, the phrase covers all those processes through which history incrusts an imagination embodied within time and space. In *Night the Eighth of The Four Zoas* those in Eternity use a related phrase in urging on the incarnation: "Assume the dark Satanic body in the Virgins womb / O Lamb divin[e]" (E 377). Like many of Blake's terms, "Body of death" can be interpreted from both positive and negative perspectives; the Eternals urge on the incarnation because they understand its creative necessity, but they also lament the inevitable darkening of the light by its enclosure in a dying body. The end-product of the process of incarnation can be called "the Body of death," but is also the path to life; as the Divine Voice comforts Jerusalem at the prospect of the incarnation, "behold Joseph & Mary / And be comforted O Jerusalem" (*Jerusalem*, E 211).

The "Daughters of Vala" are the mothers not of Mary but of Israel and finally of Jesus. Their function, however, is only to weave bodies, and Blake's deep ambivalence about bodies shapes his interpretation of Vala and probably of her daughter Bathsheba. Doubtless Blake was working with a model of reproduction that attributed the gift of life to the male seed, and saw the womb as merely the matrix from which the seed took sustenance as it grew (cf. "Vala produc'd the Bodies. Jerusalem gave the Souls" [*Jerusalem*, E 163]). Bathsheba, in Blake's only textual reference to her, as a "Daughter of Vala" and metaphorically an elder sister of Mary, has a role in the incarnation of the progressive stages of the human imagination.

18. Morton D. Paley, ed., *William Blake: Jerusalem* (Princeton: William Blake Trust/Princeton University Press, 1991) 231.

19. D.J. Sloss and J.P.R. Wallis, eds., *The Prophetic Writings of William Blake*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1926) 1:560.

20. Robert N. Essick and Joseph Viscomi, eds., *William Blake: Milton a Poem* (Princeton: William Blake Trust/Princeton University Press, 1993) 137.

Blake's view of David has a sharp cleavage line that reflects Nathan's critique; David was both king and "great poet" (*Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, E 39), not a conjunction normally found in Blake, and capable of both heroic action and great wickedness. Blake's view of David is not made more transparent by the idiosyncratic punctuation of a key statement: *Jerusalem 27* tells us that "when compulsory cruel Sacrifices had brought Humanity into a Feminine Tabernacle, in the loins of Abraham & David: the Lamb of God, the Saviour became apparent on Earth as the Prophets had foretold" (E 174). Are the "loins of Abraham & David" the space of the "Feminine Tabernacle," or are they part of the (pro)creative process that made "apparent on Earth" the Savior? The logic of Blake's argument implies that the "Return of Israel" (E 174) is the process begun by Abraham and continued by David: "Jesus as also Abraham & David considered God as a Man in the Spiritual or Imaginative Vision" (annotations to Berkeley's *Siris*, E 663). The "Saviour became apparent on Earth" in (through) the loins of Abraham and David, though all incarnation (becoming apparent) takes place through the medium of a "Feminine Tabernacle." The punctuation invites us to take it both ways.

Both Abraham and David are focal points for Blake's version of the history of human progress as recorded in the Bible. Abraham was "called to succeed the Druidical age, which began to turn allegoric and mental sacrifice into corporeal command, whereby human sacrifice would have depopulated the earth" (*A Descriptive Catalogue*, E 542-43). David's role was that of heroic defender of his people, and carrier of a poetic power that supported the "allegoric and mental" against the "corporeal"; his playing of the harp, for instance, had power to drive evil spirits away from Saul (1 Samuel 16:23). In another episode, David thanked Abigail for urging him to spare his enemies: "blessed be thy advice, and blessed be thou, which hast kept me this day from coming to shed blood, and from avenging myself with mine own hand" (1 Samuel 25:33). In such moments David advanced the cause of the imagination, transforming revenge as Abraham had transformed sacrifice.

But Blake also offers David as one "Example of the possibility of Human Beastliness" to be found in the "Jewish Scriptures" (annotations to *An Apology for the Bible*, E 614); the good will "abhor wickedness in David or Abraham" (E 618). In both Abraham and David, wickedness was intimately mingled with great good; in the case of David, a form of resolution is achieved in his buying the threshing floor from Araunah and there building an altar to the Lord, who in response stays a plague from Israel (2 Samuel 24:18-25). Blake describes Araunah "emptying out the vanities of Riches & Worldly Honours" (*A Vision of The Last Judgment*, E 557) in an act that symbolically cleanses both David and kingship. Perhaps Blake envisioned David's taking Bathsheba for himself as another version of the fortunate fall, as a movement prompted by the energy of desire, ini-

tially destructive but ending in the happy conception of one who played a role in leading Israel—humanity—towards the freer future embodied in Jesus.

Blake portrayed both aspects of David in his art. The heroic young David is the subject of a drawing in the Visionary Heads notebook (B 698) and of *Goliath Cursing David* (B 457); a maturer David is shown in *David Pardoning Absalom* (B 459). *David Delivered out of Many Waters* (B 462), based as Butlin points out on Psalm 18, shows David entangled with ropes and looking up at flying angels while, at center top, Jesus descends to save him from drowning. This David has been dragged down by "the floods of ungodly men," "the sorrows of hell" and "the snares of death," disasters that are the result of his own errors as well as the ill-will of others; he needs redemption by his descendant.

As with Bathsheba, Blake shows an interest in David's role in the genealogy leading to Jesus, and in the late *Epitome of James Hervey's Meditations among the Tombs* (B 770) visualizes some of the key figures. Adam and Eve with the Serpent are followed by Cain and Abel and then Enoch and Noah, Abraham and Isaac, Aaron, and, a little lower, David and Solomon. At the bottom is Jesus at the moment of transfiguration, flanked by Moses and Elias. The painting also shows, between Noah and Abraham, figures labelled "Mother of Leah & Rachel" and "Mother of Rebecca"; it is a minor oddity of the Genesis narrative that these mothers are never named. Rebekah was the wife of Isaac and mother of Jacob and Esau; Leah and Rachel were won as wives by Jacob, and between them produced the tribes of Israel. Blake has given both visibility and a title ("Mother of . . .") to these unnamed women who occupy key positions in Matthew's lineage. It remains to be seen whether recognition of this incorporation by Blake of the genealogies and stories of the Bible into his mythologized vision of the history of culture offers any leverage in interpreting Blake's tempera.

Some aspects of Blake's *Bathsheba* follow the biblical text or iconographic tradition. The blue sky streaked with orange, for instance, reflects the biblical narrative's note that the sighting of Bathsheba took place "in an evening-tide" (2 Samuel 11:2). David is portrayed, as became usual in the iconography of the episode, as a small figure in the background. His gesture is easily read in both conventional and Blakean language; his raised arms as he catches sight of the unexpected beauty before him echo the reaching arms of "Mans desires" in plate V of *There is No Natural Religion* (a). Blake has also followed a common iconographic tradition in showing Bathsheba with another figure or figures at the bath, though in this case the other figure appears not to be the usual maidservant. There are, however, major novelties in Blake's design that demand and challenge interpretation, in particular the prominence of the flowers and the children.

I have elsewhere made the argument that Blake, in approaching texts other than his own, often modified them in the direction of his mythology, or, better, his mode of poetic thinking, though he did not simply substitute that myth for the text being illustrated.²¹ I offered as underlying model the notion that Blake was practising an art of invention akin to Le Bossu's theory of epic invention, the most widespread theory of the time. Here is the most succinct articulation of that theory:

The first thing we are to begin with for Composing a Fable, is to chuse the Instruction, and the point of Morality, which is to serve as its Foundation . . . In the next place this Moral Truth must be reduc'd into Action, and a general Action must be feign'd in Imitation of the true and singular Actions [that illustrate the point chosen] . . . then [the Poet] should look for the Names of some Persons (to whom a parallel Action has either truly or probably happen'd) in History, or some well-known Fables: And lastly, he ought to place his Action under their Names. Thus it will be really feign'd and invented by the Author, and yet will seem to be taken out of some very ancient History and Fable.²²

The theory allowed for "accommodation" between the originating "Moral Truth" and the "History" under the names of which it was placed.

A letter to Butts dated 6 July 1803 records Blake's own comments on such "accommodation" in the context of another illustration of the Bible, the *Riposo*, which

represents the Holy Family in Egypt Guarded in their Repose from those Fiends the Egyptian Gods, and tho' not taken directly from a Poem of Miltons . . . yet it is very similar to his Hymn on the Nativity. . . . I have given in the background a building which may be supposed the ruin of a Part of Nimrods tower which I conjecture to have spread over many Countries for he ought to be reckoned of the Giant brood. (E 729)

Blake regards the Bible, like Milton's work, as a poem, to be treated with respect as "an original derivation from the Poetic Genius" (E 1), as was Milton's epic, but subject to reinterpretation by "Conscience or the Word of God Universal" which empowers "every man [to] converse with God & be a King & Priest in his own house" (E 615). In this case Blake expands upon the tradition surrounding Nimrod's tower, the tower of Babel (Genesis 10: 9-10), adding the "conjecture" that the cursed culture which he created spread over the whole earth. "[S]upposed" and "conjecture" imply the playfully imaginative insertion of new meaning into the

21. Heppner, *Reading* 82-86, 120-31.

22. Stuart Curran, ed., *Le Bossu and Voltaire on the Epic* (Gainesville, Florida: Scholars Facsimiles and Reprints, 1970) 15.

original text, which however remains almost intact; "accommodation" rather than superimposition and replacement.

Unfortunately the picture here described is lost, but there is extant a closely related watercolor, *The Repose of the Holy Family in Egypt* (B 472). This shows small and inconspicuous ruins on the banks of the river that flows between the distant pyramids and the holy family in the foreground. Assuming that the lost painting described by Blake showed similar architecture, it seems that Blake could assign to inconspicuous images meanings more explicit than any we should feel safe in assigning ourselves, meanings that substantially expand those inherent in the subject as given. Simultaneously, we learn that it would be unwise to ignore objects clearly present in a design, though not taken directly from the original subject, even if we are initially unsure what they might mean.

Before attempting to reconstruct the motivation for Blake's unique transformation of the story of Bathsheba, using some process of "accommodation" as possible key, there is another question to settle. Blake's biblical paintings were commissioned and paid for by Butts, a practising Christian,²³ who may have had a hand in choosing the subjects: "I wish to ask you what subject you choose to be painted on the remaining Canvas" (E 720). However, Blake also wrote to Butts claiming his "Just Right as an Artist & as a Man. & if any attempt should be made to refuse me this I am inflexible & will relinquish Any engagement of Designing at all unless altogether left to my own Judgment. As you My dear Friend have always left me" (E 731). We do not know whether the subject of *Bathsheba* was chosen for Blake by Butts, proposed as one possibility among others, or freely chosen by Blake, but we can assume that Blake shaped the design in accord with his own interests and desires.

We can focus now on those "principal peculiarities and differences from other representations of the scene" that both "demand explanation" and offer a path into the intentionality of a specific design.²⁴ Despite Giulio Romano's unobtrusive flowers and Bordone's lemon bushes, nothing like Blake's pervasive garden imagery had been offered in previous handlings. Honeysuckle grows around one of the columns on the left of the picture, while drooping lilies fill the space between the young girl and the column to our right, and roses the space separating the further column

23. The notion that Butts was a Swedenborgian has been generally dropped for lack of specific evidence, though it remains a possibility. The most responsible assessment is that of G.E. Bentley, Jr., who notes that Butts quotes the Archbishop of Canterbury, and summarizes thus: "It is likely that he was an Anglican or a respectable Methodist, but in the absence of evidence it is safest to say that his religious affiliation is unknown." "White Collar Maecenas," *PMLA* 71 (1956): 1053.

24. I am adopting language used by Michael Baxandall, *Patterns of Intention* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985) 121.

on the right from the frame. Like the distant buildings in *The Repose of the Holy Family in Egypt*, these apparently ornamental flowers may hold at least a partial key to the design's intent.

Here is the core of Rodney Baine's commentary on the honeysuckle:

One of the most easily distinguishable of the vines of Innocence is the honeysuckle. . . . Its long tube was for Erasmus Darwin an emblem of fertility: 'With artless grace and native ease she charms / And bears the Horn of Plenty in her arms' (I. 215-16). In Blake's symphony of flowers in *Milton* the honeysuckle is early awakened by the odors of the herbs and flowers as it is 'sleeping on the Oak': 'the flaunting beauty / Revels along upon the wind' (31: 54-55). . . . In a number of designs Blake seems to have depicted the scarlet trumpet honeysuckle . . . long cultivated in English gardens because of its beauty, its evergreen leaves, and the longevity of its flowers.²⁵

There is ample evidence for Blake's knowledge and use of Erasmus Darwin, and his treatment of this flower suggests that he was aware of its joyous participation in the "vegetable Loves" of all plant life. After the lines quoted by Baine, Darwin writes "Five rival Swains their tender cares unfold, / And watch with eye askance the treasured gold"—the female stamen, as his note makes clear: "Honeysuckle. Five males, one female."²⁶ Blake's flowers are reddish in tone, and almost alarmingly fleshy looking; one could without difficulty see both penises and reaching fingers. Should we read Blake's portrayal of the "rival Swains" as a vegetable analog to David's lusting after another man's wife, as representing the sexual energy that reaches out to enter history at this moment?

On the right are white lilies and roses, often paired as Baine notes. The lily was "associated with the bride in The Song of Solomon and praised for its beauty by Christ himself" and had "for centuries symbolized beauty, purity, and divine grace." It was assigned to Mary as an attribute, and often appeared in depictions of the Annunciation. The rose traditionally "suggested love and beauty"; in "the emblem books and the poets, roses usually suggest mercy, grace, beauty, cheerfulness, pleasure, love and marriage, and lyric poetry." The two flowers often appear together in Blake's work; for instance, there is a lily entwined with roses behind Mary in *The Christ Child Asleep on a Cross* (B 410). Baine points out that in *Satan Watching the Endearments of Adam and Eve* (B 536:4) Adam holds a lily and Eve a rose: "Roses and lilies are marital flowers also in *Job, Jerusalem*, and apparently also in *Bathsheba at the Bath* . . . where the

honeysuckle of fertility climbing the column at our left may be intended to remind us of David's line."²⁷ I shall expand on these suggestions in what follows.

The flowers are consonant with Blake's one poetic reference to Bathsheba as, like Mary, of the "Seed of Woman"; they support the hypothesis that Bathsheba is presented as a type of Mary, as the still unconscious recipient of an Annunciation that will take the form of the regal favor that discovers in her naked beauty the fruitful womb in which to seed the next leader of his people, and another ancestor of Jesus; her beauty and innocence are expressed in the lilies and roses, and her impending fruitfulness in the luxuriant honeysuckle, which also reflects the intrusive but creative sexual energy of David. This offers a conceptualization of the moment of the painting, and integrates Blake's one poetic reference to Bathsheba with the one major design from his hand to show her. We can read Bathsheba as an avatar of Vala without seriously disrupting the biblical account that underlies the design, the insertion of Blake's poetic mythology just giving an extra dimension to a familiar story. Nevertheless, even such a simple connection as this raises questions; can one, for instance, assume enough chronological consistency within Blake's mythology to support interpretation of a tempera painted in 1799-1800 by means of a poetic statement made considerably later? And can we move between Blake's poetry and his painting as if the two were a seamless unity?

Blake's mythology grew and changed. We do not know exactly when Vala entered Blake's myth; the "nameless shadowy female" of *Europe* (E 60) is probably an early version.²⁸ She seems to have grown in focus and prominence while Blake was illustrating Young's *Night Thoughts*, and by around 1797 she had become the titular figure of *Vala*. Paley sees her presence in several groups of figures in the illustrations to Young, tracing her in such roles as Fate, Life, and Fortune in pursuit of the argument that "Young's personification becomes Blake's symbol" as Blake "assimilated [his subject] into the mythological system that he was creating in his own prophetic works."²⁹ Margoliouth suggests that we may see the "actual genesis of the name" in a manuscript fragment in which "Vala" has been substituted for an erased word that he declines to read, though he disagrees with Sloss and Wallis's suggested "Mystery";³⁰ Erdman proposes "[?Enion]" (E 845). It looks as if the central concepts which animate Vala entered Blake's imagination some time

27. Baine, *Portions* 161-66.

28. See S. Foster Damon, *A Blake Dictionary* (Providence: Brown University Press, 1965) 369, and Morton D. Paley, *Energy and the Imagination* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970) 166.

29. Morton D. Paley, "Blake's *Night Thoughts*: Explorations of the Fallen World," in Alvin H. Rosenfeld, ed., *William Blake: Essays for S. Foster Damon* (Providence: Brown University Press, 1969) 142-43, 135-36.

30. H.M. Margoliouth, *William Blake's Vala* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956) xix.

25. Rodney M. Baine, with the assistance of Mary R. Baine, *The Scattered Portions* (Athens, Georgia: Baine, 1986) 157.

26. Erasmus Darwin, *The Botanic Garden* (London, 1791; facsimile reprint, Scolar Press, 1973) vol. 2, "The Botanic Garden," 21-22.

before his work on the *Night Thoughts* illustrations and the poem named after her, and grew into focus during that work, but not without difficulty, as witnessed by such occasional slips as a switch between the names of Vala and Enitharmon in *The Four Zoas* 10:17-18 (E 825).³¹

Apart from the tempera itself, there is no evidence to tell us whether by ca. 1800 Blake had already connected Vala with Bathsheba, since the reference in *Jerusalem* to Bathsheba as a daughter of Vala is considerably later. Such a connection, which puts a particular emphasis on the story of David and Bathsheba, though one already implicit within it, needs to be supported by an interpretation of the two children, the most significant departure of the design from both biblical narrative and iconographic tradition. Whose children are they, and why are they present?

The Bible narrative shows considerable interest in the children born to David by former wives and concubines, who are listed in 2 Samuel 12:8; there is further comment in 2 Samuel 5:13-16, 1 Chronicles 3:1-9 and 1 Chronicles 14:3-7. The focus is on children born to David by Bathsheba; 1 Chronicles 3:5 specifies that four children, including Solomon, were born of this relationship, while 2 Samuel 12:13-18 recounts the death of the first born, condemned by God in exchange for the commutation of David's own death sentence when the latter repents. However, the children in the tempera are obviously not David's, and the Bible records no children born to Bathsheba and Uriah.

That the children are Bathsheba's is evident from the familiarly affectionate way in which her arms drape over their shoulders. If Blake has imagined them as born to Bathsheba and Uriah, he may have added them to intensify the pathos of vulnerable women and children exposed to the powerful desires of a king, who is breaking up not only a marriage but also an apparently affectionate family. Such an interpretation, however, does not account for the gesture of the boy, who turns his back on us, and faces in the opposite direction from his mother; his right arm, though hidden from us by Bathsheba's body, seems to reach upwards to caress her hair or neck. There is a puzzling mixture of affection and rejection in his bodily relation to his mother that invites further reflection.

If Bathsheba can be understood from the perspective of Blake's myth, so perhaps can the children, and such a repositioning might throw light on the boy and his ambiguous gesture. Though a boy and a girl together are common in the *Songs*, the key configuration in the early prophecies had been a man, a woman, and a male child: Los and Enitharmon with Orc, their first born. A new emphasis appeared with the image of a woman accompanied by a boy and a girl in the large color print formerly known as *Hecate* (B 316);³²

31. See John B. Pierce, *Flexible Design: Revisionary Poetics in Blake's Vala or The Four Zoas* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's Press, 1998) 74.

