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"Wisdom is sold in the desolate market where none come to buy."

The 1971 auction season, surveyed in *Blake Newsletter* 19 (Winter, 1971-72), pp. 183-84, was remarkable for the high quality of works sold and the number of fine illuminated books which changed hands. The last two years have seen some decrease in quality, but a considerable increase in quantity, both at auction and in book and print dealers catalogues. Most notable is the growing interest in Blake's commercial book illustrations, partly out of necessity as the more important materials gravitate ceaselessly towards public collections. Almost all dealers now seem to own Bentley & Nurmi, and once a title is recognized as one containing an "ORIGINAL PLATE ENGRAVED BY THE VISIONARY ARTIST WILLIAM BLAKE," the asking price is at least quadrupled. Even individual plates pulled from the books they illustrate have appeared at London auctions, those engraved after Blake's own designs or after Fuseli fetching the best prices. The Job illustrations are no longer considered a book, but rather a series of plates subject to dismemberment and sale print by print. In some respects this is unfortunate, but it is a boon for the small collector who could never afford all twenty-two plates but can obtain one or two.

Prices have, of course, increased at a steady pace. Listed below are the most important New York and London auctions of Blake drawings and watercolors, prints, and books and letters, including a few works by artists associated with Blake.

**DRAWINGS AND WATERCOLORS**

**Sotheby Parke-Bernet, New York, 16 May 1972**

Lot 70. A pencil and ink drawing attributed to Blake, "apparently an illustration for Dante's *Inferno*," from the W. A. White Collection. The drawing is reproduced as the frontispiece to the sale catalogue. It might be by Fuseli or von Holst, but looks very little like anything Blake ever did, much less a Dante illustration. Apparently someone informed the auction house of the dubious attribution, for the sketch was withdrawn.

**Christie's, London, 5 June 1973**

Lot 42. "Mary Magdalen at the Sepulchre," one of the black ink and watercolor drawings

Robert N. Essick is an Associate Professor of English at California State University, Northridge, and Associate Editor of *Blake Studies*. His work on Blake's art includes *William Blake: Book Illustrator* (with Roger Eason) and *A Finding List of Reproductions of Blake's Art*. 
To the left "The Mourners," an ink and gray wash drawing by Blake. Sold at Christie's, London, 5 June 1973, lot 113, for 2,400 guineas.

ROBERT N. ESSICK

Blake in the Marketplace, 1972-73

executed by Blake for Thomas Butts circa 1805. This magnificent work is reproduced in the catalogue and in Blake Newsletter 23 (Winter 1972-73), cover and p. [59] with a note on the sale. £23,100, Agnew. Formerly owned by Thomas Butts, Thomas Butts, Jr., F. T. Palgrave, and Lady Beatrice Maud Cecil, the drawing is now in the collection of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Mellon.

Lot 113. "The Mourners," an ink and grey wash drawing by Blake of four figures huddled together before some steps [illus. 1], once in the collection of Mrs. Alexander Gilchrist. Reproduced in the catalogue. 2,400 guineas, Cooper.

Christie's, London, 12 June 1973
Twenty-nine drawings by George Richmond were sold by one of his descendants, including a fine Blake-like sketch of "Samson Slaying the Philistines with the Jaw-Bone of an Ass," reproduced in the catalogue; and a sketch of "A Sleeping Shepherd and his Dog" with the energetic spirit typical of The Ancients.

PRINTS

Sotheby Belgravia, London, 4 April 1973
Lot 302. "Tornado," engraved by Blake after Fuseli for Erasmus Darwin's Botanic Garden, third edition. A proof lacking a good deal of finish work in the design and before title inscription and imprint. Worn in spots, a few pieces missing, laid down and repaired. £110, Maggs. Now in the author's collection. There are four other proofs of this plate, three in the British Museum and one in the collection of Mr. and Mrs. Raymond Lister. All lack the same work in the design, but some have the title inscription.

