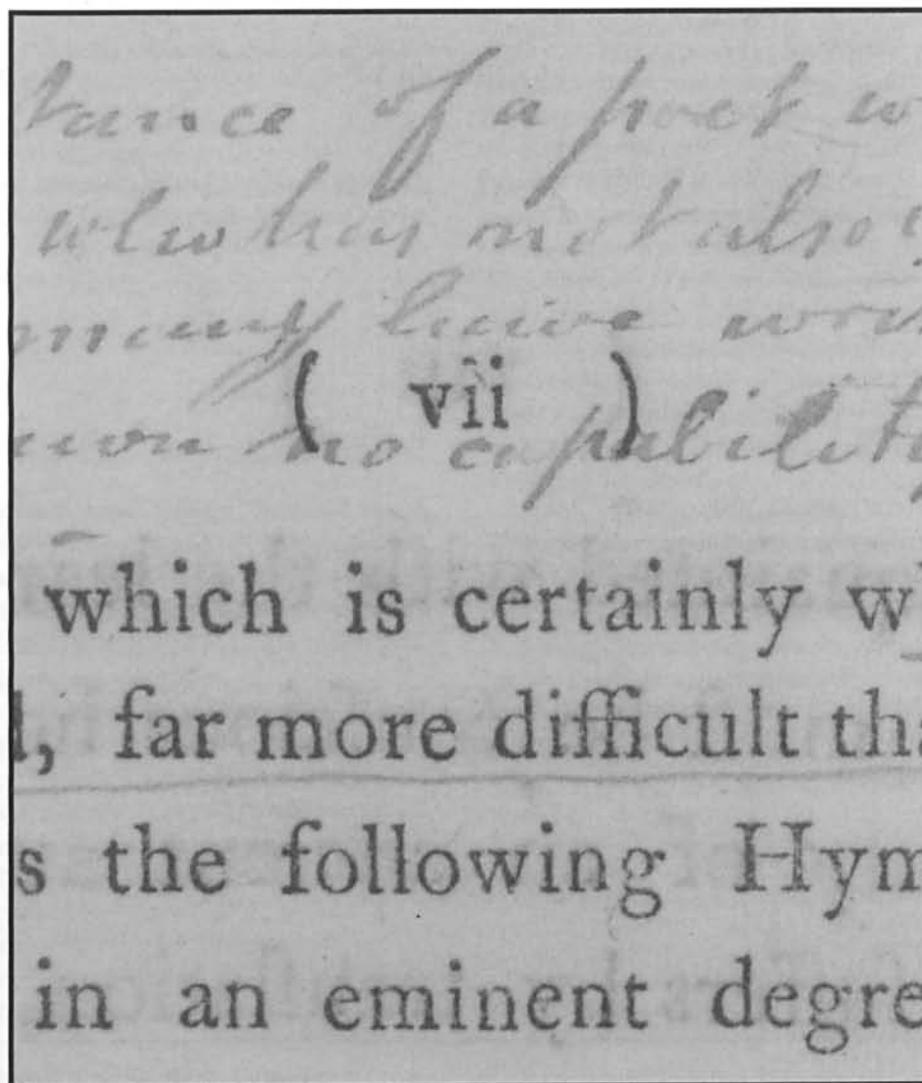


# BLAKE

AN ILLUSTRATED QUARTERLY



Found in the Bodleian:

Blake's Copy of Thomas Taylor's *Mystical Initiations*?

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WINTER 2010-11

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## A D V I S O R Y B O A R D

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Joseph Viscomi, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill  
David Worrall, The Nottingham Trent University

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

PHILIP CARDINALE (drpjcardinale@gmail.com) is an intellectual property law attorney specializing in copyright law at Drinker Biddle & Reath LLP in Washington, DC. He holds a doctorate in English literature from Oxford University.

JOSEPH CARDINALE (josephcardinale@hotmail.com) is a doctoral candidate in creative writing at the University of Hawaii (Manoa) and holds an MFA from the University of Massachusetts (Amherst). His book of creative fiction, *The Size of the Universe*, was published by FC2 in October 2010.

ROBERT N. ESSICK has been collecting and writing about Blake for over forty years.

JAMES ROVIRA (jamesrovira@gmail.com) is assistant professor of English and program chair of Humanities at Tiffin University in Tiffin, Ohio. His monograph, *Blake and Kierkegaard: Creation and Anxiety*, is now available from the Continuum International Publishing Group.

## E D I T O R S

EDITORS: Morris Eaves and Morton D. Paley  
BIBLIOGRAPHER: G. E. Bentley, Jr.  
REVIEW EDITOR: Alexander S. Gourlay  
ASSOCIATE EDITOR FOR GREAT BRITAIN: David Worrall

PRODUCTION OFFICE: Department of English, Morey 410,  
University of Rochester, Rochester NY 14627-0451  
MANAGING EDITOR: Sarah Jones sarah.jones@rochester.edu  
TELEPHONE: 585/275-3820 FAX: 585/442-5769

Morris Eaves, Department of English, University of  
Rochester, Rochester NY 14627-0451  
E-mail: morris.eaves@rochester.edu

Morton D. Paley, Department of English, University of  
California, Berkeley CA 94720-1030  
E-mail: mpaley@berkeley.edu

G. E. Bentley, Jr., 246 MacPherson Avenue, Toronto,  
Ontario M4V 1A2 Canada

Alexander S. Gourlay, Department of English, Rhode Island  
School of Design, 2 College Street, Providence RI 02903-2717  
E-mail: agourlay@risd.edu

David Worrall, Faculty of Humanities, The Nottingham Trent  
University, Clifton Lane, Nottingham NG11 8NS UK  
E-mail: david.worrall@ntu.ac.uk

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

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Cover: Thomas Taylor, *The Mystical Initiations; or, Hymns of Orpheus* (London, 1787), detail of p. vii. The Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford (Arch. H e.181).

A Newly Discovered Blake Book:  
William Blake's Copy of Thomas Taylor's  
*The Mystical Initiations; or, Hymns of  
Orpheus* (1787)

BY PHILIP J. CARDINALE AND  
JOSEPH R. CARDINALE

*Editors' note: Color versions of illus. 1-3 are online at the journal's web site <<http://www.blakequarterly.org>>.*

THERE is a book in the collection of the Bodleian Library at Oxford University that appears to contain marginalia written by the poet and painter William Blake. These marginalia were discovered several years ago by one of the authors of this paper during graduate research.<sup>1</sup> The book is a first edition, 1787 copy of Thomas Taylor's *The Mystical Initiations; or, Hymns of Orpheus* (Bodleian call number Arch. H e.181). Its author, sometimes referred to as "Taylor the Platonist," was the first to translate the complete works of Plato and Aristotle into English and has long been considered a Blake associate.

Upon the discovery of the marginalia, their style and content prompted a comparison with a facsimile of Blake's prose manuscript *An Island in the Moon* (c. 1784-85). The handwriting is strikingly similar. The annotator of *Mystical Initiations* left no autograph. The book contains one long and two short handwritten comments, as well as numerous passages underscored by the same pen. The comments and highlighted passages fit what is known of Blake's intellectual interests during the period in which he composed *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* (c. 1787-94). If this attribution is accepted, it will shed further light on the artist's association with Taylor and likely confirm a suspected source for Blake's poem "Ah! Sun-Flower" (see transcript, pp. 75-76). An especially heav-

The late Reginald Alton (1919-2003) gave insightful critique, enthusiasm, and encouragement at the earliest stage of this discovery. The article is dedicated to his memory. G. E. Bentley, Jr., Paul Betz, and Michael Phillips are also owed great thanks for their thoughtful comments, especially on paleographic matters. Jon Mee and Steve Critchley also provided invaluable feedback in response to drafts of this essay.

1. They were first noticed by Phil Cardinale in June 2001 during initial research for an Oxford English literature dissertation on Virgil and the romantics. The project of identifying, authenticating, and publishing the annotations was postponed until his academic studies were complete. His brother, Joseph Cardinale, a visiting student at Oxford when the marginalia were discovered, assisted with research and drafting, and later revived the project and helped bring it to fruition.

ily marked page may also record Blake's receptivity to Taylor's assertion that "in the universe, there is one harmony though composed from contraries" (transcript, p. 70).

This article argues for attributing to Blake the marginalia in the Bodleian's copy of *Mystical Initiations*. Part I describes the book and accounts for its provenance. Part II transcribes the marginalia. A third section delineates Blake's relationship with Taylor. Part IV compares the marginalia with specimens of Blake's handwriting, and Part V offers initial ideas about how these annotations might correlate with Blake's known thought.

### I. Description and Provenance

The Bodleian copy is an octavo-sized, 227-page book bound in brown calfskin. It is in good condition. Gilt letters on the spine read "HYMNS / OF / ORPHEUS / TAYLOR / 1787", and a book stamp inside the front cover marks its entrance into the Bodleian collection on 29 September 1928. A librarian's pencil-written note also inside the front cover records that the book was "Bt. from Quaritch" (Bernard Quaritch, bookseller of London, est. 1847). The purchase is traceable to the following listing in *Bernard Quaritch's Catalogue, Number 414* (London, February 1928):<sup>2</sup>

ORPHEUS. The Mystical Initiations, or Hymns of Orpheus, translated from the original Greek: With a preliminary Dissertation on the Life and Theology of Orpheus; by THOMAS TAYLOR. Post 8vo., newly bound in calf Printed for the author, 1787 £2, 2s

The October 1927 issue of *Quaritch's Catalogue* (number 410) advertises several of Taylor's books without including *Mystical Initiations*, hinting that the bookseller may have acquired the book in the intervening months. The description "newly bound in calf" implies that Quaritch rebound the volume. In response to an inquiry, the bookseller searched its records to attempt to trace the original supplier. It appears, however, that the firm did not retain a bill of sale due to the relatively low selling price of the item.<sup>3</sup>

According to the August 1788 issue of the *Monthly Review*, *Mystical Initiations* originally sold for five shillings, "sewed," with its leaves loosely stitched so that buyers could have their copies bound as individual taste and funding allowed.<sup>4</sup> The title page states that the volume was originally distributed by "T. Payne and Son, at the Mews-gate; L. Davis, Holborn; B. White and Son, Fleet-street; and G. Nichol, Strand." Since this was Taylor's first philosophical work it can be assumed that the print run was modest, almost certainly fewer than 1,000

2. P. 23, item 221. The book is listed in the catalogue's classics section, which is described as "including a choice selection ... from the library of the late Lt. Col. Sir George Holford" (18). However, this copy of *Mystical Initiations* must have a different source, as it is not listed in Sotheby's 1927-28 Holford estate auction catalogues.

3. The authors are grateful to Ted Hofmann, a director at Bernard Quaritch, who searched the firm's records shortly after the marginalia were discovered and concluded that a bill of sale had not been retained.

4. *Monthly Review* 79 (Aug. 1788): 133.

copies. In 1792 the book reached a second printing under the shortened title *The Hymns of Orpheus*.

If at some point the Bodleian copy belonged to Blake, it is unclear who owned the book immediately prior to its acquisition in 1928. The artist died in 1827, leaving his property to his wife, Catherine. On her death four years later, Blake's belongings fell into the possession of Frederick Tatham, who over the course of more than thirty years sold off or disposed of the artist's legacy piece by piece. In 1864 Tatham recalled that Blake

had a most consummate knowledge of all the great writers in all languages. To prove that, I may say that I have possessed books well thumbed and dirtied by his graving hands, in Latin, Greek, Hebrew, French, and Italian, besides a large collection of works of the mystical writers, Jacob Behmen, Swedenborg, and others. His knowledge was immense ....<sup>5</sup>

During the years that he kept Blake's possessions, Tatham became an adherent of the Christian minister Edward Irving and it has been said that, convinced by some of that sect that Blake's works were satanic, he destroyed many of the artist's original manuscripts, blocks, plates, and drawings.<sup>6</sup> Blake's library presumably suffered similar cleansing, though many of the books survived and have since come to light. Bentley's *Blake Records Supplement* lists fifty-one books known to have been in the poet's collection, of which twenty-one have been traced.<sup>7</sup> Among that number fifteen contain annotations, which are reprinted in Erdman's *Complete Poetry and Prose*.<sup>8</sup> *Mystical Initiations* is not listed in *Blake Records Supplement*, but the critical work of George Mills Harper, Kathleen Raine, and others has established a likelihood that the poet had access to this book in the late 1780s and early 1790s.<sup>9</sup>

In 1998 a copy of Blake's 1809 Chaucer prospectus was found in the possession of the Bodleian Library, where it had lain unrecorded for 165 years.<sup>10</sup> This discovery makes it plausible that another item connected to Blake could have remained undetected in the same library.

5. Letter to Francis Harvey (8 June 1864), quoted in G. E. Bentley, Jr., *Blake Records*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004) [hereafter *BR(2)*] 57fn.

6. G. E. Bentley, Jr., *The Stranger from Paradise: A Biography of William Blake* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001) 446.

7. G. E. Bentley, Jr., *Blake Records Supplement* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988) [hereafter *BRS*] 124-29. *BRS* rather than the more recent *BR(2)* is cited here because the latter does not contain an appendix on Blake's library. *Blake Books Supplement* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), in Part V: Books Owned by Blake, lists three more titles, and reveals that another in *BRS* (Homer, #26) has been traced.