32. There has recently been a move to retile this print *The Night*

around this time (nominally 1795) the configuration of a woman with two children, a boy and a girl, became more central to Blake's pictorial imagination. In the *Night Thoughts* watercolors, there are recurring images of a woman with two such children of varying age; they are babes in arms in NT 4, lie dead before her in NT 28, representing "Nature's . . . Joys" killed "while we clasp"; they become Body and Soul in NT 290; they embrace in NT 413, and commit adultery in NT 467; finally, they are shown at several stages simultaneously in NT 512, in spaces created by the branches of Jesus as the vine on which humanity grows: "O what a Root! O what a Branch is Here? / O what a Father! What a Family!" In the course of these illustrations, the young boy/girl couple take on a wide variety of both narrative and allegorical functions.

This new visual emphasis on a young couple (whether implicitly siblings or in a sexual relationship), without illustrating the mythology directly, may nevertheless reflect a shift in the roles of some of its key figures; Los and Enitharmon, who had appeared as parents in earlier poems such as *The Book of Urizen*, now reappear as children of Enion—which shows how difficult it is for interpretation to pass with conviction from visual image to poetic myth, unless the image is in intimate connection with that myth.

Given Blake's later association of Bathsheba with Vala, should we identify the two children in the tempera with Los and Enitharmon, the most conspicuous youthful male and female pair in Blake's mythology, a pair moreover who had recently been revisualized as children rather than as parents? The idea is tempting, but brings problems. One is that the origin of, and relationship between, Los and Enitharmon are both expressed through a wide variety of metaphors: Enitharmon emanates from Los as they both

of Enitharmon's Joy, on the basis of a catalogue entry by Gert Schiff written for an exhibition in Japan; see "The Night of Enitharmon's Joy," with comments by Morton D. Paley, in *Blake/An Illustrated Quarterly* 36.1 (Summer 2002): 38-39. Schiff accepts a good deal of my earlier reading ("Reading Blake's Designs: *Pity and Hecate*," *BRH* 84 (1981): 337-65), but identifies the central person with Enitharmon in the act of "Forbid[ding] all Joy" (*Europe*, E 62); the print "allegorizes Enitharmon's scheme to enslave mankind by way of sexual repression." There is much overlap between our views, but in a later account (*Reading*, 121-31) I proposed that the print offers a Blakean "accommodation" of the story of Medea killing her two children, relating an underlying Blakean meaning to an extant narrative. Schiff's version of allegory seems to me to offer a rather weak explanation of why Blake has portrayed Enitharmon as a witch: "By depicting Enitharmon as a brooding witch, Blake shows that both her religion of chastity and her promise of an afterlife are nothing but evil spells." I am also uncomfortable with Schiff's statement that "The woman's demeanor is expressive of the most perfect indifference"; this ignores the significant triple frown lines visible on her brow in all copies of the print, and also the strongly marked sideways turn of her head. My own second reading, hypothetical though it must remain in the absence of supporting text or inscription, does at least address these issues.



3. William Blake, *Jerusalem*, plate 32. Courtesy Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection.

separate from the Spectre of Urthona (E 333), they are born as brother and sister from Enion (E 359), they are man and wife, even William and Catherine, as at the end of *Milton*.³³ But nowhere are Los and Enitharmon described as born from Vala, though there is some indication that the reverse is at least metaphorically possible, as in the "Preludium" to *Europe* (E 60) and the later statement that "Vala shall become a Worm in Enitharmons Womb" (E 326). Enitharmon does sing a "Song of Death" in which she describes herself as walking "in the visions of Vala" (E 305), but this is remote from the scene depicted in the tempera.

A group that appears in plate 32 of *Jerusalem* in the Blake Trust/Princeton facsimile looks at first as if it might throw some oblique light on the issue (illus. 3). This shows a nude Jerusalem between two of her daughters,³⁴ while a third flies upward with an arm affectionately intertwined with a sister's. Jerusalem has her arms extended to caress the children much as Bathsheba caresses hers in the tempera, while the daughter on our right has an arm affectionately extended to Jerusalem's neck and shoulder in a fashion reminiscent of the boy's arm extended (albeit invisibly to us)

33. For a fuller account, see Peter Otto, "The Multiple Births of Los in *The Four Zoas*" *SEL 1500-1900* 31.4 (1991): 631-53.

34. The identification is made on the basis of the associated text by David V. Erdman in *The Illuminated Blake* (New York: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1974) 325.

behind Bathsheba's back. But as usual analogies must be pursued with caution. The daughter who flies upwards in *Jerusalem* 32 invites us to read her freedom from gravity as a sign that she is a visual metaphor for a thought or mental creation;³⁵ Bathsheba's children appear as grounded creatures of flesh and blood, though that does not disbar metaphoric connotations. We interpret Jerusalem's nakedness as primarily metaphorical, as part of the definition of "Liberty," whereas Bathsheba's nakedness, whatever further connotations it may possess, is in the first place naturalistically motivated by the story depicted. The two images belong to different semiotic worlds, and we cannot transfer more significance from the *Jerusalem* illumination to the tempera than a feeling of reassurance that the children in the tempera really are Bathsheba's.

Two passages in Blake's poetry might be used to incorporate Los and Enitharmon into the story of David and Bathsheba. One is from plate 29 of *Milton*: "Los conducts the Spirits to be Vegetated, into / Great Golgonooza," while "Enitharmon and her Daughters take the pleasant charge. / To give them to their lovely heavens till the Great Judgment Day" (E 128). Los here functions not according to any of Frye's mythical associations,³⁶ but as a kind of psychopomp, a Hermes leading souls down to be incarnated, while Enitharmon builds a pleasant environment for them during their stay here. The other passage, from *The Four Zoas*, lists "Joseph Benjamin David Solomon" among others as "Sons of Los & Enitharmon" (E 380). Supported by these passages, we could suggest that Blake re-imagined Bathsheba as one of the "Daughter[s] of Vala" engaged in the progressive incarnations of the human imagination—the history of Israel—and added the children to represent versions of Los and Enitharmon acting in their part-time role as spirits assisting in the incarnation of Solomon, one of their "sons"; if Bathsheba can be a daughter of Vala, then Solomon may be a son of Los.

However, this suggestion too is not problem free. In order to imagine these children as Los and Enitharmon assisting in the incarnation of Solomon, we have to imaginatively superimpose upon the calm garden scene a difficult to visualize cosmic environment in which powerful mythical/historical forces embodied within figures from biblical narrative work to reshape human culture. Mitchell writes that "[Blake's] usual approach to . . . texts, in contrast to the general practice of eighteenth-century illustrators, is to provide not a plausible visualization of a scene described in the text but rather a symbolic recreation of the ideas embodied in that scene."³⁷ That is true, but interpretation of

35. See Janet A. Warner, *Blake and the Language of Art* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's Press, 1984) 127-34.

36. Northrop Frye, *Fearful Symmetry* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947) 277-78.

37. W.J.T. Mitchell, *Blake's Composite Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978) 18.

a scene as a "symbolic recreation" is here rendered difficult by the artist's inclusion of concrete detail that resists such translation into symbol. In the illuminated poetry, Blake can and does, as Mitchell writes, largely obliterate "the visual and objective aspects of the poetic landscape" in favor of "the phantasmagoric 'fluxile' spaces of the prophetic books, in which the 'look' of Blake's scenery changes with every change in the mind of the perceiver."³⁸ But in the present case it takes considerable effort to imagine these two children, firmly visualized as about to bathe in a pool near David's palace, as "actually" facilitating the incarnation of Solomon, who will be conceived some time in the future.

The possibility of seeing the human energies represented by Los and Enitharmon as present within Bathsheba's children as pictured here depends upon our understanding of the nature of Blake's mythology. We know this mythology largely through the poetic narratives in which it is articulated. Many of Blake's own comments, however, focus not so much on these narratives as on the individual figures of his myth, who are described as embodying fundamental energies. Blake sometimes identifies these named energies with figures embedded in preexisting stories; for instance, in *A Descriptive Catalogue* Blake writes that "The giant Albion, was Patriarch of the Atlantic, he is the Atlas of the Greeks, one of those the Greeks called Titans. The stories of Arthur are the acts of Albion, applied to a Prince of the fifth century" (E 543). This identifies a name from his own mythology first with a figure from Greek myth and then "applies" that figure to a prince in the legendary history of England. Moving in the reverse direction, from poetic character to archetype, Blake identifies Chaucer's Pilgrims with "the physiognomies or lineaments of universal human life" (E 533), who in turn are identified with the gods of Greece: "The Franklin is one who keeps open table, who is the genius of eating and drinking, the Bacchus; as the Doctor of Physic is the Esculapius, the Host is the Silenus, the Squire is the Apollo, the Miller is the Hercules, &c." (E 536). Blake does not here give the Blakean names of these "visions of the eternal attributes, or divine names" (E 536), but we may try to do so if we wish. Blake evidently sees his own figures as representative of energies capable of acting out situations far removed from the narratives of his own mythological poems. The pattern follows approximately that outlined by Le Bossu, and we can imagine the same processes at work in "applying" part of the story of Vala to Bathsheba.

In another passage, Blake writes of "having been taken in vision into the ancient republics, monarchies, and patriarchates of Asia," where he "has seen those wonderful originals called in the Sacred Scriptures the Cherubim . . . being originals from which the Greeks and Hetrurians copied Hercules, Farnese, Venus of Medicis, and all the grand works

of ancient art" (E 531). These words imply that Blake's "Giant forms" (*Jerusalem* plate 3, E 145) are also copies of the originals seen in vision: "Names alter, things never alter" (E 533). However, what we know is always mediated by names, either Blake's own, or those given by equally gifted poets like Chaucer, who also had an intuition of these archetypes; like Jung, Blake seems to have believed that the archetype itself is never the object of direct experience—though it may be glimpsed in "vision"—and can normally only be known through secondary embodiments that have been culturally or personally configured. As poet, Blake sometimes maintains the fiction that his particular names are the unaltering "things" themselves, but he implicitly allows on occasion that his names are only one way of putting things, that they designate a partial and temporary rendering of an underlying reality.

Blake's figures thus have two complementary and intertwined modes of being; in the one, they act out roles in narratives in which they are born, split, and undergo a variety of transformations. In the other, they are described as representing universal and unchanging energies or powers. One perspective that helps to unify these models is provided by a passage on the "bright Sculptures of / Los's Halls," which suggests that Blake's mythology is grounded on what might be called the elementary forms of kinship, the building blocks of social human life, that mediate between constant archetypal energies and the most fundamental forms of narrative:

All things acted on Earth are seen in the bright Sculptures of
 Los's Halls & every Age renews its powers from these
 Works
 With every pathetic story possible to happen from Hate
 or
 Wayward Love & every sorrow & distress is carved here
 Every Affinity of Parents Marriages & Friendships are
 here
 In all their various combinations wrought with wondrous Art
 All that can happen to Man in his pilgrimage of seventy years
 Such is the Divine Written Law of Horeb & Sinai:
 And such the Holy Gospel of Mount Olivet &
 Calvary[.] (E 161)

These lines describe the "Sculptures" as constituted by single figures who combine into persisting narratives, Laocoön groups struggling with difficulties rather than solitary and stationary Apollos. Blake's way of putting this appears to give ontological priority to his own mythology—the sculptures exist within the Halls of Los, which were "built by Los & his mighty children"—but since he lists David and Solomon among those children, Blake simultaneously implies that his mythology and the writers of the testaments exist in one and the same world.

38. Mitchell, *Blake's Composite Art* 21.

For Blake the figures of his mythology had a potential for life both before and after the poetic narratives from which most of our knowledge of them derives; they could exist as single archetypes embodying various energies, and they could enter and transform figures acting out the narratives of already existing texts, poetic or historical. In the latter state, transfigured and with borrowed names, they can appear in designs that represent actions nowhere described in his poetry, and significantly changed from the borrowed preexisting narratives, though we may then find ourselves unable to make confident identifications without help from Blake himself.

Milton illustrates the complex relationships that can arise when Blake's mythical names are embodied in a context in which they interact with other texts, both poetic and biographical:

Then Milton knew that the Three Heavens of Beulah
were beheld
By him on earth in his bright pilgrimage of sixty years
In those three females whom his Wives, & those three
whom his Daughters
Had represented and containd. (E 110)

Three levels interact in these lines. The first is represented by the "Heavens of Beulah," a term that points to a mode of experience only reachable through interaction with "females"; these "Heavens" are spaces or states in Blake's mythology, and appear elsewhere in his poetry. They are "containd" within the second level, constituted by the "Wives" and "Daughters" who are figures from history, with ascertainable names and biographies. These in turn "contain" the third level of those "females" who taken together form Ololon, a complex mythological figure who appears in no other poem. In this passage, Blake's mythology is imaged as a deep structure embedded within history; in Swedenborgian language, it is the "spiritual" sense of "natural" figures grounded in the world. To complicate the picture further, we are told that Milton discovers that "his Wives & Daughters names were these / Rahab and Tirzah, & Milcah & Noah & Hogleh," who sit around him "as the rocks of Horeb round the land / Of Canaan."³⁹ These rocks have names: "Hor & Peor & Bashan & Abarim & Lebanon & Hermon" (E 110). Figures from Milton's family history are here identified through analogy with female figures from the Old Testament, which suggests that family patterns replicate "combinations" that recur throughout history, as is implied in their identification with mountains, images of the permanent. The mythical and universal is embodied within the historical particular; the "bright Sculptures" that

39. The ultimate source for Blake's imagery may be Paul's allegory of Abraham's wives in Galatians 4:21-31, in which "Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, . . . is Agar"; there is stimulating comment in a number of sources, including Daniel Boyarin, *A Radical Jew* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994) 32ff.

represent "Every Affinity" exist and act below and within particular events.

Ololon comes into being by an interaction between Blake's mythology as it existed prior to the writing of *Milton* (in such forms as "the Three Heavens of Beulah") and the persons and events of the life of the historical poet; she mediates between fundamental energies and the moving patterns of history. In the final plates of *Milton* we see a spectacular demonstration of the analysis and decomposition of Ololon into several distinguishable figures and concepts; having played out her role in the poem, she is resolved back into her component parts. As a mediating structure, the mythology is open to influx from both sides—from the archetypes represented by the "bright Sculptures," and from the moving shapes of history. Blake's language—"represents" and "contains"—implies the less than total overlap between levels.

Blake's image of the "bright Sculptures" that embody fundamental "Affinit[ies] of Parents, Marriages & Friendships" reflects upon the possible presence of Blake's mythology within the figures of *Bathsheba*. The most substantial "Sculpture" represented in the tempera is that of a mother with two children, boy and girl to represent the future of all humanity, but without visible father, and thus open to the winds of change and damage. If this is truly an archetype, it has no obvious name, though many possible significations. Bathsheba as mother draws our eyes, as she drew those of David, but is not presented from the point of view of those northern artists who implicitly or explicitly held her self-exposure partly responsible for David's acts. This Bathsheba, though frankly naked, bears neither jewelry nor guilt. She is first and foremost a mother with her children, prompting us to respond protectively; the family atmosphere, and the presence of the other nude woman already bathing, imply that this is, or should be, a secluded quasi-paradise of baths and flowers in which the gaze of adult males is not welcome, or welcome only with a clear statement of non-sexual intent. David, in responding sexually to Bathsheba, is invading a protected space. The vulnerability of such a family group without visible father forms a vital part of the subject of this painting, and the naked attractiveness of Bathsheba herself associates her with other stories that focus on the vulnerability of women to the desires of powerful men, like that of Susanna and the elders.

The presence of the other woman is related to this image of a protected space rather than to the iconographic history of the episode or to any explicit event from Blake's myth. There are very few previous handlings of the story that show such apparently unrelated women bathing in the nude, Aldegrever's version being one of those few. Usually, the only other women shown are either young and clothed attendants or old bawds bringing David's letter. The seated woman in Blake's design is already dressing her own hair, and looks up at Bathsheba's arrival without stopping her own toilet; she appears not as a servant, but as simply spec-

tator of a drama not her own. However, she does show by contrast just how attractive Bathsheba is; it was beauty, and not merely nakedness, that urged David to grasp for himself a woman whose children mark her as associated with another man.

Within the frame of this "Sculpture" of a family group and its significance, we can perhaps also see in Bathsheba and her children aspects of named figures from Blake's mythology. As shown above, the flowers, in conjunction with Blake's later textual reference, support the notion that Bathsheba enacts some of the meanings represented by Blake under the name of Vala; she will give birth to Solomon, taking a place in the line of descent that leads to Jesus; she is, in that sense, a figure in Blake's "Female line," a "Daughter of Vala." However, her unashamed nakedness makes it difficult to completely erase the memory of Blake's visualizations of Jerusalem from our minds, and we can see her as also part of the saving vision that continues throughout history. In a narrative, Blake could have described her with some of the machinery used to describe Ololon as a complex creature; in a single tempera Blake can only include multiple perspectives and coexisting contrary values indirectly through analogy or implication.

It is also possible that Blake might have called the children Los and Enitharmon in a hypothetical lost addition to *A Descriptive Catalogue*, as a form of shorthand; the line cited above identifying Solomon as a son of Los supports the possibility. Blake could describe all genuine poets as "Sons of Los," so that the boy in the tempera could be seen symbolically as the father of both David and Solomon, poet and architect respectively, despite the absurdity thus produced at the level of the originating biblical narrative—an almost literal case of "The child is father to the man."

The girl is less specific in stance and gesture; she is a bit player, who fills out a pattern, but needs no elaborate rationale for her presence. The line from Blake's poetic mythology cited above gives us a function that can be used to annotate her role here, but with no useful gain in understanding. It seems that the girl's chief function here is to fill in a space, to help constitute that basic family group that had become a feature of Blake's designs from the late 1790s on.

However, such an "accommodation" of the children into Blake's myth does not provide a complete or even adequate account of what they are doing in the tempera with their mother Bathsheba, and the roles suggested give rise to fairly violent conflict with the host narrative. We have also yet to account for the complexity of the boy's gesture and stance; without an understanding of these, we cannot give a firm reading of the tempera. The boy's gestures imply a breaking away from the direction of family bonds towards his own different path, though the break has not been fully implemented at the moment caught in the design. The mother's arm passes in front of his neck to rest on his shoulder; that continued linkage, and his own raised but hidden

right arm, both show that he is still entwined affectionately with his mother. The interaction suggests the pivotal moment in which a boy moves from the protected condition of childhood towards the freedom and potential dangers of manhood.