Sotheby Parke-Bernet, New York, 10 May 1973
Lot 16. Blake's engraved illustration to Dante's Inferno, plate 3, "Two of the Malebranche Quarrelling." Except for a tiny abrasion on the raised hand of one of the combatants, this is one of the finest impressions I have ever seen, with particularly rich burr. Reproduced in the catalogue. $1,600.00, Robert Light, Inc.

Sotheby, London, 12 July 1973
Lot 110. A book of portraits of and after Thomas Phillips, from the Dawson Turner collection. Over one hundred items, including Phillips' portrait of Blake engraved by Schiavonetti for Blair's Grave and a proof of Blake's engraved portrait of Earl Spencer. £1,100, Edmunds. The portrait of Spencer, like the only other known copy in the British
Sotheby, London, 11 December 1973
Lot 19. Blake, *Illustrations of the Book of Job*, proof set on laid India paper complete, but the title plate is probably a later impression. Some foxing and damp stains in the margins. Sold with an unpasted example of the printed label. This and the next lot are from the collection of Sir Thomas Phillips and the Robinson Trust. £3,200, D. Tunick.


Lot 25. Blake, "The Man Sweeping the Interpreter's Parlour," engraving on pewter, from the collections of Dr. Greville Macdonald and Ruthven Todd. Reproduced in the catalogue. £2,100, D. Tunick. The estimate was only £500.

Lots 26 and 27. Blake, *The Book of Thel*, title-page and "Thel and the Worm," uncolored, very likely posthumous impressions. Both of these lots were withdrawn because of a disagreement between the owner and the auction house concerning the reserve price.


BOOKS

Sotheby, London, 22-23 May 1972

Lot 132. A Memoir of Edward Calvert, by his third son, 1893. This book, published in only 350 copies, is particularly valuable because it contains original impressions of Calvert's six wood engravings and two copperplate engravings. Over the last few years several copies have been disbound and the prints sold individually. £480, A. K. Henderson. Another copy, lot 277, £550, G. Raffy.


Lot 199. Muir facsimiles of *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, *The Book of Thel*, *Songs of Innocence*, *Songs of Experience*, *Milton*, and *There is no Natural Religion*, handsomely bound in three volumes. £375, Maggs.


Lot 201. Blake, *Writings*, ed. Keynes, one of 75 copies on India paper, three vols. bound in one, Nonesuch Press, 1925. £95, Quaritch.


Lot 269. Pearson facsimile of *Jerusalem*, 1877. £60, Maggs.

Lot 370. A collection of over 700 engravings and woodcuts after designs by Thomas Stothard, a few executed by Blake. Some of the prints are proof impressions, but none engraved by...
Blake. £60, Mushlin.

Sotheby, London, 6 November 1972
Lot 174. The Dramatic Works of Shakespeare, Boydell’s ed., with "numerous engraved plates," presumably including the one engraved by Blake after Opie, 9 vols., 1802. Another copy, said to be a "large paper" folio in poor condition, sold at Sotheby, London, 14 June 1973, lot 190. Prices and buyers not known to me.

Thirty-seven lots of Blake related materials were sold, mostly books with reproductions of Blake’s paintings and drawings. The most important item was lot 56, the 1926 portfolio containing restrikes of the Grave illustrations, which sold for $275. Lot 78, a first ed., first issue of Swinburne's Blake: A Critical Essay, sold for only $20.

Sotheby, London, 13 November 1972
Lot 484. C. G. Salzmann, Gymnastics for Youth, with ten plates attributed to Blake. £48, Maggs.

Sotheby, London, 5-6 February 1973

Sotheby, London, 22 March 1973

Christie’s, London, 18 April 1973
Lot 54. Novelist’s Magazine, the plates only, bound in 4 vols., presumably including the engravings by Blake. 70 guineas, Walford.

Sotheby, London, 30 April-1 May 1973
Lot 92. Erasmus Darwin, The Botanic Garden, with the plates by Blake, first ed. of Part I, 1791. Price and buyer not known to me.
Lot 356. Darwin, Botanic Garden, second ed. of part I, 1791. This copy was in poor condition, but the second ed. is much rarer than the first. £60, Maggs.