8. David V. Erdman, ed., *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, newly rev. ed. (New York: Anchor-Random House, 1988) [hereafter *E*] 583-670.

9. Harper, *The Neoplatonism of William Blake* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1961); Raine, *Blake and Tradition*, 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968).

10. J. B. Mertz, "An Unrecorded Copy of Blake's 1809 Chaucer Prospectus," *Blake* 32.3 (winter 1998-99): 73-74.

## II. Transcription of the Marginalia

*Mystical Initiations* is presented in three parts: a preface (iii-iii); "A Dissertation on the Life and Theology of Orpheus" (1-106); and a translation from ancient Greek of the Orphic hymns (107-227). The "Dissertation" is subdivided into three sections: an account of Orpheus's life (1-12), an interpretation of his theology (12-84), and an introduction to his hymns (85-106).

The annotator of the Bodleian copy wrote marginalia on pages vii (see illus. 1 and 3), viii (illus. 2), and 69, corrected printer's errors on pages 89 and 225, and underscored numerous passages, primarily in the first two sections of Taylor's "Dissertation." All the handwriting and most of the underlining in the book appear in orange-brown ink; some underlining and markings are in a darker, brown-black shade of ink. Pencil marks appear on pages 14, 30, 44, 68, 70, and 97.

The transcription that follows generally gives text on the left side and explanatory details on the right. For ease of reading, instances of the long "s" have been changed to the modern short "s." As much of Taylor's context has been reproduced as space allows, but necessarily only annotated and underlined sections are given. The full text of the 1787 edition may be consulted through *Eighteenth Century Collections Online* <<http://gdc.gale.com/products/eighteenth-century-collections-online>> (subscription required). Alternatively, *Thomas Taylor the Platonist: Selected Writings*, ed. Kathleen Raine and George Mills Harper (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), reproduces the 1792 reprint. Readers should note that the text of *The Mystical Hymns of Orpheus* (1824, a second edition), reproduced in *Hymns and Initiations*, volume 5 of the Thomas Taylor Series (Frome: Prometheus Trust, 1994), differs substantially from that of 1787 and 1792.

( iii )

P R E F A C E

THERE is doubtless a revolution in the literary, correspondent to that of the natural world. The face of things is continually changing; and the perfect, and perpetual harmony of the universe, subsists by the mutability of its parts. In consequence of this fluctuation, different arts and sciences have flourished at different periods of the world: but the complete circle of human

( iv )

human knowledge has I believe, never subsisted at once, in any nation or age.

There is no instance of a poet writing good  
Blank verse, whether in, or before, or after  
Rhyme: but many have written good Rhyme  
in the same manner as <sup>vii</sup> the capability of writing good  
Blank verse -

rhyme, which is certainly when well  
executed, far more difficult than blank  
verse, as the following Hymns must  
evince, in an eminent degree.

And, here it is necessary to ob-  
serve, with respect to translation, that  
nothing is more generally mistaken  
in its nature; or more faulty in its  
execution. The author of the Letters  
on Mythology, gives it as his opi-  
nion, that it is impossible to translate  
an ancient author, so as to do justice  
to his meaning. If he had confined  
this sentiment, to the beauties of  
the composition, it would doubtless  
have been just; but to extend it,  
to the meaning of an author, is to  
make truth and opinion, partial and  
incommunicable. Every person, in-  
deed,

1-2. Thomas Taylor, *The Mystical Initiations; or, Hymns of Orpheus* (London, 1787), pp. vii (this page) and viii (facing page). The Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford (Arch. H e.181). See illus. 3 for detail of the annotation on p. vii.

deed, acquainted with the learned languages, must be conscious how much the beauty of an ancient author generally suffers by translation, though undertaken by men, who have devoted the greatest part of their lives to the study of words alone. This failure, which has more than any thing contributed to bring the ancients into contempt with the unlearned, can only be ascribed to the want of genius in the translators: for the sentiment of Pythagoras is peculiarly applicable to such as these; that many carry the Thyrsis, but few are inspired with the spirit of the God. But this observation is remarkably verified, in the translators of the ancient philosophy, whose performances are for the most part without animation; and consequently

Where accurate and profound researches, into the principles of things have advanced to perfection; there, by a natural consequence, men have neglected the disquisition of particulars: and where sensible particulars have been the general object of pursuit, the science of universals has languished, or sunk into oblivion and contempt.

Thus wisdom, the object of all true philosophy, considered as exploring the causes and principles of things, flourished in high perfection among the Egyptians first, and afterwards in Greece. Polite literature was the pursuit of the Romans; and experimental enquiries, increased without end,

( v )

end, and accumulated without order, are the employment of modern philosophy. Hence we may justly conclude, that the age of true philosophy is no more. In consequence of very extended natural discoveries, trade and commerce have increased; while abstract investigations, have necessarily declined: so that modern enquiries, never rise above sense; and every thing is despised, which does not in some respect or other, contribute to the accumulation of wealth; the gratification of childish admiration; or the refinements of corporeal delight. The author of the following translation, therefore, cannot reasonably expect, that his labours will meet with the approbation of the many: since these Hymns are too ancient, and too

( vi )

too full of the Greek philosophy, to please the ignorant, and the sordid. However, he hopes they will be acceptable to the few, who have drawn wisdom from its source; and who consider the science of universals, as first in the nature of things, though last in the progressions of human understanding.

The annotator's ink is orange brown.

The translator has adopted rhyme, not because most agreeable to general taste, but because he believes it necessary to the poetry of the English language; which requires something as a substitute, for the energetic cadence, of the Greek and Latin Hexameters. Could this be obtained by any other means, he would immediately relinquish his partiality for rhyme,

There is no instance of a poet writing good Eng. Blank verse who has not also written good Rhyme: but many have written good rhyme ( vii )

who have shewn no capability of writing. good Blank verse .

rhyme, which is certainly when well executed, far more difficult than blank verse, as the following Hymns must evince, in an eminent degree.

And, here it is necessary to observe, with respect to translation, that nothing is more generally mistaken in its nature; or more faulty in its execution. The author of the Letters on Mythology, gives it as his opinion, that it is impossible to translate an ancient author, so as to do justice to his meaning. If he had confined this sentiment, to the beauties of the composition, it would doubtless have been just; but to extend it, to the meaning of an author, is to make truth and opinion, partial and incommunicable. Every person, indeed,

( viii )

deed, acquainted with the learned languages, must be conscious how much the beauty of an ancient author generally suffers by translation, though undertaken by men, who have devoted the greatest part of their lives to the study of words alone. This failure, which has more than any thing contributed to bring the ancients into contempt with the unlearned, can only be ascribed to the want of genius in the translators: for the sentiment of Pythagoras is peculiarly applicable to such as these; that many carry the

See illus. 2. "though" is double underlined, and the annotator replaces it with the word "because." (quite faded) in the left margin. "words" is also underscored twice.

Thyrsis, but few are inspired with the spirit of the God. But this observation is remarkably verified, in the translators of the ancient philosophy, whose performances are for the most part without animation; and consequently ....

...

[There are no further marked passages in the preface.]

[1]

A  
D I S S E R T A T I O N  
ON THE  
Life and Theology of ORPHEUS.

SECT. I.

THE great obscurity and uncertainty in which the history of Orpheus is involved, affords very little matter for our information; and even renders that little, inaccurate and precarious. Upon surveying the annals of past ages, it seems that the greatest geniuses, have been subject to this historical darkness; as is evident in those great lights of antiquity, Homer and Euclid, whose writings indeed enrich mankind with perpetual

(2)

petual stores of knowledge and delight; but whose lives are for the most part concealed in impenetrable oblivion. But this historical uncertainty, is no where so apparent, as in the person of Orpheus; whose name is indeed acknowledged and celebrated by all antiquity (except perhaps Aristotle alone); while scarcely a vestige of his life is to be found amongst the immense ruins of time. For who has ever been able to affirm any thing with certainty, concerning his origin, his age, his parents, his country, and condition? This alone may be depended on, from general assent, that there formerly lived a person named Orpheus, whose father was Cægrus, who lived in Thrace, and who was the son of a king, who was the founder of theology, among the Greeks; the instigator of their life and morals; the first of

prophets, and the prince of poets; himself the offspring of a Muse; who taught the  
Greeks

(3)

Greeks their sacred rites and mysteries, and from whose wisdom, as from a perpetual and abundant fountain, the divine muse of Homer, and the philosophy of Pythagoras, and Plato, flowed; and, lastly, who by the melody of his lyre, drew rocks, woods, and wild beasts, stopt rivers in their course, and even moved the inexorable king of hell; as every page, and all the writings of antiquity sufficiently evince. Since thus much then may be collected from universal testimony, let us pursue the matter a little farther, by investigating more accurately the history of the original Orpheus; with that of the great men who have, at different periods, flourished under this venerable name.

...

[The next few marked passages are in a brown-black ink; this may or may not be the same annotator. The orange-brown ink returns at p. 69.]

(4)

...

Our poet, according to fabulous tradition, was torn in pieces by Ciconian women:

(5)

women: on which account, Plutarch affirms the Thracians were accustomed to beat their wives, that they might revenge the death of Orpheus. Hence, in the vision of Herus Pamphilus ....

The annotator has made a long dark X in the margins.

...

(6)

having recalled Eurydice to life, and not being able to detain her, he destroyed himself; nightingales building their nests, and bringing forth their young upon his tomb; whose melody, according to report, exceeded every other of this species. Others again ascribe his laceration, to his having celebrated every divinity except Bacchus ....

The annotator again has made a long X beside this passage.

...

(9)

...  
 siderable space of time. Afterwards, when Neanthus, the son of Pittacus the tyrant, found that the lyre drew trees and wild beasts with its harmony, he earnestly desired its possession; and having corrupted the priest privately with money, he took the Orphean lyre, and fixed another similar to it, in the temple. But Neanthus considering that he was not safe in the city in the day time, departed from it by night; having concealed the lyre in his bosom, on which he began to play. But as he was a rude and unlearned youth, he confounded the chords; yet pleasing himself with the sound, and fancying he produced a divine harmony, he considered himself as the blessed successor of Orpheus.

(10)

pheus. However, in the midst of his transports, the neighbouring dogs, roused by the sound, fell upon the unhappy harper and tore him to pieces.

...

[On p. 12 "SECT. II" begins, moving the discourse from Orpheus's life to his theology.]

(14)

...  
 The belief indeed of the man, who looks no higher than sense, must be necessarily terminated by appearances. Such a one introduces a dreadful chasm in the universe; and diffuses the deity through the world like an extended substance; divided with every particle of matter, and changed into the infinite varieties of sensible forms. But with the ancient philosopher, the deity is an immense and perpetually exuberant fountain; whose streams originally filled and continually replenish the

This mark is in a lighter gray shade that may be pencil.

Brown-black ink here and below.

(15)

the world with life. Hence the universe contains in its ample bosom all general natures; divinities visible and invisible ...

...

(19)

...  
 And hence we conclude that there is another certain nature exempt from the passivity and imperfection of bodies, existing not only in the heavens, but in the ever-changing elements, from which the motion of bodies is primarily derived. And this nature is no other than soul, from which animals derive their life and motive power; and which even affords an image of self-motion to the unstable order of bodies.

"soul" is underlined boldly.

If then the self-motive essence is more ancient than that which is moved by another, but soul is primarily self-motive, hence soul must be more ancient than body; and all corporeal motion must be the

(20)

the progeny of soul, and of her inherent energy. It is necessary, therefore, that the heavens, with all their boundless contents, and their various natural motions (for a circular motion, is natural to such bodies), should be endued with governing souls, essentially more ancient than their revolving bodies. According to the Platonic philosophers ....

(21)

...  
 ...  
 Because it is also necessary that the soul, essentially rational, should receive intellect by participation, and that intellectual energy should be of two

(22)

two kinds; one primarily subsisting in the divine intellect; but the other subsisting secondarily in its offspring soul. You may add too, the presence of intellectual illumination in body, which is received in as great perfection as its unstable and obscure nature will admit. For how is it possible that the celestial orbs should be for ever circularly moved in one definite order, preserving the same form, and the same immutable power, unless they participated of an intellectual nature. For soul is indeed the constant supplier of mo-

tion; but the cause of perpetual station, of indentity and uniform life, reducing unstable motion to a circular revolution, and to a condition eternally the same, must be more ancient than soul.

...

( 25 )

...

In consequence of this reasoning, Orpheus filled all things with Gods, subordinate to the demiurgus of the whole Δημιουργῶ, every one of which performs the office destined to his divinity, by his superior

( 26 )

riour leader. Hence according to his theology there are two worlds, the intelligible and the sensible. Hence too his three demiurgic principles: Jovial, Dionysiacal, and Adonical, Διῶς, Διονυσιακή, Αδωναϊκή, from whence many orders and differences of Gods proceed, intelligible ..., intellectual, super-mundane, mundane, celestial, authors of generation. And among these some in the order of guardian, demiurgic, elevating and comprehending Gods; perfecters of works, vivific, immutable, absolute, judicial, purgative, &c. and besides these to each particular divinity, he added a particular multitude of angels, dæmons, and heroes; for according to Proclus, relating the opinion

( 27 )

opinion of Orpheus, and the theologists: ... "About every God there is a kindred multitude of angels, heroes, and dæmons. For every God presides over the form of that multitude which receives the divinity." He likewise considered a difference of sex in these deities, calling some male, and others female ....