However, the situation is not totally articulate or persuasive in its *designo*, and there remains an unresolved discontinuity in the visual syntagmatic structure; what should be a quasi-grammatical sequence of meaningfully connected bodies contains implicit internal contradictions that render a firm reading of their interaction difficult or impossible without assistance from an attached or associated text. The boy's back is turned as he not only faces away from us and the other members of his family, but also appears to move away from them and from us; his right and forward foot is firmly planted while his left foot is raised, only the toes touching ground, indicating movement. All three members of the family group are in fact caught in contradictions between stasis and movement; all are drawn as if in motion, rearward feet raised with only toes touching ground, and yet forward motion for all three is virtually impossible—Bathsheba and her daughter would step straight into the bath, the boy would choke on his mother's arm. We can enjoy the bodies without becoming aware of the internal contradictions, but as soon as we attempt a full reading of their implied intentionality we confront problems that admit no full solution. Blake's desire to create pleasing bodies has here conflicted with the desire to create bodies that articulate a legible intent, and the resulting forms resist attempts to impose clear and consistent meaning.

At play here is the larger question of the readability of Blake's bodies and faces. Blake's own comments are optimistic; he directs us repeatedly towards the bearers of explicit human intentionality in a picture, and away from the mere furniture: "Rubens thinks Tables Chairs & Stools are Grand / But Rafael thinks A Head a foot a hand" (E 513), and again "Complicated & Minute Discrimination of Character . . . is the Whole of Art" (E 653). In practice, however, Blake often either used the well-established but rather crude and simplified schema of facial emotion published by Le Brun and others, or, as here, offered faces surprisingly void of explicit emotion.

There was much discussion during the 18th century about the powers and limits of facial expressiveness in painting. One of the focal points was the concept of mixed passions, which had been exploited by Benjamin Ralph in his popular *The School of Raphael; or, the Student's Guide to Expression in Historical Painting*, which included such attempts at subtle analysis of expression as this account of Raphael's cartoon of the *Draught of Fishes*: "In Peter's countenance, fear, wonder, and solicitude are blended in a most extraordinary manner," and this description of the face of the lame man in the cartoon of *The Lame Man Healed*: "the expression of joy and gratitude which appears in it, is finely bal-

anced by a mixture of doubt and astonishment."⁴⁰ Reynolds in his fifth Discourse, without mentioning Ralph's name, questions those

who praise excellencies that can hardly exist together; and above all things are fond of describing with great exactness the expression of a mixed passion, which more particularly appears to me out of reach of our art. Such are many disquisitions which I have read on some of the Cartoons and other pictures of Raffaele, where the Criticks have described their own imaginations; or indeed where the excellent master himself may have attempted this expression of passions above the powers of the art; and has therefore, by an indistinct and imperfect marking, left room for every imagination, with equal probability to find a passion of his own.⁴¹

Blake registers his disagreement: "If Reynolds could not see variety of Character in Rafael Others Can" (E 653), which at first sight seems to bypass Reynolds's point, which was about not "variety of Character" but the possibility of representing a "mixed passion." But Blake also wrote "expression cannot exist without character as its stamina" (*A Descriptive Catalogue*, E 549); for him expression was the outering of a permanent, or quasi-permanent, inner state. That puts in question not only his confidence in an artist's power to express subtle and fleeting states of mind through modifications of face and body, but also his belief that such states had real existence. Blake's defence of "Complicated & Minute Discrimination of Character" (again "Character" where we might have expected "Expression") as "the Whole of Art" (E 653) has some pathos, given his own difficulties in producing readable expression outside the realm of the powerfully exaggerated and simplified. In the present case, there is a singular lack of clear expression on the faces of all present; if there is "Minute Discrimination of Character," it is too subtle to register.

Blake also had occasional trouble combining multiple bodies into persuasive and fully articulate relationship, and in relating bodily movement to the immediate physical context; both these weaknesses are in evidence in *Bathsheba*, inhibiting confident reading of the meaning held in "a foot a hand." Blake doubtless learned some anatomy as an art student, but was not interested enough on a long-term basis to consistently create bodies capable of communicating

subtle states of energy or thought,⁴² though some of his bodies do indeed express a direct and powerful intentionality. These recurring weaknesses, areas in which Blake simply did not exert his powers adequately, put in doubt the wisdom of pushing too far an interpretation of the intentionality encoded within the gestures and faces of his figures. In the case of *Bathsheba*, an attached or inscribed text might have enabled a more confident response, though at the cost of a partial overwriting of the design itself, as has happened in the case of *A Vision of The Last Judgment*, where the accompanying text has drawn more attention than the extant drawings; the case might of course be different if the tempera had survived.

As interpreters of Blake, we are caught between a rock and a hard place. There is a temptation to assert or adopt a "firm persuasion" to remove the mountain of doubt and make a thing "so" (*Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, E 38-39). But the results of such firmness can be disastrous, as Ezekiel goes on to demonstrate—"what greater subjection can be"—and little is won by abandoning one shaky interpretation only to replace it with another almost equally suspect; Blake's Milton knew the danger of becoming the "Tabernacle" of Satan, "A covering for thee to do thy will, till one greater comes / And smites me as I smote thee & becomes my covering," for these are the laws of Satan's "false Heavns" (*Milton*, E 139). The history of interpretation of many of Blake's designs that come without attached text shows the high level of risk in making firm identifications, the large color prints offering some particularly good examples.

In that spirit, and in the absence of any associated text, I shall not make an attempt at a definitive interpretation of the meaning and identity of the boy in *Bathsheba*, nor of his complex but puzzling gesture; Blake has simply left insufficient evidence for us to answer these questions with confidence. Some incorporation of figures from Blake's mythology into the story of *Bathsheba* seems very likely, and the evidence offered above suggests Los as the most probable candidate for the figure of the boy. It is also clear that some act is in progress that will change the relationship between him and his mother, but exactly how we do not know. Such a change would probably fit into what we learn from the illuminated poetry of the relationship between boys and mothers, but not easily into either the relationship between *Bathsheba* and this otherwise unknown son, or the workings of the energy embodied in the figure of Los and possibly acted out by this boy. The attempt to read the children's identities, and the boy's gesture, through the lens of Blake's myth reaches a premature end without producing any firm conclusion. The residue of unintelligibil-

40. Benjamin Ralph, *The School of Raphael; or, the Student's Guide to Expression in Historical Painting* (first published London, 1757; cited from London: John Boydell, [1800?]) 23, 26.

41. Sir Joshua Reynolds, *Discourses on Art*, ed. Ralph R. Wark (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997) 78-79; Wark's notes refer to Félibien, but Ralph seems closer to the context. There is a fine example of what Reynolds is talking about in E.H. Gombrich, *Symbolic Images* (London: Phaidon, 1972) 224n23, which lists a variety of interpretations of the expression of the central figure in Botticelli's *Primavera* ranging from "melancholy" to "laughing."

42. Blake learned enough to make a good drawing of a cast of the Belvedere Torso (B 115v), but his well-attested dislike of life classes (see Malkin in Bentley, *Blake Records* 423) suggests that anatomical accuracy was not a primary concern.

ity haunts and teases the viewer, who must handle the uncertainty as best he or she can.

A partial solution to the problem is to cease beating so hard on the portal of explicit meaning, though invited to do so by Blake himself, and seek satisfactions elsewhere. Baxandall, after considering various iconographic readings of the imagery of Piero della Francesca's *Baptism of Christ*, turns to "the authority of the pictorial character, forms and colours," commenting that "[i]n a verbal explanation of a picture the authority of such matters, as compared to the significance of something or other found verbalized in some directory of symbols, is difficult to drive home. But their authority is primary, if we take the visual medium of pictures with any seriousness at all; they, not symbols, are the painter's language."⁴³ Even Blake, with his unusually strong emphasis on meaning, had an urge to produce a varied and interesting surface. The children, and the boy's interestingly differentiated orientation and gesture, may have been added for visual complexity and variety as well as for the kinds of meaning explored above. The three interconnected bodies afford Blake some exercise of his skills in creating gentle *contrapposto*—the girl and her mother both turn their faces slightly away from their forward foot, and turn slightly towards each other in an affirmation of affectionate relation. The bodies are harmonious and pleasingly molded, though without any particular subtlety of anatomical observation. The body of the seated woman is by contrast lumpy and not totally convincing; the waistless torso has been compressed vertically in a manner that recalls the flying figure of *Elohim Creating Adam* (B 289), and the foreshortened right leg modulates clumsily into the rounded knee. Blake's dislike of life classes had a cost.

In other areas Blake has successfully put the claims of surface interest and variety into creative tension with significance. He has, for instance, followed tradition by relegating David to a top corner, but has picked him out with a kingly crimson robe, incidentally proving the good sense of Richardson's statement that "*sometimes the Painter happens to be Obligated to put a figure in a Place, and with a Degree of Force which does not sufficiently distinguish it. In that Case, the Attention must be awakened by the Colour of the Drapery, or a Part of it, or by the Ground on which 'tis painted, or some other Artifice.*"⁴⁴ The minimization of David, contrasted with Bathsheba at center front, creates tension between the narrative, in which David provides the motivating energy, and the surface composition, in which he plays so small a part; his isolation within the window formed by the columns, the wall, and the frame of the painting joins with the color of his robe to give his small figure a power out of all proportion to its size on the canvas. The crimson of his robe echoes the bright red of the honeysuckle on the

left hand column and the roses at the bottom right of the design, reinforcing the symbolic associations of those flowers proposed above. The separation of the spaces in which David and Bathsheba exist emphasizes the intrusiveness of his act, which is about to break up a virtual haven of innocence.

The flowers in the foreground and the backdrop of rather lumpy and undifferentiated trees further the impression of an enclosed and sheltered garden paradise that is about to be broken into by the serpent of sexual desire prepared to inflict damage and even death in the pursuit of its will—to invoke the imagery of Blake's *Satan Watching Adam and Eve* in the *Paradise Lost* illustrations (B 529:5, 531, 536:4), appropriate particularly as the last of these, as Baine noted, shows Eve holding a rose and Adam a lily. David's body is constructed on the basis of diagonals and oppositions, showing a strong *contrapposto* in the opposed movements of his right leg and both arms that counter his turned head. This animation differentiates him from the calmly modulated frontal aspect of Bathsheba and her daughter. David's energetic desire is expressed also by the angle presented by the castle wall upon which he walks to the frontal plane of the bath—a note of harmonic discord in the otherwise planar composition. Males in this composition are sources of disquieting energy, females centers of calm nurture.

We look at the female figures from a low vantage point, the legs of the figures softly reflected by the water that forms the lower boundary of the design. Our vantage point is directly in front of Bathsheba, and the exact center of the surface of the design is in the dark space between Bathsheba and her daughter, at just the height of her genitals. The columns create a secondary internal frame within which the female figures are placed, and within that frame Bathsheba's genitals occupy the exact center, which is also close to the implied vanishing point of the painting, though, as is usual with Blake, there is little perspectival information with which to work. The sexual nature of the impending action has been well mapped onto the surface of the design.

Overall, the painting is a mixture of successes and relative failures. Blake has visualized the well-known episode from the Bible in a form unique enough to stimulate a search for its underlying intentionality, with the unprecedented children as its focus. But he has not provided the information—pictorial or textual—needed to enable that search to reach a confident conclusion. An exploration of the relationship of the figures and action of this design to the names and narratives of his mythological poetry produces interesting suggestions, but these suggestions are complicated by our inability to fully read the intent of the boy's gestures, though these are specific enough to assure us that they were intended to carry specific meaning. One result has been the critical silence surrounding those children, apart from my own well-meant but ill-judged earlier account. Edgar Wind once wrote that "the presence of unre-

43. Baxandall, *Patterns* 132-33.

44. Jonathan Richardson, *An Essay on the Theory of Painting* (1725; reprinted Menston, Yorkshire: Scolar Press, 1971) 131-32.

solved residues of meaning is an obstacle to the enjoyment of art. However great the visual satisfaction produced by a painting, it cannot reach a perfect state so long as the spectator is plagued by a suspicion that there is more in the painting than meets the eye.⁴⁵ That statement was made in a book featuring a new reading of Botticelli's *Primavera* that stressed "the intellectual character of Botticelli," though it also aimed to maintain our sense of the painter's "lyrisme exact."⁴⁶ However, even all Wind's skilfully applied learning has not put an end to the multiplication of interpretations of Botticelli's work, which suggests that painting is inherently an art that resists definitive iconographic interpretation. Wind's language calls to mind Blake's comment about the "wonderful originals called . . . the Cherubim" which he saw "in vision," which contained "mythological and recondite meaning, where more is meant than meets the eye" (*A Descriptive Catalogue*, E 531); we can do our best to reach out for that "more," but Blake is even more resistant than Botticelli to the imposition of firm iconographic conclusions.

If we turn to plastic values, we experience an analogously mixed state of arousal / frustration, though there is here no parallel with Botticelli's fascinating surfaces. The figures of the family group are attractive and graceful, but lacking in the kind of anatomical and expressive accuracy that might give them a more deeply satisfying articulateness. The scene contains a good deal of vegetation, split into two very differently handled realms; in one we have a background of blurred and melded trees, that appear to have been added simply to provide a contrastive but non-interfering mat against which the bodies of the family group appear to advantage, and in the other we have the rather repetitive and underindividualized though strongly registered flowers, that appear to have been added to indicate specific meanings; the two realms do not cohere into a closely observed and naturally varied garden landscape, though the generalized indications of a quasi-paradise garden do support the innocent implications of the frank nudity. The sky too is made up of streaks of color that indicate evening, but do not fuse into a persuasive sky; the desire to be faithful to a specific textual reference has won a tug-of-war over the production of a convincing background to the action.

In short, the design does not fully satisfy either the intellectual or aesthetic interests that it arouses, though it offers enough to engage our interest. In defending a painting less problematical than *Bathsheba*, Blake told Trusler that "What is Grand is necessarily obscure to Weak men. That which can be made Explicit to the Idiot is not worth my care" (E 702). One can retreat before the imputed slur, and bravely claim that a painting is after all perfectly perspicuous to an adequately prepared viewer, or one can see the statement as a form of bullying, justified in the face of all that Trusler

45. Wind, *Pagan Mysteries* 15.

46. Wind, *Pagan Mysteries* 126.

as author of a book subtitled *The Way to be Rich and Respectable* meant to Blake,⁴⁷ but not a statement we should accept as a control over our own responses. We can enjoy the painting for what it has to offer, without feeling ashamed to admit that Blake in this and other designs has partially subordinated plastic and pictorial values to the quest for significance, without giving means to fully satisfy the latter. There is a gentle irony in the fusion within one person of the poet who wrote "The School Boy" (E 31) and, while receiving no formal education in letters, wrote some of the greatest poetry in the language, with the artist who underwent a full seven year apprenticeship as professional engraver, followed by two years' study at the Royal Academy, and yet often had trouble producing fully satisfying independent designs. The illuminated poetry remains the area within which Blake most successfully integrated the two identities, the textual base providing a continuous support for and interaction with the powerful images that surround and comment upon it.

47. Bentley, *Blake Records* 60.

N E W S L E T T E R

The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens in San Marino, California, will present a major William Blake exhibition, 19 January 2003 to 25 May 2003. The show, entitled "Vision and Verse: William Blake at The Huntington," will be curated by Robert N. Essick. The Huntington has mounted a number of small Blake exhibitions over the years, but space limitations meant that only a few dozen works could be displayed at any one time. The recent development of the former carriage house on the Huntington grounds into the MaryLou and George Boone Gallery will permit a generous selection of the Blake collection to be shown. All the watercolors, including the three series illustrating John Milton's poetry, will be included, along with many plates from Blake's illuminated books, the Job and Dante engravings, drawings, manuscripts, separate plates, and commercial book illustrations. The exhibit will honor the institution's founder, Henry E. Huntington, for his prescience in collecting outstanding works by Blake at a time when the artist/poet was still little known. There will be no catalogue, but an illustrated brochure will be available free of charge to all those who visit the exhibition. Further information about the Huntington and its exhibition program is available online at www.huntington.org.

For other newsletter items, see our web site at www.blakequarterly.org.

Richard C. Jackson,
Collector of Treasures and Wishes:
Walter Pater, Charles Lamb, William Blake

By G.E. BENTLEY, JR.

Jackson the Rich Hermit

When Richard C. Jackson died in 1923, the newspapers had a wonderful time: "Recluse who Collected Everything"¹ said one headline. "Poverty in a House of Treasures"² said another. "Fortune Given to the Poor" proclaimed a third, and "Imagined Himself a Bishop."³

They said that he was a wealthy, impoverished hermit who was "found dead" in his richly-furnished mansion in Camberwell "holding a partly eaten orange in his hand."⁴ They said he used to perform mass wearing gorgeous robes in his own private chapel built over the stable, and that he wandered through the seedier streets of South London giving alms to the poor. They said that he was a neglected friend of the great such as Walter Pater, and that he lived on water and a crust and donated his paintings to the National Gallery. Newspapers love eccentrics, and especially rich hermits, and they had a field day with Richard C. Jackson.

Of course the newspapers plagiarized each other shamelessly, and it is exceedingly difficult to determine which, if any, of their reported facts are authentic. Jackson is said to have called himself Brother à Becket and to have worn mo-

nastic robes in the streets of London⁵ (illus. 1-2). At his death one correspondent said that his house was in an "in-describable condition of filth and neglect,"⁶ and another said: "I visited my late friend to within a few weeks of his death, and I have rarely seen rooms so scrupulously kept."⁷ The catalogue of the contents of his house listed eight thousand books and three hundred oil paintings, but *The Times* said the collection was "mostly rubbish."⁸

Jackson was a pious and prolific and grammatically bewildered author, but in the works I have seen he gives little information about himself. However, many surprising claims are made on his behalf in works by others, and some of these claims are quite intriguing. Indeed, many of the claims made on Jackson's behalf are so marvelous that some subsequent critics have flatly disbelieved them, and most others simply ignored them.

Jackson as Inspiration and Patron of Walter Pater

Perhaps the most marvelous of these claims was the one made by Thomas Wright in a biography of Walter Pater published in 1907, thirteen years after the death of Pater. According to Wright, "In the Spring of 1877 . . . Pater was introduced to a handsome and studious young scholar named Richard C. Jackson,"⁹ who was then twenty-six years old. At the time of their meeting, Jackson was already what Thomas Wright described as "an authority on Dante and Greek art, a Platonist, a Monk, a Re-Unionist—and more other things than he could for the moment recall."¹⁰ Notice that Wright says Jackson was an authority on "more other things than he could for the moment recall"! Plainly the information about the relationship between Jackson and Pater comes entirely from Richard C. Jackson.

According to Wright, or rather to Jackson, Pater was dazzled by the young man:

"I am dumfounded!" exclaimed Pater excitedly. "I will write a book about you." He did. That book was *Marius the Epicurean*—and Mr. Jackson was Marius.

1. Anon., "Richard C. Jackson: Eccentric Camberwell Recluse who Collected Everything: Died as He Lived," *South London Press*, 3 Aug. 1923.

2. Anon., "Recluse's £12,000 Art Hoard: Only 5s. in the Bank: Poverty in a House of Treasures: Rubens Pictures for the Nation," [no periodical identified, ?July 1923]—this reference, like numbers of others here, derives from a clipping in the Ruthven Todd Collection in Leeds University Library. According to another account, in his latter years, "He would be dressed in a coat, green with age, a pair of shabby trousers, a high wide-brimmed top hat, a pair of old white canvas shoes, and a big red scarf round his neck. This was his attire even in the middle of winter. In later years he never wore a shirt but had his coat buttoned across his bare chest." [Anon., "Rich Hermit's Romance. Private Altar Over Garage. Dream Life," *Weekly Dispatch* [sic], [?July 1923], quoted from an undated clipping in Southwark Local Studies Library.]