...

( 28 )

...

For that we may begin with the extremes, heaven corresponds with earth, in the order and proportion of male to female. Since the motion of the heavens imparts particular properties and powers, to particular things.

But on the other hand earth receiving the celestial defluxions, becomes pregnant, and produces plants and animals of every kind. And of the Gods existing in the heavens, some are distinguished by the male division, and others by the female ....

...

( 30 )

...

And in the same place, Proclus has preserved to us another copy of Orphic verses, which are also found in the writer (de Mundo); previous to which he observes, that the demiurgus, or artificer of the world, being full of ideas, comprehended by these all things within himself, as that theologer (Orpheus) declares. With these verses we have connected others, agreeable to the order of Stephens, Eschenbach, and Gesner, as follows.

...

( 43 )

...

For it is surely astonishing that the soul should live immaterially, in material concerns; and preserve itself uncontaminated amidst such base defilements; that it should drink of the cup of oblivion, and not be laid asleep by the intoxicating draught; that it should elevate its eye above

( 44 )

above the sordid darkness with which it is surrounded; and be able to open the gates of truth, which, though contained in its essence, are guarded and shut by terrene and material species. But that it is possible to know more of such exalted natures than is generally believed, by the assistance of the ancient philosophy, accompanied with a suitable life, is, I am persuaded, true; and I would recommend the arduous and glorious investigation to every liberal mind.

Let us now consider the nature of sacrifice according to Orpheus and the Platonists; previous to which, I must beg leave to inform the reader, that the Greek theologists and philosophers were not (as they are represented by modern writers on mythology) so stupid as to worship the creature instead of the Creator; and to neg-

This mark is in the lighter gray shade that is also on p. 14.

This and the next five lines are marked with a single vertical stroke, probably pencil as on pp. 14 and 30.

The ink in this section is brownish black.

lect or confound that homage and veneration,

( 45 )

ration, which is due to the first cause of all. On the contrary, they considered the supreme Being as honoured by the reverence paid to his most illustrious offspring; and carefully distinguished between the worship proper to the Deity, and to the subordinate Gods ....

...

But as I cannot give a better account of the nature and antiquity of sacrifice than from the writings of Porphyry, I shall present the reader with the following paraphrase, on

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on part of the second book of his excellent work on abstinence.

"The period of time appears to have been immensely distant, from which, as Theophrastus says, a nation the most learned of all others, and inhabiting the sacred region formed by the Nile, began first of all, from the domestic fire, to sacrifice to the celestial divinities ....

"most", "of", and "others" are underlined twice.

For at first they performed sacrifices, not with aromatics,

( 47 )

atics, but with the first fruits of the green herb; plucking it with their hands, as a certain soft down or moss of prolific nature. Indeed the earth produced trees before animals; but prior to trees, the annually rising grass, the leaves, and roots, and entire produce of which having collected, they sacrificed with fire ....

...["]

( 67 )

...

Besides, since we are as children torn from the bosom of our parent, we

( 68 )

we ought on this account to request by

our prayers that we may return to the Gods our true intellectual parents. If this is the case, do not they who deny that prayers are to be offered to the Gods, and who prevent their souls from being united with the divinities, that is with beings more excellent than themselves, appear similar to those who are deprived of their parents?

...

( 69 )

...

For a conversion to the universe procures safety to every thing which it contains. If therefore you possess virtue, it is requisite you should invoke that divinity which previously comprehended in himself every virtue: for universal good is the cause of that good which belongs to you by participation. And if you seek after some corporeal good, the world is endued with a power which contains universal body. From hence therefore it is necessary that perfection should also extend to the parts. Thus far that most excellent philosopher Porphyry; in which quotation, as well as the preceding, the reader must doubtless confess, that Proclus did not without reason admire him, for what he calls his τὰ ιεροπρεπή νοήματα, or conceptions adapted to holy concerns; for surely no philo-

( 70 )

philosopher ever possessed them in a more eminent degree.

If it should be asked, in what the power of prayer consists, according to these philosophers? I answer, in a certain sympathy and similitude of natures to each other: just as in an extended chord, where when the lowest part is moved, the highest presently after gives a responsive motion. Or as in the strings of a musical instrument, attempered to the same harmony; one chord trembling from the pulsation of another, as if it were endued with sensation from symphony. So in the universe, there is one harmony though composed from contraries; since they are at the same time similar and allied to each other. For from the soul of the world, like an immortal self-motive lyre, life every where

The first four lines of p. 68 are marked by a single vertical stroke, probably made with a pencil.

In orange-brown ink, the annotator has crossed out "him" and above written "it". This appears to be the same ink and hand as on p. vii.

This page is particularly heavily marked; in addition to underscores in orange-brown ink, a single vertical line in what appears to be pencil runs down the margin.

resounds, but in some things more inferior  
and

(71)

and remote from perfection than in others. And with respect to the super-mundane Gods, sympathy and similitude subsists in these as in their most perfect exemplars; from whence they are participated by sensible natures, their obscure and imperfect images. Hence (say they) we must not conceive, that our prayers cause any animadversion in the Gods, or, properly speaking, draw down their beneficence; but that they are rather the means of elevating the soul to these divinities, and disposing it for the reception of their supernal illumination. For the divine irradiation, which takes place in prayer, shines and energizes spontaneously, restoring unity to the soul, and causing our energy to become one with divine energy. For such, according to these philosophers, is the efficacy of prayer, that it unites all inferior with all superior beings.

(72)

beings. Since, as the great Theodorus says, all things pray except the first.

Indeed so great is the power of similitude, that through its unifying nature all things coalesce, and impart their particular properties to others. Whilst primary natures distribute their gifts to such as are secondary, by an abundant illumination, and effects are established in the causes from which they proceed.

...

(75)

...

For how shall we account for those plants called heliotropes, that is attendants on the sun, moving in correspondence with the revolution of its orb; but selenitropes, or attendants on the moon, turning in exact conformity with her motion? it is because all things pray, and compose hymns to the leaders of their respective orders; but some intellectually, and others rationally;

(76)

rationally; some in a natural, and others after a sensible manner. Hence the sunflower, as far as it is able, moves in a circular dance towards the sun; so that if any one could hear the pulsation made by its circuit in the air, he would perceive something composed by a sound of this kind, in honour of its king, such as a plant is capable of framing. Hence we may behold the sun and moon in the earth, but according to a terrene quality. But in the celestial regions, all plants, and stones, and animals, possessing an intellectual life according to a celestial nature. Now the ancients having contemplated this mutual sympathy of things, applied for occult purposes both celestial and terrene natures, by means of which through a certain similitude they deduced divine virtues into this inferior abode. For indeed

(77)

deed similitude itself is a sufficient cause of binding things together in union and consent. Thus if a piece of paper is heated, and afterwards placed near a lamp, though it does not touch the fire, the paper will be suddenly inflamed, and the flame will descend from the superior to the inferior parts. This heated paper we may compare to a certain relation of inferiors to superiors; and its approximation to the lamp, to the opportune use of things according to time, place, and matter. But the procession of fire in the paper aptly represents the presence of divine light, to that nature which is capable of its reception. Lastly, the inflammation of the paper may be compared to the deification of mortals, and to the illumination of material natures, which are afterwards carried upwards like the

(78)

the fire of the paper, from a certain participation of divine seed. Again, the lotus before the rising of the sun, folds its leaves into itself, but gradually expands them on its rising: unfolding them in

proportion to the sun's ascent to the zenith; but as gradually contracting them as that luminary descends to the west. Hence this plant by the expansion and contraction of its leaves appears no less to honour the sun than men by the gesture of their eye-lids, and the motion of their lips. But this imitation and certain participation of supernal light is not only visible in plants, which possess but a vestige of life, but likewise in particular stones. Thus the sun-stone, by its golden rays, imitates those of the sun; but the stone called the eye of heaven, or of the sun, has a figure similar

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similar to the pupil of an eye, and a ray shines from the middle of the pupil. Thus too the lunar stone, which has a figure similar to the moon when horned, by a certain change of itself, follows the lunar motion. Lastly, the stone called Helioselenus, i. e. of the sun and moon, imitates after a manner the congress of those luminaries, which it images by its colour. So that all things are full of divine natures ....

( 83 )

In consequence of a blind and mistaken zeal it is common to ridicule the opinions of the ancient philosophers, in order to establish the certainty of the Christian religion. But surely revelation does not require so unwarrantable and feeble a support, which in reality only betrays the cause it endeavours to defend, by giving infidels occasion to suspect, either weakness

( 84 )

weakness in its evidence, or obscurity in its fundamental doctrines. Besides, the generality of these uncandid opponents know nothing of the Platonic writers, from whom alone genuine information can be derived on this sublime and intricate subject; and from whose works the preceding Dissertation has been so abundantly enriched. Were these invaluable

books more generally known and understood, if they did not refine our taste, at present so depraved, they would at least teach us to admire the strength which human reason is capable of exerting, and to be more modest in our pretensions to wisdom; they would silence ignorant declaimers, and stop the immense increase of books on modern philosophy, which are so rapidly hastening to the abyss of forgetfulness, like streams into the ocean from which they originally flowed.

SECT.

...

[The remainder of the tract, "SECT. III" (pp. 85-106), introduces the Orphic hymns. This section features only a correction in brown-black ink on p. 89, and a light, vertical pencil mark on p. 97.]

( 89 )

...

It is on this account we have entitled them mystical initiations, which is doubtless their proper appellations. The author too of the Allegories in the Theogony of Hesiod ....

In brown-black ink the annotator blots out the "s" in "appellations".

...

( 97 )

...

Now Onomacritus calls Hercules and Vulcan, Καρτεροχειρ, or strong-handed; and he celebrates Hercules and Mercury as "having an almighty heart."

A light, vertical pencil mark runs alongside this sentence.

...

[No marks appear in Taylor's translation (pp. 107-227), except for a correction in orange-brown ink at the lower-right corner of p. 225, within a footnote to "To Death." The annotator adds "cted" to a word that should say "contracted" but lacks those letters due to a printing error.]

( 225 )

...

You then, as the votaries of truth, will, I doubt not, unite with me in most earnest wishes, that every valuable work on the Platonic philosophy was well translated into our native tongue; that we might no longer be subject to the toil of learning the ancient languages. The mischief, indeed, resulting from the study of words is almost too apparent to need any illustration: as the understanding is generally contracted,

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its vigour exhausted; and the genius fettered to verbal criticism, and grammatical trifles.

### III. Blake and Taylor: An Overview

Taylor (1758-1835) was a believer in ancient Greek theology who in the late 1780s began publishing a rapid succession of works that denounced Enlightenment thought and promoted paganism. *Mystical Initiations* was the first of these works. Taylor ultimately published the first complete translations in English of Plato (1804, partly revised from the work of Floyer Sydenham) and Aristotle (1806-12), as well as translations of many of the Neoplatonists whose philosophy he preferred. Called by contemporaries "Taylor the Platonist" and "Taylor the Pagan," he was a mathematician and metaphysician who taught himself Greek through Plato, and to whom university jobs were closed because of his religious dissent. He was one of the great classicists of his time, who presented Greek thought (or distorted it, some said) in a new and revolutionary light.

Taylor and Blake were six months apart in age and began their literary careers in the same intellectual circle. They may have met as early as 1783, probably through the sculptor John Flaxman. *Poetical Sketches*, Blake's first work, was published that year in part through Flaxman's patronage, and in 1785 Taylor delivered a series of twelve lectures on Platonic philosophy at Flaxman's home. He also lectured in late 1784 at the Freemasons' Tavern opposite the residence of James Basire, the engraver to whom Blake had been apprenticed. It does not seem improbable that Blake attended some of these lectures. Blake is thought to have caricatured Taylor in his fragmentary prose satire *An Island in the Moon* (c. 1784-85), alongside representations of the Unitarian thinker Joseph Priestley, the radical bookseller Joseph Johnson, and Blake's younger brother Robert, among others. Taylor may have inspired the character Obtuse Angle, who sings an early version of "Holy Thursday" (from *Innocence*) and whose arrival, at the point where the manuscript tantalizingly ends, gladdens Quid the Cynic (Blake's pseudonym for himself).

Through lecturing in 1784 Taylor met William Meredith, a businessman whose patronage allowed him to quit his job as a banker's clerk and write *Mystical Initiations*. The book received its first notice in June 1787 and was followed within four months by Taylor's "paraphrase translation" of Plotinus's *Concerning the Beautiful*.<sup>11</sup> In February 1787 Blake's younger brother Robert had died of tuberculosis, an event that would be pivotal in William's career. According to Blake's first biographer, Alexander Gilchrist, Blake nursed his dying brother until, at the last, he said he witnessed the young man's soul rise through the ceiling "clapping its hands for joy."<sup>12</sup> Blake claimed that Robert's spirit soon after appeared to him and taught him the secrets of illuminated printing.

It is in the context of Robert's recent death that we might imagine Blake's reading *Mystical Initiations*, which in large part passionately expounds Neoplatonic ideas of the soul.

11. *Critical Review* 63 (June 1787): 401-06 and 64 (Oct. 1787): 286-88.

12. Gilchrist, *Life of William Blake*, "Pictor Ignatus," 2 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1863) 1: 59.