3. Anon., "Secrets of Rich Recluse: Fortune Given to the Poor: Imagined Himself a Bishop: Gorgeous Robes at his Home Altar," [no journal identified, ?July 1923].

4. Anon., "An Eccentric Recluse—Mr. Jackson and Walter Pater," *Times*, 30 July 1923: 8. Jackson's house, at 185 Camberwell Grove, is a detached Victorian building which still survives at the southern end of a crescent, as I was generously told by Mr. Stephen Humphrey of the Southwark Local Studies Library.

5. Anon., "Richard C. Jackson: Eccentric Camberwell Recluse who Collected Everything: Died as He Lived," *South London Press*, 3 Aug. 1923.

6. Anon., "An Eccentric Recluse—Mr. Jackson and Walter Pater," *Times*, 30 July 1923: 8, repeated word for word also in Anon., "Richard C. Jackson: Eccentric Camberwell Recluse who Collected Everything: Died as He Lived," *South London Press*, 3 Aug. 1923.

7. J.C. Whitebrook, "Jackson of the Red House, Hackney," *Notes and Queries* 153 (31 Aug. 1927): 121.

8. Quoted by Whitebrook 121.

9. Thomas Wright, *The Life of Walter Pater* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons; London: Everett & Co., 1907) II: 19.

10. Wright (1907) II:20; "Jackson [at] twenty-six, was an authority on poetry, sculpture, painting, and music" (p. 21).

Pater said to Jackson,

"all that I have gleaned from *thee* [shall] swell *thy* fame to kiss posterity therewith. . . . I am glad to write about you, for, owing to you, my life has been enriched—its minstrelsy swelled."

The remark led Mr. Jackson to compose on the spot some . . . stanzas, the last of which [begins]:

You greet me as your Marius! me
Who swelled for you life's minstrelsy¹¹

Wright says that these "metrical effusions" were "hidden away" for "twenty years or so . . . and Mr. Jackson discovered them . . . only a few days ago," that is, about 1906.¹²

Wright reports that Pater spent much of his leisure with Jackson, especially in the recently created St. Austin's Priory in Walworth, which was extravagantly high-church. It was, according to Jackson, "a 'Monkery' of rich men," and when he was wearing his monkish robes he called himself "Brother à Becket." According to Wright, "the St. Austin brethren prepared young men for Holy Orders—Mr. Jackson taking Church History." Jackson painted the interior of St. Austin's church with illuminations, "with the result that within a few weeks St. Austin's presented perhaps the most beautiful interior in London." Mr. Dawkes, the connoisseur who provided the paint, said "that he had never seen anything so beautiful in his life."¹³

In his biography of Pater, Wright says that St. Austin's Priory, Walworth, and Jackson's house at Grosvenor Park, Camberwell,

which also had its chapel, became second homes to Pater, and he spent far more of his time in the company of Mr. Jackson than in that of any other friend. . . . Memories of both this chapel and St. Austin's were drawn upon by Pater

when he was writing the latter portion of *Marius* [Pater's books called] *Marius the Epicurean*, *Greek Studies*, and *Appreciations*, all . . . were inspired by Mr. Jackson and Mr. Jackson's books and pictures¹⁴

and indeed Pater often wrote his essays in Jackson's house.

Plainly, according to Wright's account, or rather to what seems to be Jackson's account as given to Thomas Wright, Richard C. Jackson was a major influence upon Walter Pater.

It is true that the allegations of influence here appear under the name of Thomas Wright rather than under that of Richard C. Jackson. However, there can be no doubt that Jackson endorsed and was responsible for the principal claim that he was the original of Pater's most important book *Marius the Epicurean*, a work which W.B. Yeats called "the only great prose in modern English."¹⁵ When Wright's biography of Pater was published in 1907, Jackson wrote to *The Academy* signing himself "Marius the Epicurean" and saying that he was Pater's "almost life-long friend." And to make absolutely unmistakable the connection between the author signing himself "Marius the Epicurean" and Richard C. Jackson, the author identified himself with the portraits of Jackson which appear in Wright's biography of Pater.¹⁶

There are a number of difficulties with these claims. For one thing, though Pater said (according to Wright/Jackson) that *Marius the Epicurean* was written to "swell *thy* fame to kiss posterity therewith," there is no explicit reference to Jackson in the book. This is a curious mode of swelling Jackson's fame.

For another, there is no reference by name to Richard C. Jackson in any of Pater's other writings either.¹⁷

For another, Pater's friendship with Jackson "seems to have been quite unknown until Wright published his biography of Pater in 1907."¹⁸

11. Wright (1907) II:21-22.

12. Wright (1907) II:22.

13. Wright (1907) II:32, 34. Pater called Jackson "the Archbishop," and Jackson "styled himself 'Richard Archprelate of the O.C.R.'" (Peter F. Anson, *The Call of the Cloister*, 2nd ed. [London: S.P.C.K., 1964] 100). Jackson gave the impression that he had a doctorate, probably in divinity—his 1923 catalogue calls him "Dr. Jackson" (#293)—and he said that the poems in his *Golden City* (1883) were written "at odd times which occurred between a special course of Divinity Lectures delivered in the Long Vacation of 1881 at Keble College, Oxford," but there is no record of him among the degree recipients at Oxford and Cambridge.

St. Austin's Priory, which flourished in the 1870s and 1880s, was founded by a wealthy Anglican priest named George Nugée who bought several large houses in New Kent Road, Walworth, to house the brothers, and built an elaborate chapel, which disappeared long ago. Nugée's sermons and the brothers' public processions in Holy Week created a sensation in the neighborhood (Anson 95). Nugée and his followers were eager for a reunion of the Church of England with the Church of Rome; they imported Roman practices into their services, and, when these were discouraged by the Church of England, most of them joined the Church of Rome.

14. Wright (1907) II:42, 45. Wright also says (II:80): "*Marius the Epicurean* . . . is the history of the progress less of a man than of a mind—the mind to a considerable extent of his friend, Richard C. Jackson . . . [though] few of the incidents in Marius's career occurred to Mr. Jackson."

15. W.B. Yeats, *Autobiographies* (London: Macmillan, 1926) 373 (quoted in Pater, *Marius the Epicurean* [London: Dent; New York: Dutton, 1963] xiii).

16. Marius the Epicurean, "The Wright Form of Biography," *Academy* No. 1826 (4 May 1907). In a letter of 17 June 1913 to Mr. Palmer (Victoria and Albert Museum Archives), Richard C. Jackson refers to Wright's claim that Jackson is "the Original of 'Marius the Epicurean'—the 'Sensations' and 'Ideas' having come from the life of him who pens this paper."

17. Samuel Wright, *An Informative Index to the Writings of Walter Pater* (West Cornwall, Connecticut: Locust Hill Press, 1987).

18. Anon., "An Eccentric Recluse: Mr. Jackson and Walter Pater," *Times*, 30 July 1923: 8. "Those who knew Jackson, particularly in later years, were aware that he was inaccurate in matter's of fact, believing just what he wanted to believe, and that his literary vanity was prodigious."

For another, the alleged friendship which Jackson said was "almost life-long" lasted by his own account only seventeen years.

Jackson himself said that he had "a stout volume" of letters and poems to Pater,¹⁹ and he offered some autograph letters of Cardinal Newman and Walter Pater to the Victoria and Albert Museum,²⁰ but no record of these valuable documents is known beyond Richard C. Jackson's claims. He certainly never gave the letters of Cardinal Newman and Walter Pater to the Victoria and Albert.

One of the curious features of Jackson's character is the pride he takes in his own modesty. For instance, he wrote in a letter of 1913: "No man, although I may say so, has done so much for the cause of Education as myself—in these days—and all with any self-advertisement."²¹ The aggressiveness of his self-effacement is wonderful.

These difficulties have caused most writers on Walter Pater simply to ignore the claims made on behalf of Richard C. Jackson. And those who paid attention to the claims were frankly incredulous. Germain d'Hangest concluded in 1961 that Jackson is a "bizarre halluciné, sorti tout droit des romans de Huysmans. . . son témoignage est aussi profondément suspect à nos yeux."²² And Gerald Cornelius Monsman echoed her in 1977: "The ascertainable facts suggest . . . that the friendship [of Jackson and Pater] was a fantasy of Jackson's pathological imagination."²³

I do not endorse these conclusions, but I record them as part of a chain of marvels.

Charles Lamb and the Jacksons

Wright learned from Jackson that Jackson's paternal grandfather, Captain Francis Jackson, was a personal friend of Charles Lamb. Indeed, according to R.C. Jackson and Thomas Wright, Lamb's essay called "Captain Jackson" in the *Essays of Elia* is a portrait of R.C. Jackson's grandfather. Captain Jackson admired Lamb so much that, according to Jackson/Wright, "He named his son, Charles, after

Lamb, and the present Mr. Jackson has Charles for one of his names."²⁴ Francis Jackson obtained so many of Charles Lamb's books that he commissioned a special bookplate to paste into them (illus. 3):

RELICS OF CHARLES LAMB | - | Purchased at Edward Moxon's Sale by | FRANCIS JACKSON ESQ. | Citizen, Merchant and Ship Owner, of London, | (Offices, Rood Lane E.C. | Admitted Freeman of the Paviour City Company, 14th March, | 1805.) | RED HOUSE, MARE STREET, HACKNEY²⁵

Francis Jackson's grandson R.C. Jackson also owned a surprising amount of the furnishings of Charles Lamb's house: prints, a bookcase, two chairs, a bureau, a card table, a tea-caddy, scores of books, and Mary Lamb's tea table.²⁶ When these were sold after R.C. Jackson's death, the catalogue entries for several of them bore a notation with some variant of "formerly belonging to Charles Lamb; purchased at the Moxon Sale, 1805."²⁷

These mementoes of Charles Lamb were clearly very important to R.C. Jackson, and he said that they were also important to Walter Pater. According to Jackson/Wright,

[Pater's] essay on Lamb was the outcome of the study of Lamb's library, which . . . was in the possession of Mr. Richard C. Jackson, and of conversations with Mr. Jackson . . . It was Pater's first intention to commence his essay by giving an account of the friendship between Mr. Jackson's grandfather and Charles Lamb, and a description of the library; but . . . the idea was abandoned. He cross-examined Mr. Jackson . . . in reference to Lamb's life and habits, and much of the essay was written in the Charles Lamb room in Mr. Jackson's house, with Lamb's chair, bookcase, bureau, clock, and other treasures within touch.²⁸

24. Wright (1907) II:19; "See *T.P.'s Weekly* and the *South London Observer* for 1905." According to the dedication to Jackson's *The Risen Life* (1889), his parents were Susanah and Richard Charles Jackson of Preston, County Lancashire.

25. Copies are in my *Gay's Fables* (London: J. Buckland et al., 1788), and in the Harvard copy of Burns's *Works* (1802), the latter accompanied by the bookplate of Richard C. Jackson (Carl H. Woodring, "Charles Lamb in the Harvard Library," *Harvard Library Bulletin* 10 [1956]).

26. *Important Sale of Antique Furniture, Etc., 185 Camberwell Grove, Denmark Hill, S.E.* By Order of the Executor of R.C. Jackson, Deceased: Catalogue of The Valuable Contents Being The Appointments of Seven Reception Rooms . . . An Extensive Library of Books Classical and Theological (about 8,000 vols.), 300 Important Oil Pictures [including] . . . Rubens, Canaletto, . . . Murillo, Corot, Bronzino, Breughel, Guido . . . Stubbs, . . . Claude Lorraine, . . . Vandyke, . . . Titian . . . Water Colour Drawings after Reynolds, Cruikshank, . . . Michael Angelo, and Others . . . Goddard & Smith Will Sell by Auction, at the Residence (23-25 July 1923), #137, 157-58, 506, 509-10, 512-13, 516, 523, 920-25 (116 books), 475.

27. Goddard & Smith sale (1923), #157-58, 506.

28. Wright (1907) II:151. Lamb's clock does not appear in the Goddard & Smith catalogue.

19. Marius the Epicurean, "The Wright Form of Biography," *Academy* No. 1826 (4 May 1907).

20. According to a letter to me of 25 Nov. 1998 from Christopher L. Marsden, Assistant Museum Archivist, Victoria and Albert Archive and Registry, to whom I am much indebted for assistance and kindness. In a letter of 5 Aug. 1914 (V&A Archives), Jackson proposes to give the V&A "a very important book by my one-time friend Cardinal Newman—over which we had many a discussion with our friend Pater, which work contains the Autograph of Walter Pater. I purpose enriching this with letters of the Cardinal & Pater."

21. Letter of 17 June 1913 (V&A Archives).

22. Germain d'Hangest, *Walter Pater: L'Homme et L'Oeuvre* (Paris: Didier, 1961) I:286-87; Jackson was a "bizarre hallucinator who came straight out of the novels of Huysmans. . . his witness is equally profoundly suspect in our eyes."

23. Gerald Cornelius Monsman, *Walter Pater* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1977) 46.

Perhaps this version of Pater's essay on Lamb was "abandoned" after Pater "cross-examined Mr. Jackson" about his connection with Charles Lamb and found Jackson's account difficult to credit. For one thing, the "Captain Jackson" of Charles Lamb's essay is a half-pay naval officer, not the owner of a merchant ship as Francis Jackson was, according to his bookplate.

For another, Lamb said that his "dear old friend" Captain Jackson "was a retired half-pay [naval] officer, with a wife and two grown-up daughters, whom he maintained with the port and notions of gentlewomen upon that slender professional allowance." Lamb's essay mentions no son, and it is difficult to account for the descent of a grandson named Jackson from a Jackson who had no son.

For another, Lamb's Captain Jackson lived in cheerful, genteel poverty, acting as if his ironware were made of silver, whereas Francis Jackson was prosperous enough to own a ship and to buy a good deal of furniture and books which he believed had belonged to Charles Lamb and pass them on to his grandson.²⁹

For another, R.C. Jackson told Thomas Wright that his grandfather had been a schoolmate of Charles Lamb at Christ's Hospital, Lamb and Coleridge being admitted on 17 July 1782 and [Francis] Jackson on 12 May 1790,³⁰ but Francis Jackson was born about 1784,³¹ two years after Lamb was admitted to Christ's Hospital.

It is very difficult to believe that Lamb's Captain Jackson has anything to do with Francis Jackson who was the grandfather of R.C. Jackson.

Both in Francis Jackson's bookplate and in the catalogue of Richard C. Jackson's sale in 1923, works associated with Charles Lamb are said to have come from "Moxon." This is inherently plausible, for Edward Moxon was Charles Lamb's publisher and his intimate friend, and when he died in 1834 Lamb left him his books. Large numbers of Lamb's scruffy books are known to have gone through the hands of Edward Moxon.

The catalogue of Richard C. Jackson's estate also says that some of his Lamb acquisitions were "purchased at the Moxon Sale, 1805". This date seems somewhat implausible, for in 1805 Edward Moxon was only four years old!

The mistaken date of the "Moxon Sale, 1805" may derive from Francis Jackson's bookplate, in which the words "Moxon's Sale" and "1805" both appear. A careless reading could lead to the conclusion that "Moxon's Sale" was on "14th March, 1805." However, the grammar is quite plain:

29. Wright (1907) II:19n3 says lamely that Francis Jackson "was not poor, as Lamb humorously represented him, nor had he any daughters—though he had two sisters."

30. Wright (1907) II:271 calls these three plus Leigh Hunt "The Lamb Quartette," a phrase which might have surprised Charles Lamb.

31. Assuming that Francis Jackson was the normal age of about twenty-one when, as he says in his bookplate, he was made a Freeman of the Company of Paviours in 1805, he was born in 1784.

what happened on "14th March, 1805" was that Francis Jackson was "Admitted Freeman of the Paviour City Company."

Whether or not this so-called "Moxon Sale" is attributed to 1805 or to some date more plausibly after Charles Lamb's death in 1834, the most curious feature of it is that there seems to be no reference to a "Moxon Sale" except in the context of Francis and Richard C. Jackson. Edward Moxon is known to have sold books from Charles Lamb's library, but he is not known to have had a sale.³²

A number of the books went from Lamb via Moxon, Francis Jackson, and Richard C. Jackson's sale to Harvard, where they were examined carefully by Carl Woodring for his account of "Charles Lamb in the Harvard Library." Woodring's conclusion is succinct. The books in Harvard which were attributed to Lamb in the 1923 Jackson catalogue "bear no marks from Lamb's hand . . . [and] it must be doubted whether Lamb owned any of them."³³

The connection of Francis Jackson and Richard C. Jackson with Charles Lamb, his books and furniture, is, then, exceedingly tenuous. They may have owned books and pictures and bureaux of Charles Lamb, but there seems to be no evidence to confirm these bare assertions.

The Jackson Collection Sold in 1923

According to Thomas Wright,

Mr. Jackson possessed, and still possesses, one of the most valuable private libraries in England . . . Marius the Epicurean—Mr. Richard C. Jackson—still resides at Camberwell, and in a house that can only be described as a literary and artistic Aladdin's Palace. We suppose so many works of art, valuable books and objects that have belonged to men of genius could scarcely be found anywhere else in the same amount of space . . .³⁴

Wright gave surprising substance to his claims by reproducing photographs of Jackson's eclectically over-furnished rooms, which show what Wright calls Thomas "Carlyle's writing-table and chair," another chair "from the Palace of Michaelangelo," and bronzes which were "Napoleon the Third's"³⁵ (illus. 4 and 5). Of course the photographs re-

32. Crabb Robinson wrote in his Diary for 27 April 1848: "Moxon . . . has really sold Lamb's books to some American. . . M: told me at first that he would give the books to the Univ: Coll: [London] but afterwards said they were not worth accepting" (MS in Dr. Williams' Library).

33. Carl H. Woodring, "Charles Lamb in the Harvard Library," *Harvard Library Bulletin* 10 (1956): 379. When I wrote to Mr. Woodring, he replied to me on 1 Jan. 1971 that he had nothing to add to this conclusion.

34. Wright (1907) II:81, 229.

35. Wright (1907) II:181, 185, 189. In Jackson's 1923 sale, "CARLYLE'S EDINBURGH UNIVERSITY CHAIR" and "THOMAS CARLYLE'S WRITING TABLE . . . old Chippendale" were #466, 470,

produce the objects rather than the associations which make the objects interesting, and what Wright calls "bronzes" seem to be porcelain. But plainly Jackson thought he owned furnishings associated with other notable figures besides Walter Pater and Charles Lamb.

The sale catalogue of the contents of Jackson's house lists a surprising number of pieces of what may be called Association Furnishings. These include "A chalice, on stem, part gilt, Elizabethan, said to have belonged to [*the Jesuit Martyr Edmund*] Campion," executed in 1581 and beatified in 1886 (#1100); "A vellum Portfolio Album, formerly belonging to, and with autograph letter from Charles Dickens"³⁶ (#966) plus a marble bust of Dickens by Angus Fletcher (#559); a portrait by Sir Joshua Reynolds of the Prince of Wales presented by the Prince's mistress Perdita to Thomas Gainsborough and by him to the father of R.C. Jackson (#176); a tortoiseshell boudoir-clock and a satinwood table which had belonged to David Garrick (#556, 571), the second of which had also belonged to Dante Gabriel Rossetti;³⁷ two Sheraton armchairs from Dr. Johnson's drawing room (#538-39); "A melon-shaped tea pot . . . reputed to have belonged to Marie Antoinette" (#1092); and an oval satinwood table "FORMERLY THE PROPERTY OF THE POET SCHILLER" (#464).