There is reason to suppose that Taylor may have been the sort of person with whom Blake could have conversed about the soul at that time. In addition to possibly having known Robert (alter egos of both men appear in *An Island in the Moon*), Taylor would likely not have dismissed Blake's claim of seeing his brother's spirit. Though he does not affirm it in his public writing, in private marginalia Taylor refers to his own mystical experience. He suggests that the soul, in such a state, "will spontaneously utter musical sounds, as indications of the harmony within."<sup>13</sup>

S. Foster Damon first posited Blake's connection with Taylor in 1924, four years before the Bodleian bought its copy of *Mystical Initiations*.<sup>14</sup> Harper thoroughly investigated that link in the 1950s. His *The Neoplatonism of William Blake* devotes several pages to *Mystical Initiations*, asserting that

Blake may have found much that excited him, including a metaphysical discussion, based upon the Theory of Forms and the Theory of Emanation, of the participation of all earthly things in the divine order and an explanation of several Neoplatonic symbols. Chief among these was the sun .... The immediate product most likely was Blake's "Ah! Sunflower."<sup>15</sup>

Bibliographic evidence confirming Blake and Taylor's friendship did not come to light until the early 1970s.<sup>16</sup> It took the form of two anecdotes, the first written between 1867 and 1869 in the *Reminiscences* of Taylor's longtime friend Alexander Dyce (1798-1869):

Taylor, so absurd himself in many aspects, was ready enough to laugh at the strange fancies of others,—for instance, at those of that half-crazed man of real genius, Blake the artist. "Pray, Mr. Taylor," said Blake one day, "did you ever find yourself, as it were, standing close beside the vast and luminous orb of the moon?"—"["]Not that I remember, Mr. Blake: did you ever?"—"Yes, frequently; and I have felt an almost irresistible desire to throw myself into it headlong."—"I think, Mr. Blake, you had better not; for if you were to do so, you most probably would never come out of it again."<sup>17</sup>

Dyce may have had in mind the passage in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1790) where the narrator throws him-

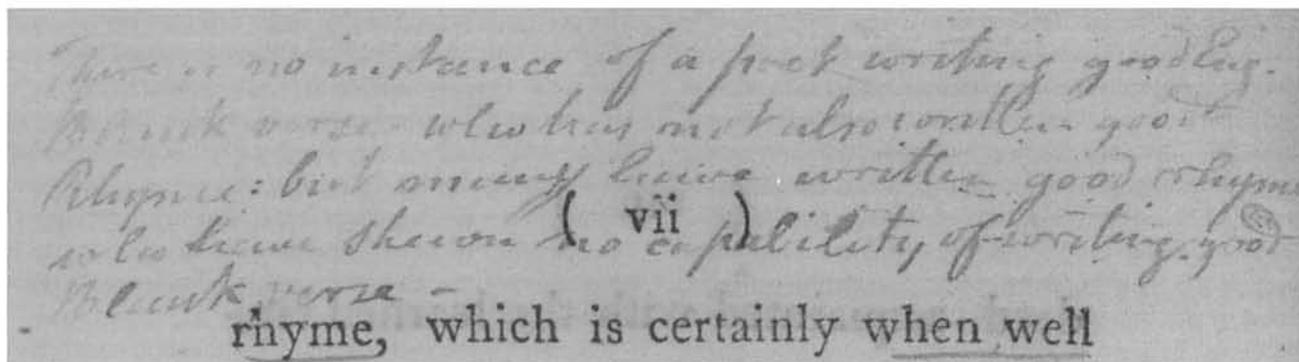
13. Quoted in S. Foster Damon, *A Blake Dictionary*, rev. ed. (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1988) 396. The quoted passage appears in Taylor's *The Philosophical and Mathematical Commentaries of Proclus*, 2 vols. (London, 1788) 2: 277. In Taylor's own copy, his comment beside this passage states "I wrote this from my own experience at the time. T. T."

14. See *William Blake: His Philosophy and Symbols* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1924) 32, where Damon states of Taylor: "Blake, we imagine, was alternately shocked and delighted at this 'philosophical polytheist'; but at first he could only laugh."

15. Harper 119 (discussion on 119-23).

16. James King, "The Meredith Family, Thomas Taylor, and William Blake," *Studies in Romanticism* 11 (1972): 153-57, and Richard J. Schrader, ed., *The Reminiscences of Alexander Dyce* ([Columbus]: Ohio State University Press, 1972) 134-35, established that Blake and Taylor were acquainted.

17. Quoted in Bentley, *BR*(2) 500.



3. Thomas Taylor, *The Mystical Initiations; or, Hymns of Orpheus* (London, 1787), detail of p. vii. The Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford (Arch. H e.181).

self into the sun (pl. 19).<sup>18</sup> William Meredith (1804-31), the nephew of Taylor's patron of the same name, recalled in 1829 another incident:

T. Taylor gave Blake, the artist, some lessons in mathematics & got as far as the 5<sup>th</sup>. proposit<sup>n</sup>. wch proves that any two angles at the base of an isocoles triangle must be equal. Taylor was going thro the demonstration, but was interrupted by Blake, exclaiming, "ah never mind that—what's the use of going to prove it, why I see with my eyes that it is so, & do not require any proof to make it clearer."<sup>19</sup>

Both anecdotes are of undetermined chronology and may date as early as the 1780s, though a diary entry by George Cumberland implies that Taylor and Blake were in contact late in life. Cumberland breakfasted with Taylor on 15 October 1825 and spoke of old friends, after which he wrote in his diary "The Duke of Sussex is also Taylor's friend—memo to see Blake."<sup>20</sup>

#### IV. Handwriting Authentication

Only one annotation in *Mystical Initiations* is longer than a word, but in certain ways it is a very desirable sample. Several words recur, displaying the writer's variations on particular letter pairings, and it is in a distinctive shade of ink. The annotation, which appears above the text of page vii (see illus. 3), reads:

There is no instance of a poet writing good Eng.  
Blank verse who has not also written good  
Rhyme: but many have written good rhyme  
who have shewn no capability of writing. good  
Blank verse .

The best bases for comparative analysis with Blake's handwriting, according to G. E. Bentley, Jr., an authority on Blake's handwriting who reviewed this article prior to publication, are capital letters ("B," "E," "R," and "T") and letters that have

ascenders and descenders (as in "good," "many," "of," "poet," "who," "writing," and "capability").

If it is accepted as plausible that the marginalia date to around the same time as the publication of *Mystical Initiations*, the best comparative source for Blake's handwriting is the manuscript of *An Island in the Moon* (c. 1784-85). Its first page is reproduced here as a sample for comparison (see illus. 4).

The table on the following pages compares samples of the annotator's handwriting in *Mystical Initiations* with corresponding instances from *An Island in the Moon*.<sup>21</sup> The table includes capital letters, letters with ascenders and descenders, and finally some additional words paralleled in the *Island* manuscript. The samples have been enhanced in order to provide easier comparisons of letter formation.

Collectively these samples display a likeness between the annotator's handwriting and Blake's, which supports an attribution of the marginalia to the artist. The shade of the orange-brown ink may provide another argument for attribution. The ink is fairly bright and its shade is comparable to the orange-brown text in some of Blake's illuminated prints, although there are differences between writing ink and printing ink.<sup>22</sup> In addition, the somewhat peculiar shade of the ink offers the best evidence that the ink underliner was the author of the marginalia. The other underlinings in the book are not as easy to associate with the same person and can only be linked through the general consistency of the content underlined.

18. See Bentley, *BR*(2) 500fn.

19. Quoted in Bentley, *BR*(2) 500.

20. Quoted in Geoffrey Keynes, *Blake Studies*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971) 247-48.

21. The authors are indebted to G. E. Bentley, Jr., for recommending these specific comparisons.

22. For more on Blake's ink formulas for printing, see Joseph Viscomi, *Blake and the Idea of the Book* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993) 94-99.

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In the Moon, in a certain Island near by a mighty continent, which small  
island seems to have some affinity to England, & what is more extraordinary the  
people are so much alike & their language so much the same that you would  
think you was among your friends. in this Island dwell three Philosophers  
I mention the Epicurean, Lucid the Lyric, & Sepsop the Pythagorean. I call them  
by the names of those sects tho' the sects are not ever mentioned there as being  
quite out of date however the things still remain, and the exercises are the  
same. the three Philosophers sat together thinking of nothing, as usual.

Democritus Column the Antiquarian & after an absurd case of Inquiries to  
no purpose sat him self down & described something that nobody lister to  
so they were employ'd when M<sup>r</sup> Gimblet came in ~~the~~ the corner of her  
mouth seem'd I don't know how, but very odd as if she hop'd you had not  
an ill opinion of her. to be sure we are all poor creatures, will she scater  
& ~~listen~~ seem'd to listen with great attention while the Antiquarian seem'd  
to be talking of virtuous cats, but it was not so. she was thinking of  
the shape of her eyes & mouth & he was thinking of his eternal fame  
the three Philosophers at this time were each endeavouring to conceal ~~the~~  
his laughter (not at them but) at his own imagination, this was the situa-  
tion of this improving company when in a great hurry, Inflammable Gaps  
the Wind finders enter'd. they seem'd to rise & salute each other

Democritus Column & Inflammable Gaps fix'd their eyes on each other. their  
tongues wast in question & answer but their thoughts were otherwise employ'd  
I don't like his eyes said Democritus Column. he's a faded puppy said  
Inflammable Gaps. smiling on him. the 3 Philosophers ~~the~~ the Lyric  
smiling the Epicurean seem'd ~~to~~ studying the flame of the candle &  
the Pythagorean playin' with the cat. ~~lyt~~ with open mouths to the  
adefyng discompos.

Sir said the Antiquarian I have seen these works & I do affirm that they  
are no such thing, they seem to me to be the most wretched paltry flimsy stuff  
that ever ~~was~~ ~~what~~ ~~dye~~ ~~say~~ ~~what~~ ~~dye~~ ~~say~~ said Inflammable Gaps, why  
why I wish I could see you write so. Sir said the Antiquarian. according  
to my opinion. the author is an eminent blockhead. - Your reason Your reason  
said Inflammable Gaps why why I think it very abominable to call a man  
a blockhead that you know nothing of. Reason Sir said the Antiquarian  
I'll give you an example for your reason As I was walking ~~along~~ the  
street I saw <sup>with</sup> a number of swallows on the ~~top~~ ~~of~~ ~~the~~ ~~roof~~ ~~of~~ ~~an~~  
old Gothic square they seem'd to be going on their passage as Pety says  
as I was looking up. a little outie fellow pulling me by the sleeve oris  
preay Sir who do all they belong to. I turn'd my self about with great

4. Blake, An Island in the Moon, p. 1. © Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge. Image courtesy of the William Blake Archive.

*Mystical Initiations*

*An Island in the Moon*

Capital letters "B" in "Blank" (two instances)

"Bible" (pp. 3, 4); "Before" (p. 7)

"E" in "Eng."

"Epicurean," "Etruscan," "Enquiries"  
(p. 1, first instances)

"R" in "Rhyme"

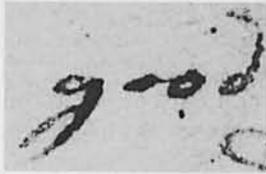
"Reason" (p. 1)

"T" in "There"

"Tactics," "Theology," "Tilly"  
(p. 3, first instances)

Editors' note: The words from *Mystical Initiations* were scanned at 500% from the Bodleian's photograph of page vii, then enhanced with Adobe Photoshop to darken the handwriting and lighten the background, and reduced to 350% of the original size. The samples from *An Island in the Moon* were cropped from the *William Blake Archive's* scans, then enlarged to 150% of the original. The Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford (Arch. H e.181), and © Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, respectively; *Island* images courtesy of the *William Blake Archive*.

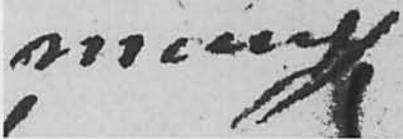
Ascenders and "d" in "good" (four instances)  
descenders



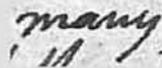
"odd" (p. 1)



"many"



"many" (pp. 12, 13)



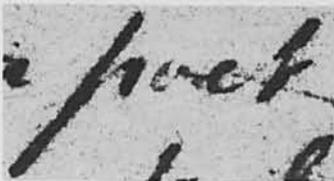
"of" (two instances)



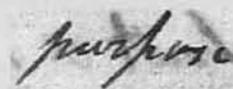
"of" (p. 1, first three instances)



"poet"



"purpose" (for "p", p. 1); "Poet" (p. 6)



"who" (two instances)

"who" (p. 1)

"writing" (two instances)

"writing" (p. 17)

Other words "a"

"a" (p. 1, first three instances)

"verse" (two instances)

"verses" (p. 9)

"capability"

"abilities" (p. 17, three instances)

## V. Content of the Annotations

Blake is perhaps best known for marginalia that are fiery and indignant, such as the scornful comments in the margins of his copy of Sir Joshua Reynolds's *Discourses*. However, he refers to another style of annotation in his copy of Lavater's 1788 *Aphorisms on Man*:

I hope no one will call what I have written cavilling because he may think my remarks of small consequence For I write from the warmth of my heart. & cannot resist the impulse I feel to rectify what I think false in a book I love so much. & approve so generally<sup>23</sup>

The marginalia in the Bodleian copy of *Mystical Initiations* similarly convey a tone of friendly correction and general assent. Another similarity lies in the long, rough Xs that appear in the margins of pages 5 and 6, a feature known to have been used by Blake as his "mark of uneasiness."<sup>24</sup> The annotator appears to have worked attentively, frequently lifting the pen to underscore or double-underscore particular words and clauses rather than quickly running the pen under whole lines at a time. The apparent purpose of the underlining was to anthologize passages that aroused the annotator's interest. There is no way of knowing whether the marks in pen and pencil were made by the same person, but the material to which the annotator is drawn seems consistent.

This concluding section offers some ideas about how the marginalia in *Mystical Initiations*, if accepted as authentic, correlate with Blake's thought in the late 1780s. Discussion is by page number of Taylor's book, with handwritten annotations and some of the most interesting underlinings examined first. Other comments follow in ascending page order.

P. vii (see illus. 1, 3): This annotation has a lilt like Blake's, and its substance carries the conviction of someone who has written poetry.

Like many writers of the romantic period, Blake considered blank verse superior to rhyme. Geoffrey Hartman notes that Blake's use of this meter in the *Poetical Sketches* of 1783 is

unusual, not only for its personality (the free enjambments, the energetic beat) but also for its very presence in short poems. Not until the 1790's will Southey, Coleridge, and Wordsworth experiment with lyrics in blank verse. With certain important exceptions, unrhymed lyrics before Blake were obvious imitations of the classics or paraphrases of the Psalms, so that Blake's choice of verse may signify an "ancient liberty recover'd" and evoke the prophetic portions of both traditions.<sup>25</sup>

Later, in *Jerusalem* (1804-20), Blake would reject even blank verse as too fettered. His introductory statement "To the Public" alludes to "English Blank Verse, derived from ... Rhym-

23. E 600. See also H. J. Jackson, *Marginalia: Readers Writing in Books* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001) 82.

24. See E 583.

25. *Beyond Formalism: Literary Essays 1958-1970* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970) 194.

ing" (pl. 3, E 145), perhaps echoing the hierarchy of verse forms suggested in the annotation.

P. viii (see illus. 2): The annotator attacks translators as pedants, altering Taylor's phrase to say that authors suffer by translation "because [it is] undertaken by men, who have devoted the greatest part of their lives to the study of words alone."

Blake's view of translation might be epitomized by biblical phrases that he imports into the first plate of his 1825 *Illustrations of the Book of Job*, "The Letter Killeth / The Spirit giveth Life" (2 Corinthians 3.6) and "It is Spiritually Discerned" (1 Corinthians 2.14). He valued translations that conveyed the spiritual more than the literal qualities of their originals, as the annotator seems to suggest here.

Taylor likely would have sympathized. His translations are notoriously loose, and he argues against the mischief of emphasizing words rather than ideas in both the preface to *Mystical Initiations* and, at greater length, in his introduction to Plotinus's *Concerning the Beautiful*.<sup>26</sup> Taylor's diversions from literalism provoked great criticism from the intellectuals of his time. However, as one of his defenders, G. R. S. Mead, asserted in the late nineteenth century, "what was true of his critics then is true of his critics today: though they may know more Greek, he knew more Plato."<sup>27</sup>

P. 69: A curious correction: the annotator changes the gender of the being that "previously comprehended ... every virtue" from the "divinity ... himself" to the "divinity ... itself," apparently suggesting that androgyny is requisite to such a divinity. If Blake is the annotator, this perhaps could be linked to the assertion on plate 11 of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* that "All deities reside in the human breast" (E 38). If the "divinity which previously comprehended ... every virtue" resides within individuals, its sex cannot be restricted.

Some of the most interesting underlinings are as follows:

P. 1: The annotator has underlined the phrase "obscurity ... affords very little matter," which is reminiscent of Blake's annotation to Reynolds, "Obscurity is Neither the Source of the Sublime nor of any Thing Else" (E 658).

Blake asserts in his Reynolds marginalia that "when very Young" he had rejected Edmund Burke's *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757), which stresses the value of obscurity in art (E 660).

26. Taylor also directly references "mischief" on page 225 of *Mystical Initiations*: "The mischief, indeed, resulting from the study of words is almost too apparent to need any illustration."

27. Thomas Taylor, *Select Works of Plotinus*, ed. Mead (London: George Bell & Sons, 1895) ix, quoted in Kathleen Raine and George Mills Harper, eds., *Thomas Taylor the Platonist: Selected Writings* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969) 22-23.

P. 70: Some of the most noticeable and continuous underlining in the book highlights Taylor's metaphor for the "power of prayer," culminating with

one  
chord trembling from the pulsation of  
another, as if it were endued with sensa-  
tion from symphony. So in the universe,  
there is one harmony though composed  
from contraries ....

It almost seems redundant to recite Blake's famous maxim from *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, "Without Contraries is no progression" (E 34). Blake describes contraries in *Jerusalem* (pls. 10 and 17) as differences or oppositions that complement rather than negate, and in that sense they agree with Taylor's use of the term here. "Pulsation" is similarly evocative. When Blake describes the "Moment" of artistic inspiration in *Milton* (pls. 28-29, E 126-27) he repeatedly equates it to a "pulsation of the artery."

The content of this annotated passage calls to mind Coleridge's 1795 poem, *The Eolian Harp*. It also has an analogy in the aforementioned reference to Taylor's mystical experience, wherein, he indicates, his soul had "spontaneously utter[ed] musical sounds, as indications of the harmony within."<sup>28</sup>

Pp. 75-76: Taylor's discussion of heliotropes, or plants that turn toward the sun, is largely translated from Proclus. Harper suggests this as the source of Blake's "Ah! Sun-Flower" in a 1953 article later incorporated into *The Neoplatonism of William Blake*. Harper asserts that in Taylor's presentation of the Plotinian doctrine of emanation, "everything in the universe participates in the first good—usually symbolized by the sun, the properties of which are everywhere apparent in the phenomenal world."<sup>29</sup> This concept of an "alliance between 'natural things' and occult power" is presented in Blake's opening verse:

Ah Sun-flower! weary of time,  
Who countest the steps of the Sun:  
Seeking after that sweet golden clime  
Where the travellers journey is done.

The second stanza extends the concept to "man, who, after all, is separated from the flower only in degree, not in kind":<sup>30</sup>

Where the Youth pined away with desire,  
And the pale Virgin shrouded in snow:  
Arise from their graves and aspire,  
Where my Sun-flower wishes to go. (E 25)

The poem is a pure aspiration, consisting of two exhaled clauses rather than statements employing verbs in the usual sense. In Harper's interpretation the poem likens humanity to

the sunflower, anchored in the material world yet "aspir[ing] to the sun's eternity."<sup>31</sup>

There is no known manuscript of "Ah! Sun-Flower." If Blake was the annotator, these underlinings shed further light on the poem's philosophical roots.

Some other observations:

P. v: These and other anti-materialistic statements marked in *Mystical Initiations* might be related to Blake's 1788 tracts *There is No Natural Religion* and *All Religions are One*.

Pp. 2-3: This genealogy of theology is reminiscent of that expressed in Blake's *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, pl. 11.

Pp. 9-10: The story of a tyrant king's son unable to control the lyre of Orpheus would have had obvious attractions for Blake as a revolutionary poet.

Pp. 14-15: A passage underlined in brown-black ink likens the deity to "an immense and perpetually exuberant fountain; whose streams originally filled and continually replenish the world with life." Harper links this passage to Blake in *The Neoplatonism of William Blake*.<sup>32</sup> If the poet was the annotator, this underlining lends support to the idea that the same person probably marked the book in brown-black and orange-brown ink. (There is also the possibility that the ink is the same, but appears darker where the pen was redipped.)

P. 19: "Soul," here marked heavily, is underlined five times in this text. The annotator seems attracted to passages about animating energies. Could this reflect Blake's contemplation of metempsychosis in the wake of his brother Robert's death in 1787?

P. 26: That the annotator does not underline Greek text but marks its English translation is consistent with the practice of Blake, who is thought not to have been proficient in Greek until 1803.

P. 78: Blake uses the lotus as a symbol of evanescence in *The Book of Thel* (1789).<sup>33</sup>

28. See note 13, above.

29. Harper 119.

30. Harper 119, 120.

31. Harper 120.

32. Harper 123.

33. Harper 122.

*William Blake's Watercolour Inventions in Illustration of The Grave* by Robert Blair. Edited with Essays and Commentary by Martin Butlin and an Essay on the Poem by Morton D. Paley. Lavenham, Suffolk: William Blake Trust, 2009. 186 copies printed for sale, of which 36, numbered I-XXXVI, are quarter bound in calf to accompany a replica of the original portfolio containing the 19 now-dispersed "Designs for Blair's *Grave*" reproduced in facsimile and mounted like the originals. Copies numbered 1-150 for sale without the replica portfolio. 95 pp., 62 illus. £2500 for the issue with the replica portfolio containing an additional suite of reproductions; £295 for the volume alone. Distributed worldwide by John Windle, Antiquarian Bookseller, San Francisco.

William Blake. *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*. A Portfolio of Eighteen Facsimile Impressions. Orlando: Flying Horse Editions, University of Central Florida, 2009. With "A Note on Production" by Michael Phillips. 33 copies printed, plus 3 printer's proofs and 1 archive copy. Accompanying paperback booklet 36 pp., 10 illus. \$1950.

Reviewed by Robert N. Essick

THESE two publications appeared within days of each other in fall 2009. Although there are many differences between them, both are elegant works, of interest to collectors of fine books as well as Blake enthusiasts, and both are major contributions to the long and fascinating history of reproducing Blake's art. Although reviews generally focus on the verbal contents of books, while ignoring (or only mentioning in passing) their physical containers, the visual impact and even tactile nature of these publications are part of their significance.<sup>1</sup>

1. In the interest of full disclosure, let me point out that the Blake Trust sent me a complimentary copy of the issue with portfolio, "O.o.s" (out of series). Flying Horse Editions sold me copy no. 1 at a reduced, pre-publication price. I had a minor role in assisting the Blake Trust ac-

The William Blake Trust has a distinguished record as the last century's foremost publisher of reproductions of Blake's works. In association with the Trianon Press, the trust produced a series of color facsimiles of the illuminated books, beginning with *Jerusalem* in 1951 and concluding with *The Book of Los* in 1976. These limited editions, generally bound in quarter leather over marbled boards, were produced through a combination of collotype and hand coloring through stencils. The trust concluded its efforts using these processes in 1987 with the publication of Blake's various illustrations of the *Book of Job*. In the 1990s, the trust shifted its focus toward a more affordable series of six volumes featuring more extensive scholarly apparatus and commercially produced, but high-quality, color reproductions. The trust's latest publication, reproducing Blake's watercolor illustrations for Blair's *Grave*, combines the limited-edition features (and prices) of its first series with the commercial reproductions of the second—but based on digital files rather than color transparencies. Sophisticated ink-jet technology was employed in printing the illustrations.

The edition of the *Grave* watercolors with the additional suite of reproductions is more sumptuous than even the Blake Trust/Trianon Press facsimiles. The volume is bound by the distinguished firm of Smith Settle (Yeadon, West Yorkshire) in quarter maroon calf over boards covered in black moiré silk, the spine lettered in gilt, the front cover bearing a maroon calf label also lettered in gilt.<sup>2</sup> The cover label is decorated with a skull and crossbones device, repeated on the title page. This is appropriate for *The Grave*, but also brings to mind the Jolly Roger. I'm confident, however, that there is nothing piratical about the trust's publication. The top edges of the leaves, 37.2 x 27.0 cm., are gilt. The text and illustrations are exceptionally well printed on 200-gram archival paper. The real treat is the accompanying portfolio, a reproduction of the wallet-style portfolio in which nineteen of the watercolors were discovered in 2001 after an absence of 165 years. The original was offered as the last lot in the auction of the watercolors at Sotheby's New York, 2 May 2006. It was knocked down to John Windle, the San Francisco book dealer who is also the distributor of the Blake Trust *Grave*, for \$4,200 and is now in a California private collection. The main differences between the original portfolio and the re-creation are the inclusion of an inner paper folder (complete with cover label) to enclose the mounted plates, a pull ribbon, the use of calf rather than morocco, and the lack of wear on the new portfolio (I am tempted to do a bit of antiquing). The volume and the portfolio are housed together in a black moiré silk slipcase. Depending on one's tastes, this is either an overly

quire digital files for its publication; I have had e-mail correspondence with Theo Lotz, director of Flying Horse Editions, and Michael Phillips about their publication.