In none of these cases is there any indication of by whom the work is said or reputed to have belonged to such a notable person. However, the provenance of the portrait of the Prince of Wales is said to derive "from description at the back" [of the frame]. This description surely implies that it has the authority of both Francis Jackson, to whom Thomas Gainsborough is said to have given the picture, and of Richard C. Jackson, who inherited it.

The chronology of the provenance of the Reynolds portrait is somewhat implausible. Thomas Gainsborough, who died in 1788, cannot have given the picture to Jackson's father, who was born in 1810, and he is exceedingly unlikely to have given it to Jackson's grandfather, who was "*Admitted Freeman of the Paviour City Company, 14th March, 1805*" and was only about four years old at the time of Gainsborough's death. It is virtually inconceivable that R.C. Jackson's father or grandfather obtained the painting directly from Thomas Gainsborough.

"A cardinal's Chair . . . (Purchased by Dr. Jackson at Michael Angelo's Palace, in Florence)" was #579, but the only Napoleon III item was "A very Handsome Gilt Ormolu French Clock . . . Stated to have been presented by Napoleon III. to Isabella, Queen of Spain" (#21a). Carlyle's writing desk was offered in Oscar Wilde's sale by Mr. Bullock of 24 April 1895.

36. No Richard Jackson is in the indices of *The Letters of Charles Dickens*, ed. various, 10 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965-1998).

37. Lot #552 is "Two sand glasses (relics from Benjamin Webster and David Garrick Sale)." "George Brinsley Sheridan," who is said to have owned a Heppelwhite table (#552), may be intended for the dramatist Richard Brinsley Sheridan.

Wright also reproduced photographs of some notable books from Jackson's library: *The Workes of our Antient and learned English Poet, Geoffrey Chaucer* (1598) (illus. 6), Dante's *Divine Comedy* (Venice, 1529) (illus. 7), Sebastian Brandt's edition of Virgil (1502), Homer (Venice, 1525) (illus. 8), and [John] Guillim, *Display of Heraldry*, Fourth Edition (1660) with "every coat [of arms] . . . properly coloured by hand at the time of publication."³⁸ These are works of substantial intrinsic importance, and, presuming that Jackson really did own them, they indicate that some of Jackson's possessions were quite interesting.

Wright says that Pater was especially interested in Jackson's "early edition of Caxton and a pre-Caxtonian copy of the Golden Legend, with beautiful binding and clasps."³⁹ These are important works, though Wright does not reproduce them. But our persistent suspicion of the accuracy of Wright and Jackson may be allayed by reference to Jackson's 1923 catalogue, which listed works which must have existed, however imprecisely they were described. The 1923 catalogue lists many 15th- and 16th-century books, including Caxton's *Game and Playe of the Chesse, Prologues* (Nuremberg, 1482), a volume by Joannes Gerson (1489), "Instit Imperia" (1499), "Albert Durer's Designs of the Prayer Books, . . . and Biblia Pauperum, by John Wiclif," 15th-century copies of the Psalter, Northern Book of Psalms, and a Prayer Book, plus thirty-seven unnamed volumes of "Old classical works, 15th and 16th century."⁴⁰ This must have been a genuinely notable library, though the treasure islands were lapped by a vast, anonymous sea. After "The Lady of the Lake, manuscript copy by Walter Scott" (#1032) is an enormous series of 1350 volumes described merely as "Books, various" (#1064-90).

The catalogue of Jackson's library is deliciously or infuriatingly erratic, with references to the Spanish monarch "Phillipi of Spain" (#194), to a volume of "Drayto's piems" (#671), and to those famous Romans "Public Vergilii" (#675) and "Mere Antonio" (#16). I like to think of a triumvirate consisting of Marc Antony (Antonio Maximus), Marc Antonio Raimondi (Antonio Minimus), followed by Mere Antonio.

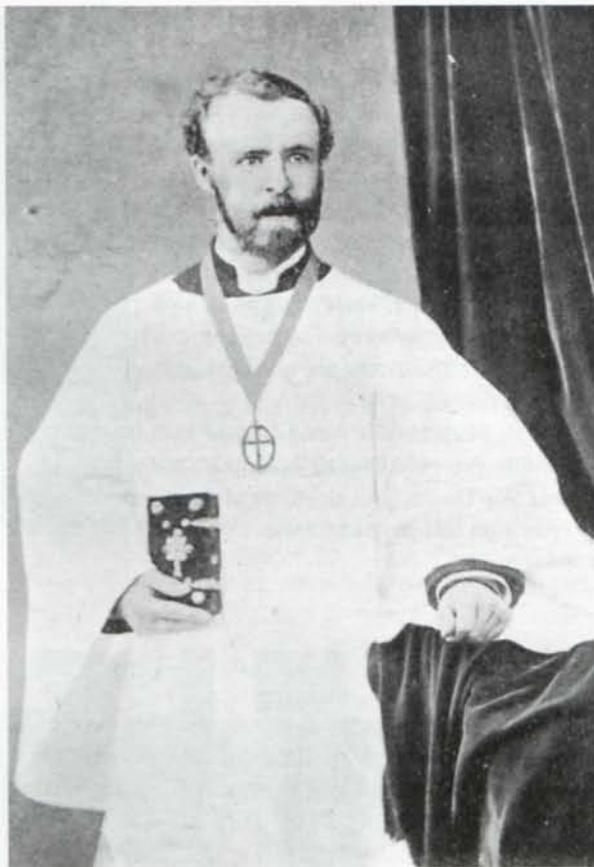
The catalogue records a wonderful combination of trash and treasures, from "A FINE OLD PERSIAN CORRIDOR RUG (14-ft. 6-in. by 5-ft. 9-in.)" (#428) to "a silk chasuble with gold braid bordering" (#583) to a collection of ninety unset emeralds (#1221) to "A brown paper parcel containing sundry prints and drawings and sketches" (#26).

The most spectacular entries are the paintings and drawings, including works by Michael Angelo, Canaletto,

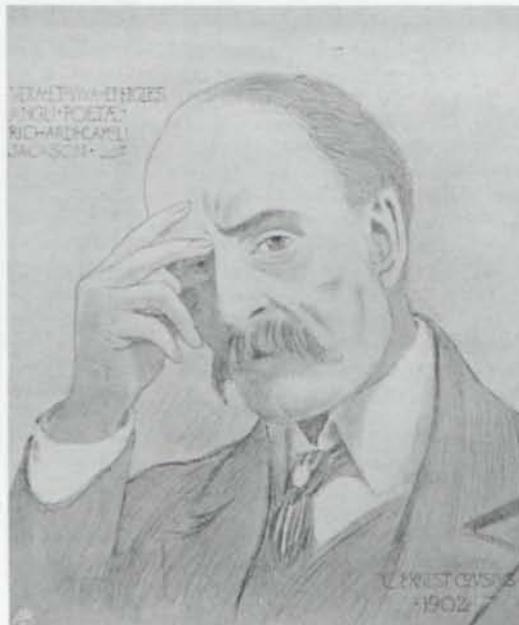
38. Wright (1907) II:237, 241, 245, 248, 251, 255, 258, 261, 268, 269, 273, 276. Only "Public [sic] Vergilii Maronis Opera" (1502), #675, appears in Jackson's 1923 sale.

39. Wright (1907) II:174.

40. 1923 Jackson catalogue #767, 872, 719, 488, 947, 967, 874-75. I do not find the Golden Legend.

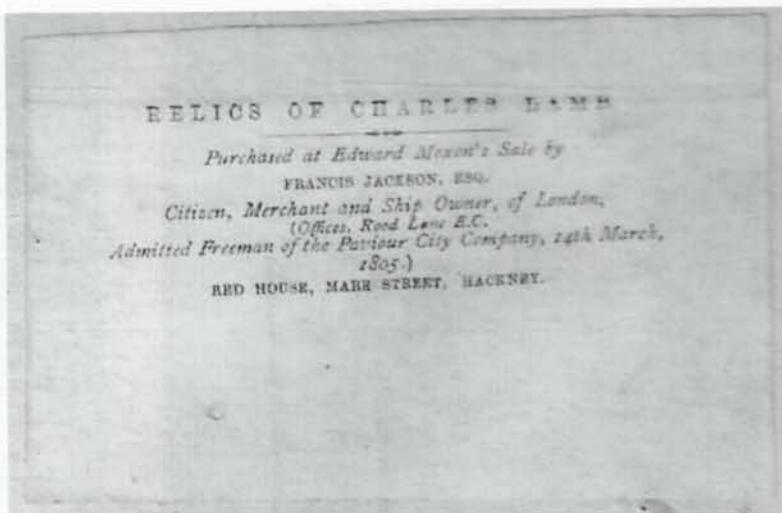


1a-b. "Marius the Epicurean" (c. 1886) and "Brother à Becket" (c. 1882) <Thomas Wright, *The Life of Walter Pater* (1907) II:78, 53>. All illustrations from Wright's book reproduced by kind permission of his granddaughter, Mrs. June Harris. The black robe (covered with a surplice) is that of St. Austin's Priory (Walworth), which Jackson and other members of the seminary wore in the streets. Jackson "is a lineal descendent of John de Norfolk, who was a younger brother and heir apparent of Roger Earl of Norfolk." "At the age of twelve he could recite the whole of the Book of Psalms and much of Dante's 'Inferno'" (Wright (1907) II:20).



2a-b. "Mr. Richard Charles Jackson, in Mr. Wright's Study at Olney, Aug. 1906" and "Richard Caroli Jackson" (1902) <Wright (1907) II:233, 172>.

3. Bookplate of Francis Jackson Esq., the grandfather of Richard C. Jackson, in *FABLES* | BY THE LATE | M^r. GAY. | IN ONE VOLUME COMPLETE. | LONDON: | Printed for J. BUCKLAND, J.F. and C. RIVINGTON, | B. and B. WHITE, T. LONGMAN, B. LAW, T. CAR- | NAN, G.G.J. and J. ROBINSON, T. CADELL, | S. BLADON, R. BALDWIN, J. SEWELL, J. JOHNSON, | H.L. GARDNER, J. BEW, W. GOLDSMITH, | J. MURRAY, W. LOWNDES, J. SCATCHERD and | J. WHITAKER, G. and T. WILKIE, and E. | NEWBERY. | M DCC LXXXVIII [1788]. <GEB> The cataloguer of R.C. Jackson's sale misread the bookplate as referring to Moxon's sale in 1805, when Lamb's friend Edward Moxon was only four years old. Francis Jackson is a "Merchant and Ship Owner," not an officer of the Royal Navy retired on half-pay like Charles Lamb's Captain Jackson.

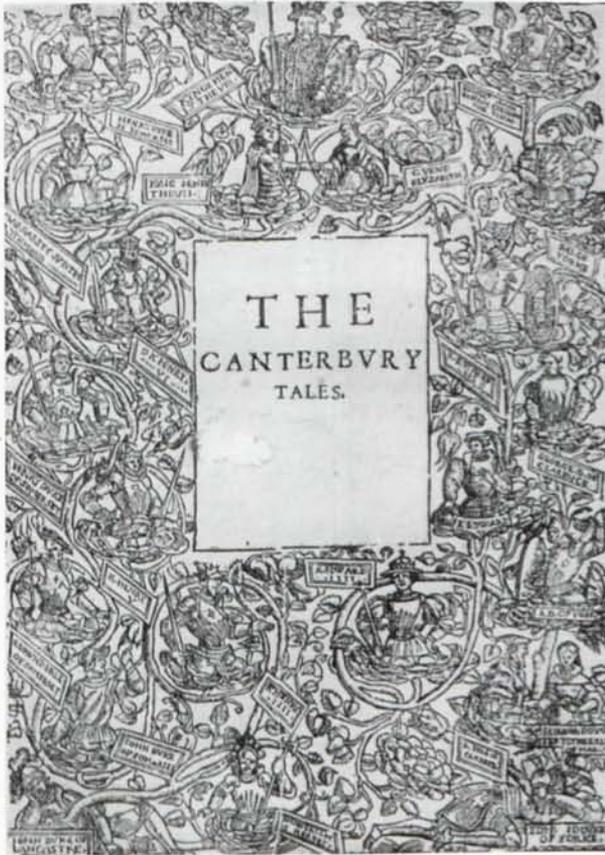


4a-d. (clockwise from top left) The northeast, northwest, and southwest corners of the White King's [Charles I's] Drawing Room, and the Gold Room in Jackson's house in Camberwell <Wright (1907) II:180, 188>.

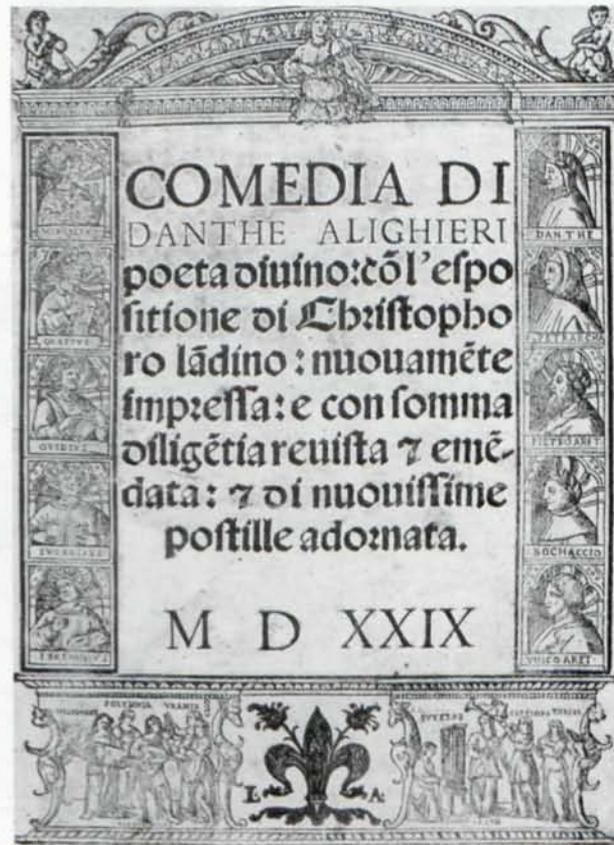




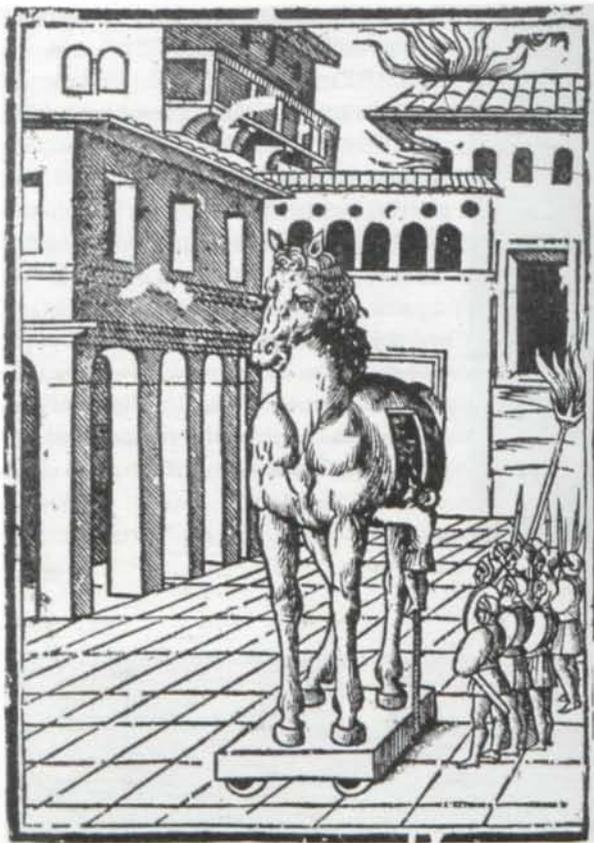
5. The Salon di Dante in Jackson's house in Camberwell <Wright (1907) II:185, with the caption "The Chair with a picture in it was Carlyle's, and it is turned towards Carlyle's table. George Eliot's Chair . . . is the one with an open back on the other side of the fireplace">. Wright says (II:173) that "the bronzes on the mantelpiece were Napoleon the Third's," but they are plainly Chinese porcelain. "We suppose so many works of art, valuable books and objects that have belonged to men of genius could scarcely be found anywhere else in the same amount of space" (II:229). Jackson claimed that Carlyle was his earliest friend and that he was Carlyle's only literary pupil.



6. Title page of Jackson's copy of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* (London: Bonham Norton, 1598) <Wright (1907) II:237>.



7. Title page of Jackson's copy of Dante's *Comedia*, commentary by Christophoro Landino (Venice: Jacob del Burgofranco, 1529) <Wright (1907) II:248>. Wright says that Pater studied both this Dante and Jackson's Chaucer (illus. 6) and "would have written a work on Dante had his life been spared" (II:268).



8. Plate from Jackson's copy of Homer (Venice, 1525) <Wright (1907) II:276>. "When Pater first saw Mr. Jackson's copy he stood as if thunderstruck; and exclaimed: 'You are the "Liar of Truth," for no scholar—not one in ten thousand writers has ever heard of, much less seen, what you now present to my gaze.'" "What a joy to me it is, . . . to be able to find such a treasure as this in the hands of a friend. To my mind it is an embodiment of the soul of Marius . . ." (II:271, 81).

9. Bookplates of Richard C. Jackson (1901, 1891) <Southwark Local Studies Library>. Note that he claims residence in both Camberwell (Surrey) and Hempnall (Norfolk).



EX-LIBRIS
 RICHARD C. JACKSON, F.S.A.,
 PRESIDENT OF THE
 IMPERIAL DANTE SOCIETY OF
 GREAT BRITAIN.
 Late (First) Vice-President of the Dante Society
 of London, and
 Formerly Fellow of the Royal Historical Society,
 Fellow (Honoris Causa) and Gold Medalist
 of the Society of Science, &c.
 Member of the Gregorian Society, and late of
 the Society of Arts.
 Bowyer Park, Camberwell, Surrey,
 and Hempnall, Co. Norfolk.
 1900.

• EX-LIBRIS • 1891 •



RICHARD C. JACKSON,
 FELLOW OF THE ROYAL HISTORICAL
 SOCIETY, AND SOCIETY OF ARTS,
 FELLOW (HONORIS CAUSA) & GOLD
 MEDALIST OF THE SOCIETY OF
 SCIENCE, &c., OF LONDON. MEMBER
 OF THE GREGORIAN SOCIETY. 80
 68 MARGARET STREET, CAVENDISH
 SQUARE, BOWYER PARK, CAMBER-
 WELL, SURREY, AND HEMPSTALL CO.
 NORFOLK. B-12 ARE MARKED TO BE KEPT

Murillo, Rubens, Stubbs, Claude Lorraine, Van Dyke, Gerard David, William Blake, Joshua Reynolds, and Whistler. This certainly sounds like a major collection.