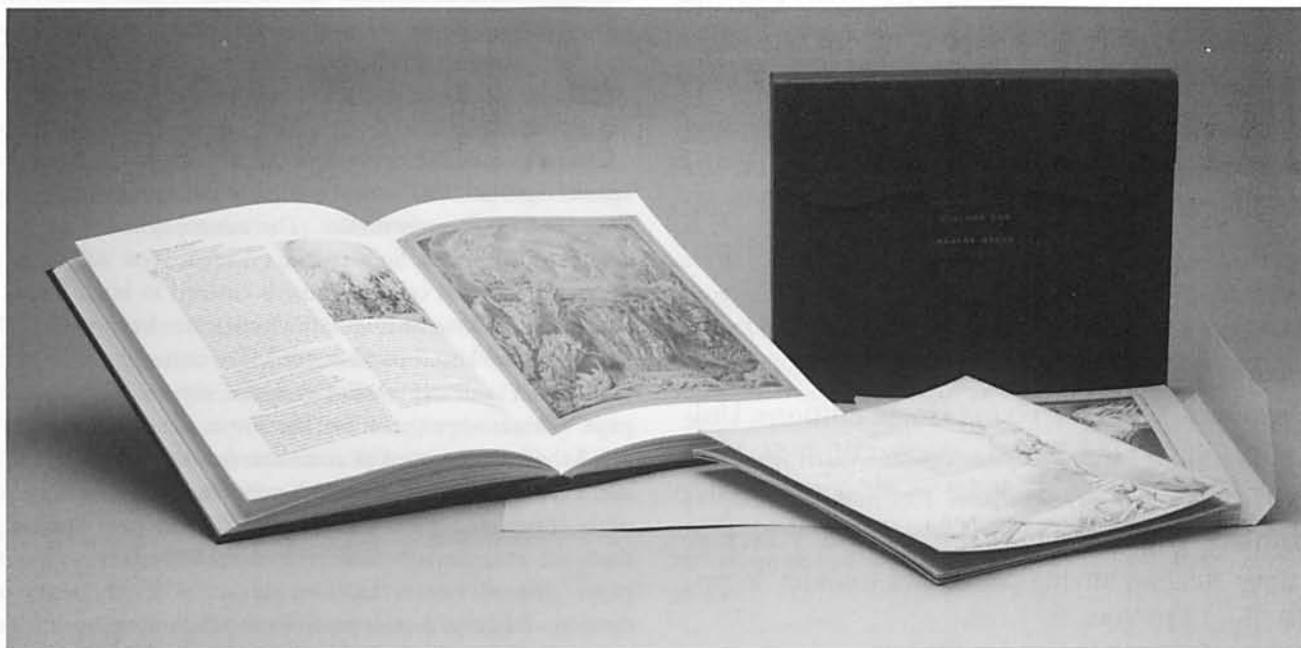
2. I have not seen the issue without the additional suite of illustrations in portfolio, but the prospectus indicates that the volume is bound in silk without the quarter calf.

rich soufflé or the sort of splendid treatment Blake's works deserve. I am of the latter opinion, for the packaging does not overwhelm the contents.

As John Commander, executive director of the Blake Trust, explains in a brief foreword, the *raison d'être* of the publication is the full-color reproduction of the *Grave* watercolors, now widely dispersed in private and institutional collections. To the group of nineteen recently rediscovered drawings is added *Prone on the Lowly Grave—She Drops*, sometimes titled *The Widow Embracing Her Husband's Grave*. Now in the Yale Center for British Art, this watercolor is on the same type of mount as the others and must have once been part of the set of "20" which Robert Hartley Cromek, who commissioned Blake's designs for an illustrated edition of Blair's poem, "proposes [to] have engraved."<sup>3</sup> This main sequence, repro-

are, like the originals, inscribed with framing lines. When I first saw the newly discovered *Grave* watercolors in London in 2002, they were spread out on a large table. The Blake Trust portfolio permits repeat performances of that amazing sight.

The reproductions of the twenty *Grave* watercolors are excellent. Based on high-resolution digital files, the illustrations lend an almost relief appearance to Blake's fine pen and ink outlining. I suspect, however, that the paper in the title-page design, *Friendship*, and *Prone on the Lowly Grave* has shifted to a hue slightly browner than the originals. Capturing paper tone is always very difficult; getting it right often results in misrepresenting some other colors. A more significant problem in my copy is that three of the reproductions in the bound volume (but not in the portfolio) have been trimmed along one or more of their margins. The toes on the right foot of the



duced in color "at approximately 98% of the originals' size" (29), includes the framing lines on nineteen of the mounts to which the watercolors are affixed and is supplemented by twenty-nine illustrations, mostly in color, of related works. The volume also includes a reproduction on a reduced scale of the text of Cromek's 1808 edition of *The Grave*, followed by almost full-size reproductions of Blake's twelve illustrations etched and engraved by Louis Schiavonetti, plus the frontispiece portrait of Blake (Schiavonetti after Thomas Phillips). The plates are in the second published state appearing in the quarto issue of the 1808 edition. The additional suite of reproductions appropriately includes only the nineteen watercolors found in the original portfolio, each mounted like the originals on thick card. The title-page design extends to the edges of its backing mat; the mounts for all the other designs

descending trumpeter have been cut off at the top margin of the title page. In *The Meeting of a Family in Heaven*, the foot of the hovering angel on the left, most of the left foot of the angel on the right, and most of the right foot of the boy lower right have been amputated. The top of the head of the fleeing soul in *Death of the Strong Wicked Man* has been lowered. As noted, the original title page is mounted to the edge of its backing, but all the other reproductions in the volume include the ruled lines on the backing mounts as part of a single image, and thus these trimmings of the watercolors within the ruled lines are difficult to explain. Windle, the distributor of the work, has told me that these faults, having been identified in a preliminary run of copies not for sale, were rectified and are not present in regularly numbered copies. Other, less significant, differences between the reproductions in the bound volume and in the portfolio, such as the darkness of the foxing evident in the originals, teach us once again that no two reproductions of the same object are ever identical, even within the same publication.

3. John Flaxman's letter to William Hayley of 18 Oct. 1805, quoted in G. E. Bentley, Jr., *Blake Records*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004) [hereafter *BR*(2)] 207.

I have compared the images in the Blake Trust volume to two of the originals, *The Death of the Good Old Man* and *Heaven's Portals Wide Expand to Let Him In*, both in my collection. It is very difficult to tell them apart. If I were truly conservation-minded I would take the originals off the wall and replace them with the reproductions. Nobody would notice. I have also been able to compare one of the supplementary illustrations, Blake's white-line etching of "Deaths Door," to the unique impression of the original. The reproduction is a bit darker and obscures the rolled mat or bedding within the tomb, but the velvety texture of its black ink makes it look like another—and better?—impression from Blake's copperplate on much the same paper as the original, time-darkened to a light tan. Should you see a second "original" impression of "Deaths Door" on the market, be suspicious that it is the Blake Trust reproduction cut out of the book.

Blake scholars are now in the fortunate position of having three complete color reproductions of the *Grave* watercolors: Sotheby's 2 May 2006 auction catalogue, the online *William Blake Archive* <<http://www.blakearchive.org>>, edited by Morris Eaves, Joseph Viscomi, and this reviewer, and the Blake Trust publication. The last two add *Prone on the Lowly Grave* to the nineteen offered by Sotheby's; the archive illustrations do not include the framing lines on the backing mats. The archive arranges the designs according to the sequence of the passages illustrated, with those not based on any specific passage grouped at the end. The Blake Trust sequences the designs published in 1808 according to their order in that work, followed by the unpublished designs. Sotheby's arranged its lots so that the most valuable objects would fall in the middle of the sale—apparently in a failed attempt to maximize prices (the drawings with the highest estimates did not sell). The reproductions are exceptionally good for an auction catalogue, but have the most color shifts. The archive images were made from the same color transparencies used by the auction house, but corrected according to notes Joe Viscomi made in his copy of the catalogue while comparing its reproductions to the originals. Because the archive images are backlit on a monitor, the colors tend to be more saturated, and hence the paper and paler washes lighter, than either the originals or the Blake Trust illustrations. This inevitable distortion highlights certain very thin washes, such as the yellows and reds in *The Reunion of the Soul and the Body*. The archive images also reveal a good deal more of the foxing and staining on the watercolors, particularly on *The Meeting of a Family in Heaven*. I wonder if some of the Blake Trust digital files were cleaned up a bit in Adobe Photoshop. The 300dpi enlargements available in the archive are unsurpassed for the study of details, the closest approach to viewing the originals with a powerful magnifying glass. The Blake Trust illustrations are not suitable for similar levels of magnification because they will dissolve into a dot-matrix pattern, the paper-print equivalent of pixelation in a digital image. Each reproductive technology has its own virtues and its own limitations.

The dazzling pictorial contents of the volume should not be allowed to hinder attention to the accompanying texts.<sup>4</sup> Morton Paley's brief essay, "William Blake and Robert Blair's *The Grave*," builds fruitfully on his 1982 coauthored book.<sup>5</sup> He offers some new information about Philip Doddridge's involvement in the composition and publication of Blair's poem. Paley also proposes that Blake "sympathized with the evangelicism of the poem" (10) and suggests that we consider Blake's responses to it within the context of his "conversionary experiences during the years 1801-03" (11) and the impact of those experiences on *Milton* and *Jerusalem*. The white-line etching of "Deaths Door" is singled out as expressing a sense of "inner rebirth" and an "almost primitive sense of death and resurrection" (11), but what other designs can be related to Blake's religious beliefs? The essay ends abruptly, leaving me wanting more, much more, about this fascinating thesis.

Martin Butlin's contributions, set forth with his usual clarity and precision, are divided into three sections, "The History of Blake's Illustrations to *The Grave*," "The Newly Discovered Watercolours," and "The Watercolours: Catalogue and Commentary." A good deal has been written, both before and after the discoveries of 2001, about Blake's *Grave* project and his relationship with Cromek; Butlin necessarily covers much of this material, particularly when factual in nature.<sup>6</sup> There is, however, some new information and well-informed speculation, some of which might easily go unnoticed. For example, I believe that this is the first recording of some of the watermarks: EDMEADS & PINE in several of the watercolors, JWHATMAN / 1800 on one mount, JWHATMAN without a date on two mounts, and JRUSE / 1800 on one mount (21). I was also interested to learn that the "full-page design [for the *Grave* title page] is mounted on the same card as the rest of the newly discovered watercolours" (30).

The watermarks and some of Butlin's other perceptions about the backing mounts open up interesting possibilities. He comments that "the fact that all of the watercolours are treated in the same way suggests that this must have happened before Blake, or Cromek, knew that the number of engravings was going to be cut down from the original twenty" (21). This is not necessarily the case. The suite of watercolors, executed in fall 1805, may have been assembled and mounted in the next year as a unique collection for sale independent of the 1808 book. The final break between illustrator and publisher did not occur until May 1807, when Cromek refused Blake's

4. A few typos crept into the text, including "reseaches" (for "researches") in the "Editor's Acknowledgements" (7). Would it be mere pedantry for me to suggest that the second "of" in the title *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* should not be omitted, as it is on page 58?

5. Essick and Paley, *Robert Blair's The Grave Illustrated by William Blake: A Study with Facsimile* (London: Scolar Press, 1982).

6. See particularly *BR*(2) and the Essick and Paley volume. Most of the basic facts about the watercolors were previously published in Butlin, "New Risen from the Grave: Nineteen Unknown Watercolours by William Blake," *Blake* 35.3 (winter 2001-02): 68-73, and in the 2 May 2006 Sotheby's auction catalogue.

dedicatory design "To the Queen." At least some involvement with the mounts on Blake's part is possible. *Prone on the Lowly Grave* is inscribed on the mount below the drawing "W. Blake. del" and three lines are quoted from the poem. I believe that Butlin may be right when he states that these inscriptions "would indeed appear to have been done by Blake himself" (68). Did Blake also produce the mounts himself, including the framing lines in the so-called "French" style, possibly at Cromek's request? The watermarks, two of which include a date of 1800, show that the mounts were made with papers familiar to Blake, for he used Whatman and Ruse & Turners papers for many of his illuminated books and drawings. By no later than 1821, Blake began to inscribe framing lines around the prints in some of his illuminated books. *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* copy V, available in the *Blake Archive*, is a representative example.<sup>7</sup> Blake has drawn, as with the *Grave* watercolor mounts, three framing lines (not counting an outline contiguous with the edges of the image) on each page and added pale color washes between two of the lines. Even if Blake did not personally mat and inscribe the frames for the *Grave* watercolors, their treatment may have prompted his own later practices.

Some of Butlin's most interesting observations concern drawings related to Blake's *Grave* commission. *A Destroying Deity*, a watercolor in the Philadelphia Museum of Art, can be associated in size and format with *The Grave Personified* as its "negative counterpart" (54). This relationship continues the pairing of contrary companions found throughout Blake's *Grave* designs. As Butlin points out, the male figure in *A Destroying Deity* may actually be a personification of Sin, as described on pages 26-27 of the 1808 *Grave*. He does not take the final step of changing the title of this drawing to *Sin Personified*, perhaps because Sin (as in *Paradise Lost*) is "described as female" on page 27.

Butlin tentatively proposes the deattribution of two drawings. He suspects that "the drawing apparently from the Butts collection" of an ascending trumpeter (Yale Center for British Art), associated with the descending angel in the *Grave* title-page design, "is perhaps not by Blake" (30), and that *Death Pursuing the Soul through the Avenues of Life* (Essick collection) "is perhaps a pencil drawing gone over by someone else to make it more saleable in the later 19th century" (24). Might the trumpeter be wholly or in part the work of Thomas Butts, father or son, when the latter was learning etching from Blake, c. 1806-08? When sold at Sotheby's, 22 March 1910, the drawing was grouped in lot 447 with "a number of engravings and drawings, by William Blake and some by T. Butts, his patron ...." I will pursue the attribution of *Death Pursuing* in a separate essay; the Yale Center may have more to say about its drawing.