Of course, attributions are cheap, collectors are vain, and dealers are hopeful. Anyone can say, "Here is a Michael Angelo drawing," "Gerard David painted this picture," "The Prince of Wales sat for Sir Joshua Reynolds for this portrait." For instance, two very large paintings are described as Rubens portraits of the Archduke Albert and his wife Isabella. But their authenticity was confirmed when they were given to the National Gallery under the terms of Jackson's will⁴¹ and exhibited as genuine Rubens paintings. In the way of artistic fashion, they have now been recatalogued as paintings from Rubens's workshop,⁴² but they are still in the National Gallery.

Regardless of the name attached to them, the portraits of the Archduke Albert and the Infanta of Spain are very fine paintings. It seems likely that other paintings in Jackson's house were also fine and valuable works. There must have been many treasures among the rubbish in Jackson's "literary and artistic Aladdin's Palace."

Richard C. Jackson's Blake Collection

What interests me most about Jackson is his enthusiasm for William Blake. Jackson was President of the William Blake Society of Arts and Letters, he wrote letters to the press about Blake, his Blake Society published works by Blake,⁴³ he said he owned important works by Blake, and he collected a number of works which he thought had be-

41. "I bequeath to the National Gallery London my two portraits by Rubens" (Will of Richard Charles Jackson "died 25/4/23 Inglewood N.H. Grove Park Denmark Hill S4 . . . Effects £4673-19s6d," a copy of which was generously sent to me by Mr. Kevin Hebborn). I cannot explain why these works bequeathed to the National Gallery appeared in the auction of Jackson's effects, unless it was for the purpose of obtaining an evaluation.

Jackson also bequeathed "to the South Kensington Museum [now the Victoria and Albert Museum] London all my ornamental antique silver and silver plated articles," and the museum accepted about 80 pieces, chiefly 18th-century English domestic silver, plus a Siennese chalice, and an Augsburg ciborium (c. 1700), according to a letter to me of 25 Nov. 1998 from Christopher L. Marsden, Assistant Museum Archivist of the V&A. (Jackson also offered the museum sword mounts and a dagger which never materialized.) Jackson's remaining silver was in the 1923 sale, 47 lots of antique silver and 15 lots of silver plate.

42. Gregory Martin, *National Gallery Catalogues: The Flemish School 1600-1900* (London, 1970) #3818-19; "There is no reason to suppose" that they are not "work[s] of the seventeenth century." The provenance notes: "Coll. Richard J. [sic] Jackson, Camberwell, by 1900; for sale by private contract, Sotheby's, 1912, not sold; bequeathed by Richard J. Jackson, 1923," with no reference to Jackson's 1923 sale catalogue.

43. William Blake, *The Book of Thel* [Illustrated by] W.R. Kean (Lambeth: Printed as Manuscript [sic] for the Blake Society, [?1917]) and William Blake, *Little Tom the Sailor* (London, 1917).

longed to Blake. None of these works associated with Blake was recorded before Jackson acquired them, and, with one curious exception, none of them has been recorded since that time either.

In a letter of 1901 Jackson said: "I have lived with William Blake (in the Spirit) for over 20 years,"⁴⁴ that is, since before 1881 when he was thirty. He said that "my father . . . knew Blake personally"⁴⁵ and had seen Blake's now-lost picture of "The Last Judgment" "in the artist's 'Salon' in Fountain Court, in the Strand," where Blake lived in 1820-27,⁴⁶ and "many of his relics are here which my father acquired of M^{rs} Blake & Tatham—and here are his Clock and watch & chain & seal—Still going & keeping fairly good time."⁴⁷

Jackson wrote many newspaper articles on Blake, and indeed "I have long had a book on the stocks, over 20 years, about Blake." With characteristic self-effacement, he wrote:

My Blake (my opus on Blake) will contain the last word on any subject connected with our poet-painter and prophet—upon which I have been engaged over twenty years, by the aid of my father who knew Blake personally. The work will contain some splendid little items full of the utmost interest & entirely unknown. . . .

I want my book to contain all my fire & spirit and I fear publishers will want this so watered down so as to become like those vapid things which are so deplorable. Blake was

44. Quoted from a letter to Henry Syer Cuming (1817-1902), founder of the local museum in Southwark; a reproduction of the letter in Southwark Local Studies Library was generously sent to me by Mr. Stephen Humphrey, archivist in the library. The letter continues: "I appear to know as much as that[?] of his nature, knowing also how sensitive he was of the slightest act done towards himself, that I sincerely trust you will let me thank you for your kindness towards to [sic] him." Some of Jackson's claims seem to be as strange as his diction.

45. Jackson to Palmer, 17 June 1913 (V&A Archives).

46. R.C. Jackson, "William Blake at the Tate Gallery, Resident in Lambeth from 1793-1800," *South London Press*, 31 Oct. 1913; "My father said Frederick Tatham had it in his house in Lisson Grove, in 1846 or 1847." He also said of "The Deluge," a study of the sea: "Blake exhibited it to my father, saying it was a sketch he made on the seashore on a rough day at Felpham, Bognor."

47. Jackson to G.H. Palmer of the V&A, 14 June 1913 (V&A Archives). In a letter of 5 Aug. 1914, Jackson said: "on the 12th Inst I am arranging a little local Exhibition of some of my Blakean treasures, at the Central library at Camberwell," but in a letter of 8 Aug. 1914 he said he had cancelled the exhibition because of the terrible times (V&A Archives). These Blake memorabilia do not appear in his sale catalogue, and no other reference to them is known. In a copy of *Songs of Innocence and Experience with Other Poems By W. Blake* (London: Basil Montagu Pickering, 1866) in the collection of Robert N. Essick, Richard C. Jackson put his bookplate and wrote: "such was my father's disgust at Gilchrist's Journalistic Performance, that he would not allow him to use any of his Blakean material."

Blake appears to be wearing a seal under his left elbow in the Phillips portrait of Blake engraved by Schiavonetti for Blair's *Grave*, a copy of which Jackson gave to the Victoria and Albert Museum Library.

one of our very greatest heroes—of which the world knows nothing.⁴⁸

What a pity such a valuable work was never published! A work written with “all my fire & spirit” and with reproductions from his own collection might have proved very interesting. But it is difficult to believe that Jackson’s opus on Blake had any existence outside Jackson’s fertile and apparently self-delusive imagination.

Jackson said that his father, who “was born in 1810, . . . was associated with a large number of earnest young men . . . gathering round the feet” of Blake. “My respected father detailed to myself many particulars respecting the mode of life and deep spiritual character” of Blake.⁴⁹ His respected father must have been very young when he knew Blake, for he was only seventeen when Blake died in 1827.

Jackson said that when he was “quite a boy” (c. 1860?), his father took him to tea in the house in Hercules Buildings, Lambeth, which the Blakes had occupied from 1790 to 1800. There Jackson saw Blake’s fig tree and “the luxurious vine . . . nestling round the open casement,” and his father told him that the vine and fig tree were presents to Blake from George Romney, the vine having been “grafted from the great vine at Versailles or Fontainebleau.”⁵⁰

George Romney is known to have admired Blake, and Hercules Buildings did have a grapevine, but no one else records that the vine and fig tree were given to the Blakes by George Romney. Even if the information of Jackson’s father is correct, it is still very indirect, for Jackson’s father was not born until eight years after Romney died and ten years after the Blakes left Lambeth.

But we have only Jackson’s word for the association of his father with Blake’s disciples.

The Blake drawings which R.C. Jackson owned are portrait busts of Dante (12" x 9") and of Chaucer (16" x 13") (#182), “a fine pen and ink drawing with inscription and figure cartoon” (#245), and “Blake’s original oil-colour sketch for Chaucer,”⁵¹ none of which appears in Martin Butlin’s magisterial catalogue raisonné of *The Paintings and Drawings of William Blake* (1981).

The engravings are the largest ones Blake made, for Chaucer’s *Canterbury Pilgrims* and for Hogarth’s *Beggar’s Opera*,⁵² plus “Blake’s own copy” of the *Illustrations of the Book of Job* “which is over 20 inches high by 16 wide,”⁵³ and

48. Letters of 14 and 17 June 1913 (V&A Archive).

49. “William Blake: An Unlooked for Discovery,” *South London Observer*, 22, 29? June 1912.

50. “William Blake: An Unlooked for Discovery,” *South London Observer*, 22 June 1912.

51. Wright (1907) II:180.

52. #293, not attributed to Blake in the 1923 catalogue.

53. “William Blake at the Tate Gallery, Resident in Lambeth from 1793-1800,” *South London Press*, 31 Oct. 1913; “Blake’s own copy” of *Job* is not otherwise known, it did not appear in Jackson’s sale, and the size is enormous; the largest known copy is c. 17 x 13 1/4”.

there is an otherwise unknown manuscript letter from William Blake to John Flaxman (#293). Jackson’s catalogue listed “The Library of William Blake, 25 vols.” (#812), with no further detail of author, title, size, or subject. None of these copies is known to Blake scholarship.

Even more unusual are furnishings from Blake’s house: an anonymous drawing of a “Female in Cerise Robe in Sainly Attitude with Skull on Lap (9-in. by 8-in.), formerly in the collection of William Blake, and a ditto, The Holy Family (16-in. by 11-in.)” (#276), a “Heppelwhite open arm mahogany chair with seat and back in velvet. FORMERLY THE PROPERTY OF WILLIAM BLAKE, THE POET” (#465), “WILLIAM BLAKE’S PAINTING TABLE, with leather centre, tilting top and on tripod (formerly Gainsborough’s) (20-in. by 15-in.)” (#579f), “cushions worked by his wife, his classical dinner service, some of his tea-set, and . . . his eight-day English clock, which still keeps good time.”⁵⁴ There is no other record of any of these furnishings outside the Jackson collection, and only the first three appeared in the Jackson sale. A velvet-backed chair and a classical dinner service sound most unlike the impoverished poet, however much one might expect them among Jackson’s Edwardian magnificence.

The elegant little tilt-topped painting table seems more appropriate for Blake, but its provenance from Gainsborough is very surprising. There is no known connection between Blake and Gainsborough, and Blake was only thirty-one when Gainsborough died. Of course the catalogue merely says that Gainsborough and Blake owned it, not that Blake obtained it from Gainsborough; Blake could have obtained it at any time after Gainsborough’s death in 1788.

This object has been traced today, and indeed when it was examined recently it proved to have a Blake drawing in the drawer. Unfortunately the drawing is not BY Blake; it is merely a representation OF him, the artist who portrayed Blake being a man who owned the table after 1923. There seems to be nothing in the table itself to associate it with either Gainsborough or Blake, and the claim in the 1923 catalogue must be judged at least in part by the plausibility of other claims which are made on behalf of Richard C. Jackson.

Perhaps the most surprising Blake works claimed in Jackson’s library are the very rare books there. In his catalogue was “The Book of Thel, by William Blake, 1789” (#737). A newspaper report of the Thirty-Fourth Meeting of the William Blake Society of Arts and Letters reports the “Interesting Speech of the President” Richard C. Jackson and gives an account of books displayed then, including “books with Blake’s Autograph,” the title pages of Blake’s *America* and *Europe*, plus a copy of *Jerusalem*, identified as

54. “William Blake, Hampstead, and John Linnell,” *South London Observer*, summer 1912.

"an original decorated copy."⁵⁵ The newspaper does not specify that Jackson owned these Blake works, but it implies that he did. And finally, Thomas Wright describes an occasion when Walter Pater and Jackson were talking in Jackson's library:

The talk having glided to William Blake, a topic upon which the two friends held but one opinion, Mr. Jackson brought out his Blake treasures: an engraving of the Canterbury Pilgrims, Blake's original oil-colour sketch for Chaucer, several copies of Blake's works in proof state, including the plates to the *Book of Job*, Young's *Night Thoughts*, and Blair's *Grave*—all in uncut states, and a copy of the famous "Marriage of Heaven and Hell," coloured in water-colours by Blake's own hand.⁵⁶

Jackson also says that "My Father had Blake's M/S of this [Blake's *Descriptive Catalogue*], and I may have it still."⁵⁷ No one else is known to have seen the manuscript of Blake's *Descriptive Catalogue* since the book was published in 1809.

These Blake treasures identified by Wright are very remarkable. The Canterbury Pilgrims engraving we have seen in Jackson's sale, but none of the others is named there. Some of the works are not rare in themselves, such as Blake's *Illustrations of the Book of Job* (1826), Young's *Night Thoughts* (1797), and Blair's *Grave* (1808), but no copy of *Night Thoughts* is known "in proof state" like Jackson's.

All the other Blake works which are claimed for Jackson's collection are genuinely rare. *The Book of Thel* survives in sixteen known copies, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* in nine copies, separate pulls of the title pages of *America* and *Europe* in one to four copies, and *Jerusalem* in only one complete colored copy like the one shown when Jackson spoke to the Blake Society of Arts and Letters.

These works are immensely valuable today, beginning at about \$20,000 per page,⁵⁸ and no known copy of *Thel*, *The Marriage*, *America*, *Europe*, and *Jerusalem* can be associated with Richard C. Jackson. Is there a wonderful trove of Blakes

from the Jackson collection to be discovered somewhere in South London where he lived? Was Jackson mistaken in believing that he owned genuine Blakes? Is there fraud involved here?

Before we go further, let me reiterate that much of the evidence that Jackson owned important original Blakes is indirect. Many of the claims are made on his behalf rather than by him. One of those making the claims is an anonymous newspaper reporter, and another is a hurried auction-cataloguer who sometimes seems to have been as careless with his identifications as with his orthography.

The third person making the claim, however, is Thomas Wright, and Wright too was a Blake enthusiast, president of a Blake Society, and the author of *The Life of William Blake* (1929). Thomas Wright, at least, is likely to have recognized a genuine Blake when he saw one.

However, it is not clear that Wright saw Richard C. Jackson's Blakes. The conversation between Walter Pater and Richard C. Jackson which Wright reports could only have been told him by Richard C. Jackson—or conceivably by someone who had it from Jackson. The authority for Jackson's ownership of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* "coloured in water-colours by Blake's own hand" and of proof copies of *Blake's Illustrations of the Book of Job*, Blair's *Grave*, and Young's *Night Thoughts* must derive from Richard C. Jackson himself.

The paradox of Jackson's ownership of an otherwise unrecorded copy of what the catalogue calls "The Book of Thel, by William Blake, 1789, in board cover, quarto size" may be explained fairly readily. The catalogue description continues: "39 copies, and 13 royal quarto ditto." This is manifestly not the "1789" edition of *The Book of Thel*, of which only sixteen copies are known to survive. Those fifty-two copies of *The Book of Thel* in the 1923 Jackson sale must be from *The Book of Thel*, [Illustrated by] W.R. Kean (Lambeth: Printed as Manuscript [sic] for the Blake Society, [?1917]) of which Richard C. Jackson was president. This edition of *The Book of Thel* does not bear Blake's designs, and no one who knew anything about Blake could have mistaken it for the first issue of 1789. The fault here is manifestly that of the 1923 cataloguer and not that of Richard C. Jackson.

Some of the other Blake works attributed to Jackson's collection may be similarly explained away, though with rather more difficulty. John Camden Hotten published a color facsimile of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* in 1868, and William Muir had made facsimiles of Blake's *America* and *Europe* in 1887. These facsimiles are sufficiently skillful to deceive an inexperienced eye, and the reporter for the *Observer and West Sussex Record* in 1914 may not have been very experienced in Blake matters.

There was no colored facsimile of *Jerusalem* until 1951. However, there was a plausible uncolored facsimile made in 1877, and in the *Observer and West Sussex Record* account, the words "decorated copy" may refer to marginal designs rather than to coloring.

55. Anon., "Felpham and the Poet-Painter Blake. The Thirty-Fourth Meeting of the William Blake Society of Arts and Letters. Interesting Speech of the President," *Observer and West Sussex Record*, 27 May 1914.

56. Wright (1907) II:180. Jackson's copy of "Blake's original oil-colour sketch for Chaucer" is not recorded in Butlin's *Paintings and Drawings of William Blake* (1981). Blake strongly disapproved of oils and very rarely used them.

A copy of B.H. Malkin's *A Father's Memoirs of His Child* (1806) with a frontispiece designed by Blake and an encomium about him, bearing Jackson's bookplate, is in the library of the University of Kentucky; it did not appear in Jackson's 1923 sale.

57. Letter of 5 Aug. 1914 (V&A Archives); the letter continues: "It is only last month that I re-discovered Michael Angelo's M/S of Justinus[?] so I may find Blake's M/S Cat also amongst my father's books here."

58. This estimate should perhaps be revised to "\$100,000 a page" in light of the sale of the 24 plates of *The First Book of Urizen* (E) at Sotheby's (New York) in April 1999 for \$2,500,000.

The copies of *America*, *Europe*, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, and *Jerusalem* said to have been in Jackson's collection may then, by a generous allowance of courtesy and credulity, refer to facsimiles of these works rather than to genuine originals. The known histories of all known original copies of these works scarcely allows the possibility that any of them belonged to Richard C. Jackson. Certainly no book associated with William Blake is known to have one of Richard C. Jackson's bookplates (illus. 9).

But what are we to make of the "books with Blake's Autograph" which are said to have been with these other Blakes in Jackson's collection?

No known book with Blake's autograph can be traced to the collection of Richard C. Jackson, much less twenty-five books from "The Library of William Blake." It is easy and perhaps gratifying to think that unmarked books in one's own collection came from the library of William Blake or of Charles Lamb, but books with autographs of William Blake and Charles Lamb are a different matter. Such autographs in books are likely to be either genuine or forged.⁵⁹ Wishful thinking is one thing, wishfully associating one's books and furniture with Thomas Gainsborough or Edmund Campion or Charles Lamb or William Blake. Wishful forgery is quite a different matter. And however wishfully we may think that Richard C. Jackson associated his books and pictures and furniture with the illustrious, there is scarcely any evidence that he used forgery to authenticate his wishes.

In any case, neither originals nor facsimiles nor forgeries of *America*, *Europe*, *Jerusalem*, the manuscript of *The Descriptive Catalogue*, or *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* appeared in the catalogue of Jackson's collections. Nor did copies of the far more common *Illustrations of the Book of Job*, *Young's Night Thoughts*, and *Blair's Grave* appear there. Surely at least some of these works were in Jackson's collection, whether originals or facsimiles. What can have become of them?

There is at least a possibility that they were disposed of before his death. Though the newspaper accounts reported with relish that Jackson refused to sell his treasures when his financial reverses reduced him to poverty—one obituary said that when he died he had only 5s in the bank⁶⁰—

59. There is a third possibility which must be considered. There are well over 20 London contemporaries of the poet bearing the names "William Blake" (see "A Collection of Prosaic William Blakes," *Notes and Queries* [1965]: 172-78), and several of them put their names in books which have been traced.

However, it seems extremely improbable that Richard C. Jackson or anyone else had a collection of "books with [the wrong William] Blake's Autograph."