The title-page design also suffers a partial deattribution: "It is difficult to believe that Blake himself could have written out the title [on the title-page watercolor] crediting the engrav-

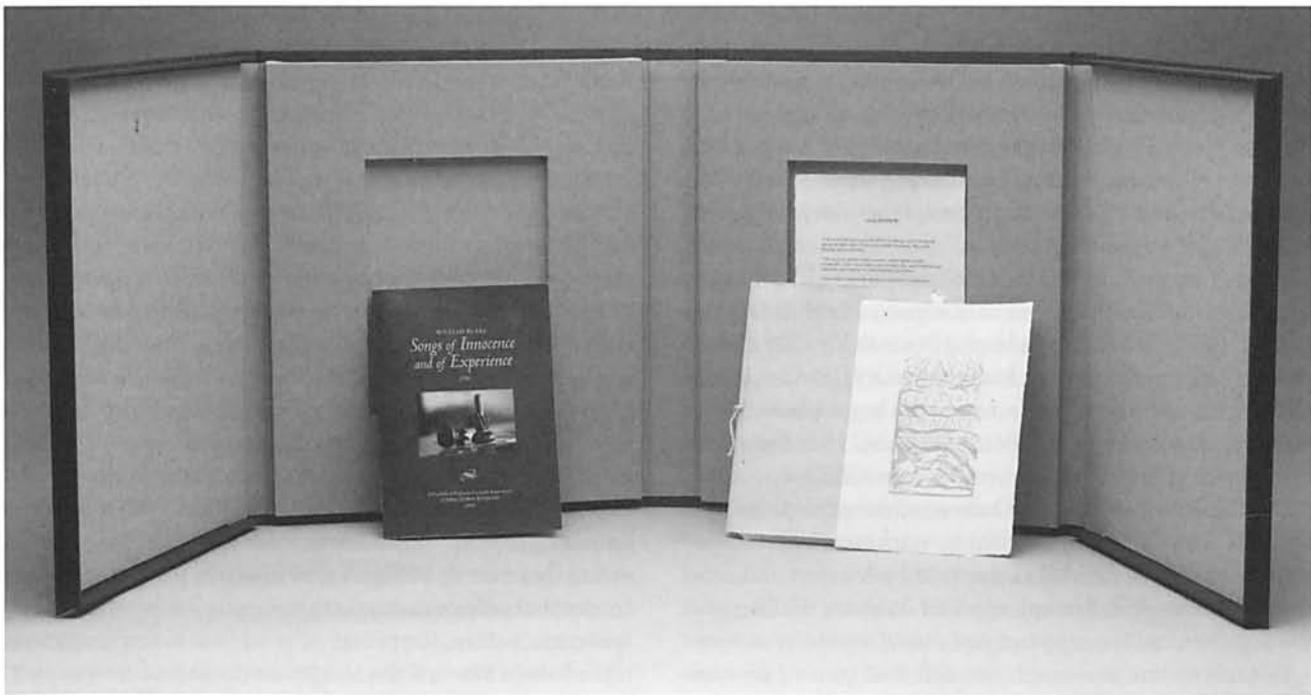
7. Copy designations for the illuminated books follow G. E. Bentley, Jr., *Blake Books* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977).

ings to Schiavonetti; one can only assume that the lettering was done either by Schiavonetti himself or by Cromek or one of his assistants" (30). As Butlin points out, "Blake seems to have remained on relatively good terms with Cromek well into 1807" (16), and thus well past the time when Blake must have known that he had been replaced by Schiavonetti as the engraver.<sup>8</sup> The hand that inscribed the title page also inscribed the watercolor of an alternative title page for "A Series of Designs: Illustrative of The Grave" (Huntington Library); both include an "1806" date. The pen and ink used for the inscriptions appear to me to be the same used to outline many motifs in the designs of both drawings; the lettering shows the same elegance as Blake's so-called "copperplate" hand in the *Four Zoas* manuscript. The unusual formation of the lowercase "g" with serif, particularly in the first line of the inscription on the Huntington drawing, and the addition of a serif to the lowercase "s" in the same line, recall Blake's calligraphy in the illuminated books (for example, plate 3 in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*). Butlin may be right, but I have only slight difficulty in believing that "Blake himself could have written out the title" in both watercolors, even if reluctantly.

I have only one severe caveat about the Blake Trust's *Grave*. The verso of its title page includes the following in small type: "Design and production by John Commander." I feel certain that he was the guiding hand for the entire project. His bibliographic wit gave birth to the brilliant idea of re-creating the original leather portfolio. Commander's name should have been on the *recto* of the title page.

The Flying Horse publication does not have the eye-catching richness of the *Grave* watercolors and their presentation by the Blake Trust, but it is certainly a handsome object. The eighteen prints of *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* are printed on the rectos only of eighteen leaves, 19.5 x 14.1 cm. These are fitted unbound into a re-creation of the buff paper wrappers, with string stitched through three stabholes on the front cover only, into which Catherine Blake bound some of her husband's illuminated books—a nice touch roughly equivalent to the trust's re-creation of the leather portfolio. The prints and their wrapper are housed in a rectangular well that is sunk into the right side of a triple-folding, four-section clamshell box, covered in finely woven dark-brown cloth, gilt stamped on the back and with a beige cloth interior; the accompanying paperbound pamphlet, 19.4 x 13.9 cm., is fitted into a depression on the left side of the box. Some may find that the container, at 37.0 x 132.5 cm. when fully opened, is out of proportion to its contents. The raised panels holding the prints and booklet measure a more modest 35.2 x 29.8 cm.

8. The second prospectus names Schiavonetti as the engraver and is dated, like the first, "Nov. 1805" (see Bentley, *BR*(2) 210-12, 214-15 for reproductions of both prospectuses). Cromek must have delivered Blake's watercolors to Schiavonetti by late 1805 or very early in 1806, for a proof of Schiavonetti's "Death's Door" plate, with the design completed, is dated "Feb' 1<sup>st</sup> 1806" in the imprint.



As with the Blake Trust *Grave*, the pictures are the main event in the Flying Horse portfolio. These are the general title page from *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* and, from *Innocence*, the title page, "The Lamb," "Holy Thursday," "Nurse's Song," "The Chimney Sweeper," both plates of "A Cradle Song," and "The Divine Image." *Experience* contributed its title page, "The Tyger," "Holy Thursday," "Nurses Song," "The Chimney Sweeper," "London," "My Pretty Rose Tree" and its two companions on the same plate, "The Human Abstract," and "A Divine Image." The last is printed in black, as is the only impression definitely printed by Blake (*Songs* copy BB), all others in golden yellow ochre. As an untitled, unsigned essay at the beginning of the accompanying booklet explains, the yellow ochre ink is based on one that "Blake used in the first printing of the combined *Songs*" (7). The color accords with *Songs of Innocence* copies E and F (both probably printed 1789), and is a particularly close match to the *Experience* plates in *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* copies B and D, printed in 1794 to join *Innocence* plates printed earlier in raw sienna.<sup>9</sup> Some of the *Experience* plates in copy E of the combined *Songs* are also from this first printing in yellow ochre; the ochre ink in copy C is a bit darker. The graininess and subtle variations in tone and texture of the Flying Horse prints replicate these characteristics in Blake's own impressions.

The contrast between the ivory paper and the yellow ochre ink is not strong. In his own early copies of the combined

9. For ink colors and printing histories, see Joseph Viscomi, *Blake and the Idea of the Book* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993) 241-43, 267-75. Phillips dates the printing of *Innocence* copy E to "about the same time" as "the combined *Songs* in 1794" (25). Copies B and C of the combined *Songs* are available in the *Blake Archive*.

*Songs*, Blake partly compensated for this by color printing and/or hand coloring the designs. The monochrome prints in the Flying Horse edition do not have this advantage. I wonder if the choice of ink color was the best. Blake also printed early impressions of *Experience* plates for copies of the combined *Songs* in green; that color would have made stronger pictorial statements without violating historical considerations. Some prints made by Phillips in the early 1990s—I believe from copperplates the same as, or very similar to, those used by Flying Horse—in blue and black inks have greater visual presence.<sup>10</sup>

The unsigned essay (5-8) and Phillips's "Note on Production" (9-31) in the booklet provide information about the Flying Horse impressions. They were "printed from relief etched copper plates made by Michael Phillips ... using exact-size photo negatives of original monochrome impressions." The "negatives were modified to eliminate printing flaws in the original—such as poor inking, smudging and splattering—in order to establish the clearest and most complete example." "Further refinements" were made on the copperplates "by scraping out unwanted details and adding missing ones" (5). "Each plate has been etched in two stages" (6) to the "same shallow depths as the *America* fragment" (23)—that is, the step-etched fragment of canceled plate a of *America* in the National Gallery of Art, Washington, the only extant copperplate etched by Blake in relief. "The paper has been handmade to match the color,

10. See the announcements for Phillips's presentations to the Bibliographical Society, 20 Nov. 1990 (*Innocence* title page) and 17 Nov. 1992 ("Holy Thursday" from *Experience*). Both are on Whatman laid paper; my copy of the 1990 announcement has an "1801" watermark. Phillips very kindly gave me impressions from his "London" copperplate in black ink, one on laid paper and one on wove.

texture, size and weight of the wove papers that Blake used for printing the illuminated books. The ink used to print this edition has been hand mixed for each plate from the same historic dry pigments that we know Blake used—and approximates as closely as possible the colors and texture of many of the originals. The facsimile relief etched plates have been inked using a leather-covered dauber, painstakingly building up the ink in stages on the relief surfaces” (6). Three copies of the combined *Songs*, B, C, and D, were “used to guide the way in which each facsimile plate has been wiped and printed for this edition” (6-7). “The inking of each plate with a leather dauber, and then wiping the plate . . . , has consistently taken more than 30 minutes, and considerably more with some plates, before an impression could be taken” (23). The booklet includes four illustrations of the inking daubers, three in color.

This wealth of information raises as many questions as it answers. Exactly which “original monochrome impressions” were used as models? What is meant by “clearest and most complete example”? Example of what? Why the fiddling with the negatives and the copperplates?

To garner some answers, I e-mailed Phillips on 2 November 2009. His reply of the next day is both generous and fascinating. The copperplates used by Flying Horse were selected from “over 30” produced by Phillips in several stages over many years. Some of the plates began as photo-etchings based on the electrotypes printed in Alexander Gilchrist’s *Life of William Blake*, 1863 and 1880. The photographic negatives, and later the images etched in copper, were corrected on the basis of “more than one impression of a plate . . . until details that do not belong [in the copperplate image]—foul inking for example—[are removed] and others that do and are not present—the tail of a letter or tiny element of a design—are added in stop-out varnish by hand.” One such copperplate, the title page for *Innocence*, is reproduced in color in the booklet.<sup>11</sup> The sixteen Gilchrist prints could have supplied Phillips with models for only nine or ten of his eighteen plates.<sup>12</sup> The other eight plates in the Flying Horse portfolio have their origin in, or at least were corrected in response to, several copies of the *Songs* printed by Blake, including *Songs of Innocence* copy U (Houghton Library) and *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* copies O (Houghton Library) and BB (private collection). Phillips also consulted posthumous copy

11. This is probably the same copperplate exhibited by Phillips at Tate Britain, 9 Nov. 2000-11 Feb. 2001, and at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 27 Mar.-24 June 2001. The plate, and several stages in its development, are illustrated in the catalogue; see Robin Hamlyn and Michael Phillips, *William Blake* (London: Tate Publishing, 2000) 105, 112.

12. Gilchrist includes the title page for *Songs of Experience*, but that would seem to be a re-creation rather than an electrotype mold-made from Blake’s original copperplate. If Phillips used this as the basis for his plate, it has been considerably modified in accord with Blake’s impressions. The eight Phillips/Flying Horse plates not among the Gilchrist electrotypes are the general title page, “Holy Thursday,” “The Chimney Sweeper,” and the second plate of “A Cradle Song” from *Innocence*, and “The Tyger,” “Nurses Song,” “The Chimney Sweeper,” and “A Divine Image” from *Experience*.

a of the combined *Songs* in the British Museum. His plate of “The Divine Image” bears two letters from the platemaker’s mark in white line lower right, as in posthumous impressions. For “A Divine Image,” he “used the [posthumous] impression in Geoffrey Keynes collection now in the Fitzwilliam Museum and the impression present in copy BB.”

I conclude from the booklet in the Flying Horse portfolio and Phillips’s e-mail that he has tried to recover and re-create the images on Blake’s copperplates. Thus the “clearest and most complete example” is a new copperplate that comes closest to Blake’s own. Surprisingly, this ambitious and worthy goal is nowhere made explicit in the publication, even though it would seem to be one of the guiding principles of the entire enterprise.<sup>13</sup> Another goal, one that receives ample attention in the booklet, is the recovery and reenactment of Blake’s inking and printing methods. When combined, these activities do not produce a “reproduction” or “facsimile” as I wish to define them here. Phillips’s alterations in the negatives and copperplates mean that no single impression by Blake (or by Frederick Tatham, the printer of posthumous impressions) is reproduced. Nor are the relief plateaus and white-line incisions on Blake’s own (lost) copperplates reproduced; rather, they are re-created. Impressions from those archaeological reconstructions are, in some senses of the term, “original” prints. They are an attempt to come as close as possible to publishing a new edition of Blake’s *Songs*.