60. Anon., "Recluse's £12,000 Art Hoard: Only 5s. in the Bank: Poverty in a House of Treasures: Rubens Pictures for the Nation," [no periodical identified, ?July 1923]. According to *Thomas Wright of Olney: An Autobiography* (London: Herbert Jenkins Ltd, 1936) 125: "Having lost a large sum of money by the failure of the Australian

he had made substantial donations to public institutions. In June 1900 he gave eight hundred and fifty books and pamphlets on Dante to Southwark Public Library,⁶¹ he gave prints and books to the Victoria and Albert Library,⁶² he bequeathed ornamental antique silver and silver plate to the Victoria and Albert Metalwork Department, and he bequeathed two fine oil paintings attributed to Rubens to the National Gallery. It would be charitable to hope that Jackson's original decorated copies of William Blake's *America*, *Europe*, *Jerusalem*, and *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, plus his uncut, proof copies of *Illustrations of The Book of Job* (Blake's own copy), *Blair's Grave*, and *Young's Night Thoughts* may yet turn up in an unexpected public collection. After all, who would have expected an important collection of Dante to turn up in the Southwark Public Library?

Richard C. Jackson certainly had an eclectic collection of treasures, including two portraits from the studio of Rubens, dozens of incunabula, a 1525 Homer, a 1529 Dante, and a 1598 Chaucer. He also had an impressive collection of wishes, including intimate friendship with Walter Pater, extensive collections of books and furnishings which had belonged to Charles Lamb and William Blake, and books of the utmost rarity engraved by William Blake. Some of these wishes may have come true. One may at least hope that some of them did. It would be worth a good deal to know where that truth lies.

banks, he was poor but would not part with any of his treasures. He had enough but hardly enough to live on . . ." Wright also said that Jackson was "eccentric beyond belief" (p. 192).

61. Samuel Wright, "Richard Charles Jackson," *Antigonish Review* 1 (Winter 1971): 88. I am told by Mr. Stephen Humphrey, Archivist, Local Studies Library, Southwark, that Jackson's gift actually went to Newington Library, which became the central library for the Metropolitan Borough of Southwark, and that in the 1980s the collection was transferred to London University, probably University College. However, I am told by Ms. Susan Stead of University College Library that Jackson's Dante collection did not come to them.

62. Letter to me from Christopher L. Marsden, Assistant Museum Archivist, V&A, 25 Nov. 1998. The books donated by Jackson consisted of a handful of twentieth-century volumes, including typographic editions of Blake's *Jerusalem* (1904) and *Milton* (1907), both ed. E.R.D. Maclagen and A.G.B. Russell. (On 17 June 1913 Jackson asked G.W. Palmer to "let me know if you have copies of *Blakes Milton & Jerusalem the originals* [?] in your Library at Kensington, if not—I will see if I can present copies" [V&A Archive].) The illustrations which Jackson gave to the V&A are an etching by John A. Poulter of Blake's cottage in Felpham and a portrait of Blake in a process reproduction of the engraving by Schiavonetti after T. Phillips.

Appendix

Works by R.C. Jackson (1847-4 April 1923)⁶³

*Works marked by an asterisk were seen as clippings (often without indication of date or journal) in the Ruthven Todd Collection of Leeds University.

1879 *The Very Rev. Provost Nugée* (1879) <Wright (1907)—see note 11>

1883 *The Golden City: Sonnets and Other Poems Written at Keble College, Oxford, with a sonnet "In Memoriam" of Dr. E.B. Pusey* (Oxford: B.H. Blackwell, 1883)

1883 *The Risen Life: Hymns and Poems for the Christian Year—Easter to Advent* (London: Masters & Co., 1883); New Edition, with Miniatures in Gold and Colours (London: J. Westall, 1886); Third Edition, illustrated by D.G. Rossetti, etc., 1889; (1894)

1883 *Sunday Readings* (Bristol & London, 1883)

1886 *His Presence: Spiritual Hymns and Poems of the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar for Devotional Use at Holy Communion* (London: J. Westall, 1886); Second Edition, with New Hymns (London: Church of England Text Society, 1887); Third Edition (London: R.Elkins [1889]); *His Presence: Impromptu Hymns and Poems at the Altar, Written in the Presence of the Holy Sacrament, Fourth Edition* (London: R. Elkins & Co., 1891) <25,000 copies of the last three editions were sold at 1s (Wright (1907) II:66)>

1886 *Jackson's Church of England Lectern and Parish Calendar for 1886, 1887* (London, 1886); Second Edition (1889); (1892-93); (1897) <according to Wright (1907) II:230, "350,000 dozen" copies of the 1897 edition were sold>

1892 Anon., *Divine Poems* (1892) <Wright (1907)>

1896 *Ye Purple Yeast [sic]: A Poem Written in Vindication of Old England's Honour [in reply to William Watson's poem *The Purple East*]* (London: Bowyer Press, 1896) <the book is a satire (on William Watson's *Purple East*) defending Britain's non-interference policy in Turkey and the East; the Bodley copy is inscribed to the Sultan of Turkey>

1898 *In the Wake of Spring: Love Songs and Lyrics* (London: Bowyer Press, 1898)

1901 "The Portraiture of William Blake," *Brixtonian* 15 (18, 25 Jan. 1901, "To be continued," but apparently it wasn't) <a plea for recognition of Blake>

1901 *"Blake Memorial," *Brixtonian* 15 (2 Feb. 1901) <an appeal for money>

1901 "King Alfred Medal of 1901," *Westminster Review* (Dec. 1901) <Wright (1907)>

1901 "The Millenium of Alfred the Great" from *Brixtonian* ([1901])

1901 *Alfred the Great of Blessed Memory: Memorials Concerning England Long Anterior to the Reign of King Alfred to His Epoch Dug Out of Forgotten Lore* (London: Bowyer Press, and Jones & Evans, 1901) 116 pp.; it reproduces "The Jacksonian Commemorative Medal, 1901" designed by himself for Alfred. In the Jackson sale by Goddard & Smith, 23-25 July 1923, #1091 was "About 13 reams of paper in the flat and unfolding [sic], being the Work on 'Alfred the Great,' written by Richard J. Jack-

son, F.S.A., President of the Dante Society, 1901."

1901 *In Memoriam the Lord Bishop of Oxford, the Right Revd. William Stubbs, D.D.* (Camberwell, 1901), broadside

1902 *Love Poems* (London: Bowyer Press, 1902)

1907 Marius the Epicurean. "The Wright Form of Biography," *Academy* No. 1826 (4 May 1907)

1912 *"William Blake: An Unlooked for Discovery," *South London Observer*, 22, 29? June 1912 <Blake's vine and fig tree were given him by George Romney>

1912 *"William Blake and John Linnell," *South London Observer* (summer 1912), in two sections a week apart

1912 *"William Blake's 'Dulce Domum,'" *South London Observer* (summer 1912)

1912 *"William Blake's Residence at Lambeth," *South London Observer* (summer 1912) <a quarrel with the London County Council as to which house was the poet's>

1913 *"William Blake at the Tate Gallery: Resident in Lambeth from 1793-1800," *South London Press*, 31 Oct. 1913 <about the pictures on exhibition>

1913 *"The Vision of William Blake: Ode on his 156th Birthday," *South London Observer*, 21 Nov. 1913

1913 *"William Blake—England's Michael Angelo: Some noble thoughts of our poet-painter brought into the light of day for his 156th birthday November 28, 1913," *South London Observer*, 26 Nov. 1913

1913 "The Immortal William Blake. The Memorial (Blank Verse) Sonnet for Blake's 156th Birthday," ([?Nov 1913]), separately issued with a portrait (copies in the John Johnson Collection in Bodley and the Tate)

1914 *"Felpham and the Poet-Painter Blake: Blake Society of Arts and Letters: Interesting Speech of the President," *Observer and West Sussex Recorder* (27 May 1914)

1917 William Blake, *The Book of Thel* [Illustrated by] W.R. Kean (Lambeth: Printed as Manuscript [sic] for the Blake Society, [?1917])

1917 William Blake, *Little Tom the Sailor* (London, 1917)

1919 "The 162nd Year's Mind of the Immortel [sic] William Blake, England's Wondrous Mystic Poet, A Memorial Sonnet, by the Baron Antwerpen-Plantin, Richard C. Jackson," (2 Aug. 1919), printed on blue paper (copy in the John Johnson Collection in Bodley)

1923 Will for effects valued at £4,673.19.6, heirs Henry Buxton Angier Ashton (solicitor, sole executor) and Gardner Teall (of The Authors Club, 7th Avenue at 56th Street, Carnegie Buildings, N.Y.), made 4 March 1923, probate 25 June 1923

n.d.

The Dream of Omar Khayyám ([n.p., n.d.]), pamphlet
Advertised but not seen

The Coming of the Bridegroom <ad in *The Risen Life* (1883)>

Hymns and Poems on Various Occasions <ad in *His Presence* (1891)>

Lyrics of the Blessed Sacrament <ad in *The Risen Life* (1883)>

Music for the Liturgy of the Blessed Sacrament <ad in *His Presence* (1891)>

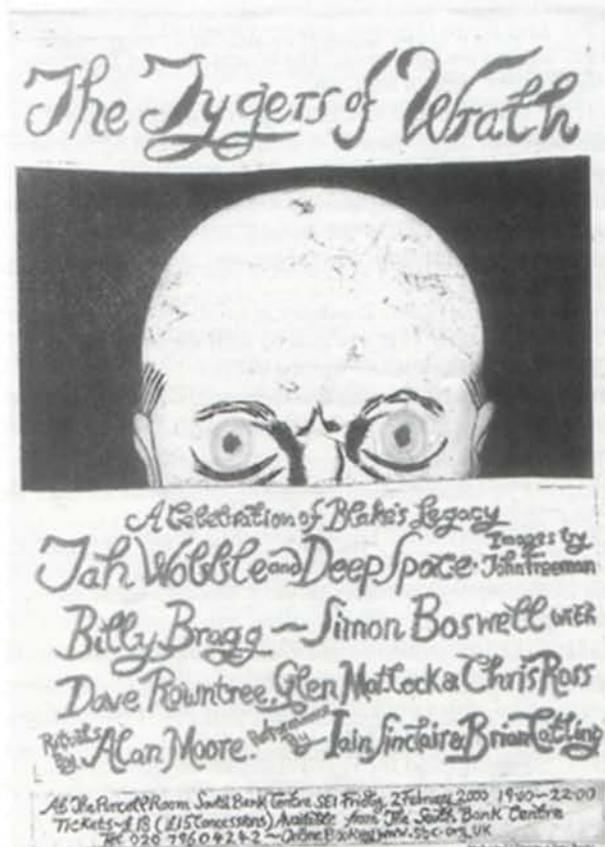
Pearls of Great Price and Other Poems (1891) <ad in *His Presence* (1891)>

Thine and Mine: Poems and Hymns for the Sick and Weary <ad in *His Presence* (1891)>

Articles in *Oxford University Herald*, *South London Observer*, *Camberwell and Peckham Times* "and other papers" <Wright (1907)>

R.C. Jackson and Dr. Lee of Lambeth were the proprietors of *The Church Echo* <Wright (1907)>

63. The year of Jackson's birth derives from the General Record Office in London (Vol. IV, p. 58, September 1847), kindly reported to me by Mrs. June Harris. Mrs. Harris tells me that she inherited a silver fish slice of 1838 engraved with "T W / from / R , C / 1906" which was given to her grandfather Thomas Wright on an occasion when Jackson stayed with him.



The Tygers of Wrath. Concert held in conjunction with an exhibition of Blake's works at Tate Britain. 2 February 2001. Purcell Room, South Bank Centre, London.

Reviewed by DAVID MINCKLER

Originally envisioned as a weekend-long conference to promote, celebrate, and expand the huge Blake exhibition at Tate Britain, this eclectic finale to that exhibition took Blake's aphorism ("The Tygers of Wrath are wiser than the Horses of Instruction") as its polestar: if the exhibition, with all its attendant courses, conferences, lectures, workshops, films, and readings, appealed to the scholars (the horses of instruction), then this conference would appeal to the counterculture (the tygers of wrath).

The initial plan included sounds and images of Allen Ginsberg performing Blake's songs, a session or two on Blake, jazz, and rock, Van Morrison singing some of the Blakean songs from *Veillon Fleece*, singer-songwriter Billy Bragg and Blake's relationship to radical politics, Jim Jarmusch's strange western, *Dead Man*, starring Johnny Depp as an accountant named William Blake, some musings

on Blake, Huxley, and the drug culture, the presence of Blake in Thomas Harris's first Hannibal Lecter novel, *Red Dragon*, Blake and the sexual revolution, etc.

But booking this hodgepodge suffered from the usual show-biz problems: Harris is a notorious recluse; Van Morrison is impossible to reach and anyway far too expensive; *Dead Man* was booked by a related film series; certain rights and releases could not be negotiated, etc. After the dust settled, the conference became a concert with little resemblance to the original concept.

The Purcell Room is an intimate auditorium of a few hundred seats in the massive South Bank Centre arts complex (Royal Festival Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall, Hayward Gallery, National Film Theatre, Museum of the Moving Image, etc.) across the Waterloo Bridge from Blake's last abode at Fountain Court. When the lights come down, not all the seats are occupied, but the room is full by the end of the night.

First up is long-time Blake fan, Billy Bragg—easily the best known name on the program, especially for his commitment to political and humanitarian issues. Many Brits consider Bragg's piano-accompanied rendition of "Jerusalem," the unofficial British national anthem, to be the most moving version of this oft-recorded verse. Initially surfacing during the Thatcher years, Bragg first received major recognition in the U.S. when his album of previously unrecorded Woodie Guthrie songs, *Mermaid Avenue*, was nominated for a Grammy in 1998.

Bragg strides onto the stage carrying a guitar and Blake's bust ("... our sponsor ... in case he wishes to communicate with us"). Although he sings only three songs, Bragg sets the tone by reminding the audience of the "infinite challenge" of Blake's vision: "It's not the artist's job to change the world. It's yours." Then he sings a new song about being English, an old love song, "New England," before finishing with the affectively Blakean "Upfield" from his 1996 album, *William Blake*:

I dreamed I saw a tree of angels, up on Primrose hill
And I flew with them over the Great Wen till I had seen
my fill
Of such poverty and misery, sure to tear my soul apart.
I've got a socialism of the heart, I've got a socialism of
the heart.

Next is a collaboration between writer (*Lights Out for the Territory*), poet, and book dealer Iain Sinclair, and poet, performance artist, and sculptor Brian Catling. Standing on either side of the stage at podiums, Sinclair and Catling introduce their performance piece by talking about their travel experiences on various Blake excursions and the importance of influence and possession when it comes to Blake—Milton's spirit visiting Blake, Blake inspiring Ginsberg, etc.

An odd and intermittently affecting recital of Blake's "Mental Traveller" follows. The lights dim and on a screen above and between Sinclair and Catling appears a projected

black-and-white image of an old woman, her eyes closed, her head moving back and forth as she grimaces and contorts her features, as if in mental anguish. We hear what sounds like someone hissing or breathing awkwardly, but the sound isn't synchronized to the picture. After a bit, the image and sound freeze, and Sinclair begins to recite this very strange poem from the Pickering Manuscript—until he reads the first word of the sixth verse, "Till." At which point, the image and sound start up again for a while, then freeze again, and the recitation or commentary picks up again until the next "till." This becomes a bit tedious and predictable, and some of the shifts back and forth don't go smoothly, but hearing the poem is worth the glitches. At the end of "Mental Traveller," Catling reads one of his own poems—meaning, I suppose, to illustrate how Blake had influenced him, but I couldn't discern any parallelism.

After hearing Jah Wobble's 1996 album, *The Inspiration of William Blake*, months before the concert, I looked forward to this set the most. The album is an eclectic mix of Blake lyrics ("Songs of Innocence," "Tyger," "Holy Thursday," etc.), atmospheric soundscapes, backing tracks, Eastern esoterica, and Western beats—in the manner of what is often now referred to as "world music."

The music and name suggest Caribbean origins, but Jah Wobble is actually an East End cockney named John Wardle, who emerged from the British punk rock scene of the late 70s and early 80s. In a drunken stupor, Sid Vicious of the Sex Pistols twisted his name into Jah Wobble, which he adopted because he thought it made him sound like a Jamaican bass player. When the Pistols dissolved, Johnny Rotten invited Wobble to play bass in his new band, Public Image Ltd., and when that too crashed, he dropped out of the music scene to become a train driver on London's underground until the late 80s. When he came back, he dropped the virulent nihilism of punk rock—in part because he discovered Blake—for experimental, eclectic collaborations with Björk, Brian Eno, Sinéad O'Connor, and many others.

Despite this inner change, Wobble is an imposing physical presence—a big hulk of a fellow with a shaved head. Joining him on the Purcell Room stage is Deep Space, a three-piece band he often plays and records with. The name is apt: with Wobble laying down the steady bass line, the others join in a hypnotic thirty-minute improvised instrumental piece that builds, Bolero-like, to a loud crescendo. Clive Bell and Jean-Pierre Rasle supply most of the sound—an improbable, exotic mix of French bagpipes, crumhorn, recorders, Turkish sipsi, shinobue flute, and stereo goathorns. On the screen above them, a slide show alternates between drawings and paintings by Blake and John Freeman (who did the concert program cover above). Certainly Blakean in the spacey sense.

After the intermission, visionary comic book novelist Alan Moore smolders onto the stage. He's tall, with long dark hair and beard, dressed in black, and accompanied by composer Tim Perkins. Given Blake's comic book style (the mix

of pictures and words) and his vivid colors, it's understandable that Moore sees Blake as an influential precursor. Moore's 1986 *Watchman* redefined the comic book medium, and his graphic novel, *From Hell*, was made into a film, again starring Depp.

After Moore settles into a seat at center stage, a recorded sound track commences, to which Perkins adds percussive touches. On the screen above Moore's head, a psychedelic video plays. And then Moore begins to read "Angel Passage," his own densely evocative, epic description of Blake's life in blank verse (a recording is available on the RE: label, PCD04, at www.stevenseverin.com). After a bit, performer Andrea Svajcsic, dressed in a white robe and carrying lighted torches, appears on stage behind Moore, swigs drafts of flammable liquid, and breathes fire into the air. At the end, she returns in a cloud of white smoke, cloaked in huge angel wings. Although it is overly busy, this performance seems the centerpiece of the evening and the closest to a genuine tribute. "It's not enough to study or revere him—only be him," insists Moore, who actually believes himself to be the reincarnation of Blake.

Last, and I'm afraid least, comes film composer Simon Boswell (*Photographing Fairies, A Midsummer Night's Dream*), along with a small chamber orchestra and classical pianist Chris Ross, Blur's Dave Rowntree on drums, former Sex Pistol Glen Matlock on bass, and surprise guest, actor Ewan McGregor. The musicians perform the first public airing of a new work called *Time to Die*, which combines the classical score of *Photographing Fairies* with a contemporary rap railing against the false glamour of early death, read by McGregor. What this has to do with Blake, I can't guess.

For the grand finale, performers and audience join in a standing singalong of Blake's "Jerusalem." All in all, some of the evening's performances worked, some didn't—much like Blake's art. The tygers of wrath were as wise as the horses of instruction.

An Oxford Companion to the Romantic Age: British Culture 1776-1832. Iain McCalman, general ed.; Jon Mee, Gillian Russell, Clara Tuite, assoc. eds. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999. 780 pp., 109 illus. £85/\$150 cloth; £20/\$29.95 paper.

Reviewed by NELSON HILTON

Unlike the *Encyclopedia of Romanticism: Culture in Britain, 1780s-1830s*, reported on in these pages nine years ago, this larger and more comprehensive volume offers itself as a "companion": *An Oxford Companion to the Romantic Age: British Culture 1776-1832*. Discussing this denomination in the "Introduction," the general editor Iain

McCalman refers to the advent of the "encyclopaedia" in the eighteenth century, but notes Coleridge's deprecatory rant that "[t]o call a huge unconnected miscellany of the *omne scibile*, in an arrangement determined by the accident of initial letters, an encyclopaedia, is an impudent ignorance of your Presbyterian bookmakers" (5). The "*Companion*," he continues, formed "another genre [which] made a quiet entry onto the publishing scene during the Romantic period," though "[n]obody, including its authors, seems to have been sure" as to what constituted one (10). Leigh Hunt's hopes for his 1828 periodical, *The Companion*, are invoked to characterize the editor's aims for the present endeavor: it would "not express a unified view of the world, but generate a collision and comparison of opinion from which truth would emerge . . . in a form that was always entertaining and personable, so as to generate a real friendship" (11).

The volume divides almost exactly into two parts, first a collection of forty-one essays grouped under the four conceptual headings "Transforming Polity and Nation," "Re-ordering Social and Private Worlds," "Culture, Consumption, and the Arts," and "Emerging Knowledges," and then alphabetical entries for "subjects viewed by the editors as intrinsically and self-evidently important to the cultural history of the period" (ix). This latter section is wonderfully ample, and includes useful entries on a variety of subjects not included in the 1992 *Encyclopedia* (e.g., *The Anti-Jacobin Review*, the London Corresponding Society, C. F. Volney, Edward Williams, Rousseau, John Thelwall). There are also 109 black-and-white illustrations "to reflect the fascination" of the Romantic epoch "with visual culture—with new styles and subject-matter in painting, with print-making and caricature, fashion and design" (x). All these elements are linked with a network of cross-references, the most playful occurring in the alphabetical entry for "romanticism," where the asterisk in the reference to "the period . . . encompassed in this *Romantic Age Companion*" refers the reader to the whole of the book.

The longer essays, which range around 6,000 words each, constitute the innovation and glory of the book, and are to be recommended as a fascinating overview and guide to key topics in current thinking about the romantic age or—the label which also tempted the editors—"the age of Revolution." All make for very rewarding reading, but among those which particularly struck this reviewer were the discussions of "Slavery," "Land," "Popular Culture," "Painting," "Poetry," "Antiquarianism (Popular)," "Language" and "Literary Theory."

In his essay on "Slavery" (sixth in the book), James Walvin emphasizes how products "of the slave empire and global commerce"—like tobacco, tea, coffee, chocolate, and in particular sugar—"so deeply embedded [themselves] in British daily experience that [their] social and economic origins passed unnoticed" (61). He reminds us that "Of all the slaves landed in the Americas, some 70 per cent worked in sugar," the crop which made the new bitter potions palatable

(59). If one compares his numbers for tons of sugar imported with population data elsewhere in the volume, it seems that the average consumption of sugar per person per year increased 400% to 500% between 1700 and 1800 (on its way to an average consumption of 100 pounds per person per year in 1900). This dramatic change, written into the very bodies of the British public and the rituals of daily life, emphasizes the extent to which "apparently innocent aspects of domestic consumption" were enabled by "the exercise of imperial power and commercial dominion" (61) that saw the delivery to the Americas by British slavers of 35,000 to 40,000 Africans annually. Walvin also offers a concise discussion of the "brilliant propaganda campaign" of the abolition movement and how it meshed with the growing ethos of sensibility (subject of an exemplary essay, the book's eleventh, by Barker-Benfield). One cannot but wonder, in light of the larger complex social dynamic which the volume so powerfully conveys, to what extent abolition served also as a kind of lure or false-consciousness to deflect and diffuse concern for the growing wage-slavery in Britain itself.

Anne Janowitz's essay on "Land" (the book's sixteenth) foregrounds "the practice and rhetoric of 'improvement'" (153). The term turns out to have implications far beyond husbandry:

Improvement as a practice referred to the management and cultivation of land to render it more profitable; as a discursive and rhetorical term improvement came to refer to moral or social cultivation. In the context of European and trans-Atlantic warfare as well as trade, improvement had a global dimension. In the context of the culture of Romanticism, the meanings of improvement range from an external set of incentives for increasing profit to a set of internal pressures for developing the Self. In the long run, the moral associations of the discourse of improvement outstripped its originally economic meaning, but in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries the meanings of improvement were often contradictory and obscure, as questions of profit and decorum were at times experienced as congruent, and at others as irreconcilable. (153)

An entry on "children's literature" in the book's second part quotes a reviewer of *A Mirror for the Female Sex: designed principally for the Use of Ladies' Schools* (1798) who argues that "The age we live in discovers a laudable anxiety for the improvement of the rising generation" (451). This history bears remembering in the context of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* which tells us, in perhaps deliberately unimproved fashion, that "Improvement [sic] makes strait roads, but the crooked roads without Improvement, are roads of Genius" and foresees "an improvement of sensual enjoyment." More conventional is Blake's rhetorical question, "What is the Joy of Heaven but Improvement in the things of the Spirit?" (*Jerusalem* 77). When Janowitz makes the interesting observation that "the period we have come to designate as 'Ro-

manticism' coincides exactly with the years of the greatest number of parliamentary enclosure acts" (160), one wonders whether children of a future age will look back at the present and find any contemporary upheaval to correlate with the appropriative intellectual enclosures presently enacted as extensions of copyright.

Iain McCalman and Maureen Perkins begin the twenty-third essay, on "Popular Culture," by noting "two overarching theses about popular culture in the Romantic age" argued by historians since the 1960s:

first, they have contended that a long-term process of polarization between elite and plebeian cultures widened into a yawning gulf; second, that over this same period the British middle and ruling classes subjected the culture of the common people to intensifying attack in order to eradicate or reform traditional customs and morality. Popular culture, they have argued, thus became increasingly oppositional and embattled, the domain of the labouring poor and outcast. This process of marginalization was compounded by the modernizing forces of commercialism and consumerism [the subject of the nineteenth essay]. (214)

They dwell in particular over the imposition of and "desire for a new uniform temporality"—evident in factory schedules and "the standardization of timetables"—and the resulting internalization of a new time-consciousness as a profound development of the age. But citing a new awareness of "some exaggeration both of the degree of cultural dominance achieved by the ruling classes . . . and of the extent to which plebeian culture took exclusively oppositional forms" (216), the body of the essay examines "the experiences and cultural expressions of three of the period's most notable plebeians: the brilliant Northamptonshire peasant poet John Clare, the celebrated Devonshire servant-prophetess Joanna Southcott, and London's bestselling writer-journalist Pierce Egan" (216-17). Each of these—and evidently also Blake, labeled in passing as Clare's "urban counterpart"—"mark[s] a confluence-point where orality and print, canonical literary works and street genres, combined and exchanged in complex ways" (217).

Mark Hallett's discussion of "Painting" (twenty-seventh in the book) insightfully summarizes the "class system for painting" which organized picture types according to "a progressively diminishing aesthetic status: portraiture, landscape, genre, and still-life painting" (252). At the top of this hierarchy in the late eighteenth century was the Royal Academy with its "patrician and elitist pretensions" embodied in the *Discourses* of Joshua Reynolds (whose "career is closely tied to the gradual professionalization and institutionalization of the arts in this period," according to his alphabetical entry [676], and thus, for Blake, one who "was Hired to Depress Art").

Reynolds declares, 'the beauty of which we are in quest is general and intellectual; it is an idea that subsists only in

the mind; the sight never beheld it, nor has the hand expressed it: it is an idea residing in the breast of the artist.' Through such high-flown language, the artist is thoroughly disassociated from the mechanical skills of craftsmanship, redefined as a liberal intellectual working within an enlightened Academic community, and mythologized as someone constantly seeking to 'raise the thoughts, and extend the view of the spectator.' (252)

But as Hallett also points out, there were also "irreverent . . . pamphlets like *The Royal Academicians: A Farce, of 1786* by Anthony Pasquin [John Williams, who rates a separate entry], or *Lyric Odes to the Royal Academicians* (1782-85) by Peter Pindar [John Wolcot, who 'remains seriously underestimated' according to his longer note]" which "offered a satirical and sophisticated rebuttal to the Academy's lofty claims to grandeur" (253). Such works would doubtlessly have interested a contributor to the 1785 Academy exhibition and confirm for me a satiric context of the immediate art world for Blake's manuscript *Tiriel*, which like his *Descriptive Catalogue* of twenty years later also (in Hallett's words) "bemoaned the state of the arts in a corrupt society" (256).

After a nod to a collective "lost 'seventh' Pleiad" of poets who might be considered with the usual six, Jerome McGann pitches his essay on "Poetry" (twenty-ninth in the book) around "the two dominant poets of their age, Byron and Wordsworth [, who] fairly define the contradictions of Romantic writing in the agon of their poetic relationship." Appropriately for "an age of taxonomic enthusiasm" (illustrated with charts published in 1787 and in 1798 which tabulated poetic achievements) McGann offers this most pithy paragraph:

If Byron and Blake stand together, and against Wordsworth, in their ethical judgment of nature and the non-human order of things, Wordsworth and Blake clearly share, over and against Byron, a belief that a redemptive scheme shapes both individual and collective existence. Byron and Wordsworth, on the other hand, stand against Blake in the authority they assign to objective and material conditions. For Wordsworth and Byron, everything is *not* as it is perceived; indeed, the primacy of a 'real' independent of perception or imagination characterizes their descriptive writing. Blake, in contrast, stands much closer to Keats, whose descriptions are driven by desire and structure as an order of pure language. (276)

Marilyn Butler's wonderful essay on "Antiquarianism (Popular)," the thirty-fifth, proposes to establish the contribution of the antiquarians "to cultural history and the professional modern study of both language and literature" by considering "four exemplary figures, all active in diverse aspects of popular culture by the last quarter of the eighteenth century—John Brand, Francis Grose, Joseph Ritson, and Francis Douce, and one in the early nineteenth century, William Hone" (329). Grose, for whom Burns wrote

"Tam O'Shanter," memorably described himself "in his collected essays, *The Grumbler* (1791), as 'an Opposition-man and Grumble-man'" (330). Thanks to Butler, the reader learns that

in *A Guide to Health, Beauty, Riches and Honour* (1785) [Grose] assembles an entertaining collection of these notices from London newspapers and journals, to disclose to 'those living remote from the capital . . . the vast improvement made within this century, not only in the more abstruse sciences, but in the arts and conveniences of life'. Grose's selection includes Mr Martin Vanbutchell, dentist, of Upper Mount Street, Grosvenor Square, who exhibits his embalmed wife to anyone armed with an introduction, any day between 9 a.m. and 1 p.m. except Sunday. In the *Guide* Grose anticipates Southey and Dickens in his curiosity about human wants and his eye for the grotesque. (330)

Butler concludes that in their work with fifteenth- and sixteenth-century literature, the antiquarians "were constructing a cultural history and a history of mentalities." In particular, "[b]y diagnosing late medieval culture as anarchic, disorderly, semi-pagan, and Rabelaisian, they were reading similar characteristics even into individual works," which action, she argues, "should have massive implications for our understanding of Romantic form" (334).

The two last long essays, the fortieth and forty-first, present Blake scholars Jon Mee on "Language" and Peter Otto on "Literary Theory." Mee reminds us that the "spectre of an increasingly literate population, whether real or imagined, desirable or undesirable, helps explain the urgency of debates from the middle of the eighteenth century about what constituted 'correct' English"—an urgency which seems to have motivated over 200 writings on "grammar, rhetoric, criticism, and linguistic theory" published between 1750 and 1800, as against fewer than one per year over the preceding fifty years. This context highlights the importance of John Horne Tooke, whose "experience in the law courts convinced him that language was an important instrument through which the authority of the élite was maintained" (374). His [*Epea pteroenta*], *Or Diversions of Purley* "sets itself up as an attack on . . . 'Metaphysical [that is, verbal] Imposture': the process by which the language operated in the interests of the powerful to exclude the unlearned from the public sphere" (374, 376). Blake seems to have this dynamic in mind with the emphasis in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* on "what [something] is called" and the confrontation between the narrator and the angel where what is seen depends on "metaphysics" and the "imposing" of one phantasy on another. Mee also introduces Charles Pigott's "much-reprinted *Political Dictionary* (1795)" as another agent, with Paine's *Rights of Man*, in the struggle against "imposture"; Blake must have enjoyed Pigott's assertion of "an entirely different and equally valid language of politics in which, for instance, 'Church' could

be glossed as 'a patent for hypocrisy; the refuge of sloth, ignorance and superstition, the corner-stone of tyranny'" (376).

Otto finds a "juxtaposition of aesthetics with questions of subjectivity and politics" to be characteristic of the age and effectively highlights how "[t]he literary and aesthetic theories of Coleridge and De Quincey elaborate different but interrelated responses to the late-eighteenth-century 'turn' to the subject exemplified by Kant" (378, 384). Subject himself (one is surprised to learn) of "[a]t least four book-length studies . . . published in London between 1795 and 1798," Kant's "circumscription of human knowledge" deflates "the pretensions of the literatures of knowledge and of power," and makes him for De Quincey "a disenchanter the most profound" (379, 382, 381). An illuminating two paragraphs on Coleridge's discussion of "the Brocken Spectre" suggest in a most accessible fashion "[t]he convergence between Kant's epistemological dilemmas and Coleridge's Romantic aesthetics" (382). Blake hardly figures in this overview, though Otto risks the shorthand formulation that "Blake attempts to open Kant's categories (the fixed forms of Urizen) and the forms of time and space (Los and Enitharmon) to the ungrounded energies of Eternity" (q.v. Otto's 1991 book) and observes that Blake aligns "subjectivity, aesthetics, and politics in a way that, one imagines, would be dismissed by Wordsworth, Coleridge, De Quincey, or Peacock" (384).

The topics of essays in the book's first part not yet mentioned include: "Revolution" (Mark Philp), "War" (J. E. Cookson), "Democracy" (H. T. Dickinson), "Women" (Barbara Caine, who notes very close links between "the question of genius and the question of women's sexual subjectivity" [50]), "Empire" (John Gascoigne), "Policing" (David Philips), "Law" (David Lemmings), "Utopianism" (Gregory Claeys), "Religion" (R. K. Webb), "Poverty" (Sarah Lloyd), "Domesticity" (Clara Tuite, who comments that the "naturalization of middle-class ideological prerogatives is what constitutes the ideal of domesticity" [129]), "Industrialization" (John Stevenson), "Class" (Eileen Janes Yeo), "Education" (Ian Britain), "Medicine" (Roy Porter, who contends curiously that "William Blake revelled in the idea that he was himself mad" [175]), "Consumerism" (Roy Porter, again—an essay illustrated with a page of Josiah Wedgwood's creamware shapes engraved by Blake in 1817), "Viewing" (C. Suzanne Matheson), "Publishing" (John Brewer and Iain McCalman, an essay augmented by a three-column entry on "publishing companies" in part two), "Prints" (David Bindman), "Theatre" (Gillian Russell), "Design" (Celina Fox), "Music" (Cyril Ehrlich and Simon McVeigh), "Architecture" (Daniel Abramson), "Prose" (Jon Klancher), "Novels" (Fiona Robertson, who singles out *Ivanhoe* as "probably the single most dominant cultural product of the nineteenth century" [295]), "Enlightenment" (Martin Fitzpatrick, who focuses on "Rational Dissent"), "Political Economy" (Donald Winch, who notes how both Burke and Paine "laid claim to the basic insights of Smith's political economy of mo-

dermy" [313]), "Natural Philosophy" (Richard Yeo), "Mythology" (Nigel Leask), "Exploration" (Nicholas Thomas), "History" (James Chandler), and "Psychology" (Robert Brown).

The second half of the *Companion* offers a cornucopia of shorter entries covering biographies, "cultural and political movements, important incidents and events, influential ideas and discourses, and technical terms or definitions" (ix). Here, just to sample briefly, we learn of "clubs oriented towards women such as the Belle Assemblée and the Female Parliament at the University of Rational Amusement" (480); that the years between 1801 and 1812 saw the transformation of "British experimental science from the artisanal mode of Priestley into the institutionally centered 'big chemistry' of the new metropolitan science" (479); that the father of Robert Malthus was Rousseau's executor (594); that Gideon Algernon Mantell, the discoverer of dinosaur fossils, "had in his last years alienated many colleagues and friends, and his funeral drew not one scientific or public figure" (595); that Harriet Martineau "spent her last twenty years in expectation of imminent death" (597);¹ that the first notable use of the term "melodrama" ["music drama"] oc-

1. Gary Kamiya's review of Jan Bondeson's *Buried Alive: The Terrifying History of Our Most Primal Fear* (2001), adds the curious datum that in her will, "[t]aking no chances, the writer Harriet Martineau left her doctor 10 guineas to cut off her head" (<http://dir.salon.com/books/feature/2001/03/07/buriedalive/index.html?pn=1>).

curs in 1802 (599); that the embodiment of Enlightenment publishing, Joseph Johnson, published "over thirty books on prophecy" (604); that John William Polidori's younger sister was the mother of Christina Rossetti (652); that Morgan John Rhys, who described himself in 1789 as "a Welshman opposed to all oppression" founded in 1798 an Allegheny mountain settlement "appropriately christened Beulah" (677); that in considering the history of Romanticism, "particularly since the early twentieth century, we can see the startling rise of Blake," who "independent of Immanuel Kant . . . proclaimed that mental things alone are real" (683); that Mary Shelley now receives more column inches than her husband; that Sir Robert Smirke was "probably the most successful and least inspired architect of the early nineteenth century" (708); and that Sarah Trimmer, as editor of the *Guardian of Education*, warned in its 1802 opening number of "[a] conspiracy against CHRISTIANITY and all SOCIAL ORDER . . . endeavouring to infect the minds of the rising generation, through the medium of books of Education and Children's Books" (739).

In sum, the book is a splendid achievement, one which should be in the hands of everyone with a more than passing interest in Romanticism. While the hardcover price is rather daunting, Oxford has now published the volume at the most attractive price of \$29.95, which makes it easy to recommend as the boon companion for any undergraduate or graduate student of Romanticism.

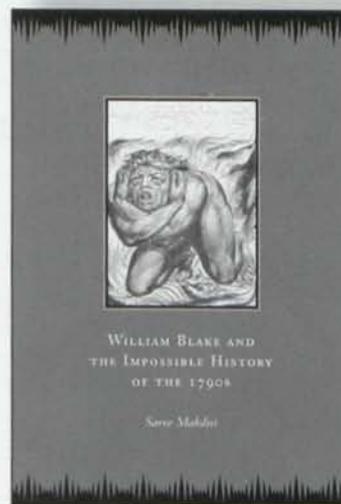
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