How can we evaluate the accuracy of Phillips’s reconstructions? Posthumous copies of the *Songs* offer some answers. They were printed rather flatly from the original copperplates and do not contain the color printing, hand coloring, or special inking manipulations that grace Blake’s own impressions but also diverge from the images etched in copper. Copy h, in my collection, contains fifty-seven impressions of fifty-four plates, including “A Divine Image.” Many were poorly inked but printed with considerable pressure; the resulting embossments create shallow molds of Blake’s copperplates as they existed when Tatham was printing them c. 1832. These impressions provide a good benchmark by which to judge the success of Phillips’s copperplates in re-creating the originals. Comparisons, with and without low-power magnification, reveal only a few details that would appear to indicate differences between Phillips’s copperplates and Blake’s: “The Lamb.” The solid form on the ground lower right is differently shaped in the original. “Holy Thursday” (*Innocence*). Horizontal white lines at the bottom are differently configured.

13. I would have printed “Blake’s Copperplates Re-created” as a subtitle in the Flying Horse booklet. While experimenting with relief etching in the 1970s, I was tempted to undertake a similar restoration, but took it no further than photo-etchings on zinc and copper without correcting these plates against multiple original impressions to recover Blake’s copperplate images and texts. Impressions from some of these plates, inked with a roller, were printed directly from the facsimile metal plates (not reproduced photographically from impressions) in Essick, *William Blake’s Relief Inventions* (Los Angeles: Press of the Pegacycle Lady, 1978).

"Nurse's Song" (*Innocence*). A bit of white-line work in the large leaf above "rs" in the title may not be in the re-creation. "The Divine Image." Phillips's plate may not have the same configuration of white lines in the vine left of the final two stanzas.

"Holy Thursday" (*Experience*). The dot of the question mark at the end of line 4 of the text is missing, as in the Gilchrist electrotype.<sup>14</sup> The outline between mountain and sky above and to the left of the standing woman's right hand is a single line in the original. This line is oddly fragmented, at least in the Flying Horse impression from Phillips's plate.

"London." The hyphen is missing from "Chimney-sweepers" (line 9), as in the Gilchrist electrotype.

Plate including "Ah! Sun-Flower." The hyphen is missing from the title, as in the Gilchrist electrotype.

All other differences, and perhaps even some of those listed above, can be accounted for by variations in inking and the wiping of etching borders (following Blake's own practice in the 1790s) in the Flying Horse impressions. The "colophon" on a separate leaf in the Flying Horse publication states that "the copper plates for this facsimile edition were made by Michael Phillips from original William Blake impressions." The repetition of characteristics indicative of the Gilchrist electrotypes and not Blake's own plates leads me to question this statement for three of the Phillips copperplates. These may have been corrected in accord with "original William Blake impressions," but the three details noted above overlooked. The electrotype of "Holy Thursday" (*Experience*) is missing part of the "n" in "rain" (line 14); the first plate of "A Cradle Song" lacks the first letter of "dreams" (line 3). These elements are present in the Flying Horse impressions.

Both the Flying Horse printer and Tatham, in his posthumous impressions, had difficulty capturing Blake's fine white-line work, as I was able to confirm by consulting reproductions of a few impressions by Blake. Among the Flying Horse prints, this is a significant feature only in the second plate of "A Cradle Song." Several of the prints from Phillips's copperplates would seem to reveal more of the original copperplate image than Tatham's prints, particularly in comparison to his miserably over-inked impression of the *Innocence* title page in posthumous copy h. Similar inking and printing differences can be found among Blake's own impressions.

Comparisons between the Flying Horse publication and the uncolored issue of the Manchester Etching Workshop portfolio of 1983 are inevitable.<sup>15</sup> Phillips himself initiates such

14. Differences between the electrotypes and Blake's copperplates are listed in Essick, *William Blake Printmaker* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980) 95.

15. *Songs of Innocence and Songs of Experience* (Manchester: Manchester Etching Workshop, 1983). "Monochrome Edition" limited to thirty-five copies each with nineteen plates, two hand colored, boxed loose in folders. See also Joseph Viscomi, "Recreating Blake's Illuminated Prints: The Facsimiles of the Manchester Etching Workshop," *Blake* 19.1 (summer 1985): 4-23, and my review of both the colored and uncolored editions in the same issue, 39-51.

comparisons by noting, in the Flying Horse booklet, that the Manchester copperplates were etched much more deeply than the *America* fragment and his *Songs* plates (33n2).<sup>16</sup> Perhaps the similarity is accidental, but the Flying Horse folding box is covered in brown cloth only slightly darker than the cloth covering the folding box housing the Manchester prints and their accompanying paperbound booklet, *The Art of William Blake's Illuminated Prints*, by Joseph Viscomi. Both editions are printed on handmade paper produced specifically for their projects, the Manchester leaves with a blind-embossed "Inv / WB" and some Flying Horse leaves showing a "WB" watermark. Both sets were printed from photo-etched copperplates; sixteen of the Manchester plates, like some of Phillips's, used the Gilchrist electrotypes as prototypes, although in somewhat different ways.

Detailed, letter by letter and motif by motif, comparisons between the Manchester and Flying Horse impressions would be tedious and serve little purpose. Both are important publications, the products of expertise and dedication; both attempt to recapture Blake's original copperplate images. Both sets were printed on softer paper than is typical of Blake's impressions, thereby creating more prominent platemarks and embossments of small relief elements, such as letters. The Manchester set restores to the impressions the three textual details, noted above, missing from the Gilchrist electrotypes and the Flying Horse plates.<sup>17</sup> Following combined *Songs* copy B as a precedent, the Manchester plates of *Innocence* were printed in raw sienna, the *Experience* plates in a yellow ochre a little darker than the yellow ochre of the Flying Horse prints. The Manchester inks make a stronger visual impact. The plates were inked with a roller, and thus have more evenly printed surfaces than the Flying Horse impressions, inked with leather-covered daubers.<sup>18</sup> Rollers had not been invented until very late in Blake's career; he probably inked his relief-etched plates with either leather-covered or linen-covered inking balls. Thus, the inking of the Flying Horse

16. Phillips cites Paul Ritchie of the Manchester Etching Workshop as the source for information about depth of bite in its copperplates. In *The Art of William Blake's Illuminated Prints* included in the Manchester portfolio, Viscomi suggests that "the depth of plates executed before 1793 was probably greater than of those executed afterwards" (12).

17. Viscomi, "Recreating Blake's Illuminated Prints," comments that "we corrected the missing characters in a matching ink on the impressions themselves, rather than correct the electrotypes" (6). The Manchester Etching Workshop had a set of electrotypes, mold-made from the Gilchrist set, on loan from the Victoria and Albert Museum, but by "electrotypes" I take it that Viscomi means in this statement the photo-etched copperplates based on impressions of the electrotypes, the production of which is explained on page 5 of his essay.

18. Viscomi states that Paul Ritchie of the Manchester Etching Workshop "applied the ink ... with a roller, rather than a linen dabber, the tool Blake most likely used. We resorted to the 'unBlakean' tool ... because it produced more consistent results. With dampened paper, light printing pressure, and stiff handmade intaglio ink, we succeeded in duplicating the surface texture, as well as the colors of the originals" ("Recreating Blake's Illuminated Prints" 7). For a detailed but rather inconclusive discussion of Blake's possible inking tool(s), see Essick, *Printmaker* 99-102.

plates comes closer to Blake's own practices. This difference in inking methods between the Manchester and Flying Horse impressions underscores the tension between an attempt to re-create aesthetically pleasing prints with the visual qualities of Blake's own and an attempt to reenact his processes. In my review of the Manchester portfolio I complained (mildly) about the rough texture of the paper on which the plates were printed. To my eyes, the texture and lighter color of the Flying Horse paper are a little closer to Blake's own. We should, however, be grateful for the instructive differences between the two publications. Except for the minor problems noted here, I suspect that the Manchester and Flying Horse editions of Blake's *Songs* are as close as we are likely to come to new prints from Blake's own plates—short of a discovery even more breathtaking than the nineteen *Grave* watercolors.

Much of Phillips's essay in the Flying Horse portfolio deals with Blake's own etching and printing methods rather than with their reenactment. Many of his observations are controversial, including the depth of bite in Blake's early relief etchings and the type of inking instrument he used (see notes 16 and 18 here). Phillips relies heavily on the description of Blake's methods in Jackson and Chatto, *A Treatise on Wood Engraving*, and particularly their comment that Blake "was accustomed to wipe the ink out where it had touched in the hollows. As this occupied more time than the mere inking of the plate, his progress in printing was necessarily slow."<sup>19</sup> Phillips believes that the Jackson and Chatto account has considerable authority because it "suggests that they visited Blake in his studio at No. 3 Fountain Court, the Strand, some time between Jackson's arrival in London in 1824 and Blake's death in August 1827" (11). These statements and Phillips's own experiences with relief printing lead him to conclude that Blake's art of illuminated printing required exacting craftsmanship and painstaking, time-consuming labor. For Phillips, "the evidence" shows "that the processes of creation and reproduction were rarely accomplished simply or easily" and that "Blake's method of production was neither simple nor efficient ...."<sup>20</sup>

In the 453 double-column pages of *Blake and the Idea of the Book*, Viscomi does not cite the Jackson and Chatto description of Blake's method and, in stark contrast to Phillips's views, claims that "inking small relief plates ... and printing them ... was relatively easy" and that, "working alone with handmade ink and a linen dabber," he "pulled thirty good impressions" from "electrotypes" of the *Songs of Innocence* title page and "The Lamb" in "less than two hours."<sup>21</sup> My own study of Blake's prints etched in relief led me to conclude that,

"in the majority of his relief etchings, Blake did not have to wipe bitten surfaces in order to keep them clean enough to meet his own inking and printing requirements."<sup>22</sup> I have consistently emphasized the ways in which relief etching is a direct and autographic process joining invention and execution, one that freed Blake from the trammels of his profession as an intaglio engraver of other artists' designs. These practical characteristics allowed Blake to claim that his process "combines the Painter and the Poet" and "produces works at less than one fourth of the expense" of "Letter-press and Engraving."<sup>23</sup> These differing views are not merely trivial disputes over technical details, for they evince fundamentally different visions of Blake. Perhaps Viscomi and I could be accused of succumbing to a now-discredited romantic ideology in which "first thoughts are best in art, second thoughts in other matters."<sup>24</sup> Perhaps Phillips could be accused of assuming that original composition and execution are as time-consuming as replication and succumbing to a modernist literary ideology in which complexity is the hallmark of genius.

This is not the place to engage further in this long-running debate. Rather, it is the time to welcome, indeed to celebrate, the two publications of scholarship and beauty which it has been my pleasure to review in *Blake*.

22. Essick, *Printmaker* 104.

23. "To the Public," *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, ed. David V. Erdman (New York: Anchor-Random House, 1988) 692. I suspect that part of the savings in "expense" can be accounted for by savings in labor.

24. A remark attributed to Blake in Gilchrist, *Life of William Blake*, 2 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1863) 1: 370.

Michael Phillips and the Infernal Method of William Blake. Cornell Fine Arts Museum, Rollins College, 12 September 2009–3 January 2010.

Reviewed by James Rovira

*Editors' note: Illustrations of the exhibition and of some of the Phillips copperplates and impressions are online at the journal's web site <<http://www.blakequarterly.org>>.*

**D**URING the 2008-09 academic year, Michael Phillips served as an inaugural scholar in residence of the Winter Park Institute of Rollins College in Winter Park, Florida. Phillips presented a series of lectures on Blake, conducted printmaking demonstrations, and produced in the studio a facsimile edition of the *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* for the institute. His production of this facsimile edition served as the basis of an exhibition at the Cornell Fine Arts

19. [John Jackson and William Andrew Chatto], *A Treatise on Wood Engraving, Historical and Practical* (London: Charles Knight, 1839) 716-17.

20. Phillips, "The Printing of Blake's *America a Prophecy*," *Print Quarterly* 21.1 (2004): 20n5, 38.

21. *Blake and the Idea of the Book* 118, 397n22. See also Viscomi, "Illuminated Printing" *The Cambridge Companion to William Blake*, ed. Morris Eaves (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) 41: "Illuminated printing was not mysterious, complex, or difficult."

Museum of Rollins College entitled Michael Phillips and the Infernal Method of William Blake.

The exhibition included Phillips's reproductions of Blake's relief-etched copperplates and impressions taken from them of eighteen prints from the *Songs*, the frontispiece to *America a Prophecy*, and five prints from *Europe a Prophecy*, along with inking daubers, historical pigments, and other materials used in the making of these facsimiles. These impressions represent attempts to reproduce Blake's printmaking methods as closely as possible following a careful study of Blake originals, canceled plate a of *America*, and John Jackson's *A Treatise on Wood Engraving* (1839), a possible eyewitness account of Blake's procedures. Phillips's process involved very shallow

etching of the relief plates, careful inking with a dauber using a re-creation of Blake's pigmented printing ink, and extensive hand wiping of the plate before printing. The paper used in printing was handmade by Gangolf Ulbricht in consultation with John van Oosterom of JvO Papers in England to match the J. Whatman and other wove papers that Blake used. Also on display was the portfolio of eighteen facsimile impressions of the *Songs* published by Flying Horse Editions in conjunction with the exhibition. Phillips printed the facsimiles with such painstaking attention to detail that they could almost be mistaken for originals; they constitute a valuable contribution to our understanding of how Blake may have produced his illuminated books.

WILLIAM BLAKE

# *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*



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