Sotheby, London, 18-19 June 1973
Lot 244. William Hayley, Triumph of Temper, five of the six plates engraved by Blake after Maria Flaxman, twelfth ed., 1803. £14, M. Ayers. Another copy, complete, lot 271, £95, A. G. Thomas.
Lot 27. Blake, Illustrations of the Book of Job, 1927 quarto reproduction with an inscription from Keynes to John Trevor. £18, Quaritch.


Lot 31. Blake, All Religions are One, Blake Trust facsimile, 1970. £40, Hobson.


Lot 264. J. C. Lavater, Aphorisms of Man, with the frontispiece by Blake after Fuseli, first ed., 1788. £45, Maggs.

Lot 265. C. G. Salzmann, Elements of Morality, with the plates attributed to Blake, 3 vols., 1791. £80, Maggs.

Lot 266. John Gay, Fables, with the plates by Blake, a large paper copy, 2 vols., 1793. £130, Blackwell. Another copy, regular size, some plates discolored, lot 275, £24, E. Morris.

Lot 267. Erasmus Darwin, The Botanic Garden, with the plates by Blake, third ed. of part I (with the extra plate after Fuseli, "Tornado"), 1795. £190, F. Edwards.

Lot 269. Edward Young, Night Thoughts, with Blake’s engraved illustrations (some discolored, some cropped), and the leaf of explanation, 1797. The title-page to Night the Third is reproduced in the catalogue. £480, A. Solomon.

Lot 270. Josephus, Works, Maynard’s ed. with the plates by Blake, Bentley & Nurmi third issue, 1800. £70, Maggs.

Lot 272. William Hayley, Ballads, with Blake’s five plates, first state, 1805. £110, Maggs.

Lot 273. B. H. Malkin, A Father’s Memoir of His Child, lacking half-title, 1806. £28, A. K. Henderson. This rare and important work continues to be one of the few Blake books still undervalued.

Lot 274. William Hayley, Life of Romney, with the plate by Blake, 1809. £38, E. Morris.


Lot 281. Blake, a portfolio of the illustrations to Blair's *Grave*, 1813. £70, Maggs.


Lot 293. Blake, *Illustrations to Young's Night Thoughts*, 30 reproductions of the watercolors in portfolio, intro. by Keynes, 1927. £65, Quaritch.


Lot 296. Blake, *Jerusalem*, Blake Trust facsimile, with the companion volume by Wicksteed, 1951. £300, Quaritch.

Lot 297. Blake, *Jerusalem*, Blake Trust color facsimile, with the companion volume by Wicksteed, 1951. £300, Quaritch.

lished, as listed below.

DRAWINGS AND WATERCOLORS: DEALERS

Martin Breslauer, London, List XLI and Catalogue 102 (June 1972)
As item 148 in his List XLI Breslauer offered page 12 from the Blake-Varley Sketchbook, containing eight caricature heads by Blake, for £285. The sketch, now in the collection of Mr. and Mrs. Raymond Lister, is reproduced in the catalogue. Breslauer had purchased the leaf at Christie's on 15 June 1971 for 160 guineas. Catalogue 102 offered "The Ghost of a Flea" from the Blake-Varley Sketchbook (item 95, reproduced) for £3,800. Breslauer purchased the drawing at the Christie's sale for 2,000 guineas.

Paul Grinke, London, Catalogue 5, Summer 1972
Item 32. Thomas Stothard, "The Battle of Ai," pen and grey wash drawing engraved by Blake for Kimpton's Universal History of the Bible, 1781. The drawing is reproduced, along with the published engraving as it appeared in Maynard's edition of Josephus and the reversed proof in the Rosenwald Collection. No price is given since the drawing was sold to the Rosenwald Collection of the Library of Congress before the catalogue appeared. Included is a brief article by Ruthven Todd with comments on the drawing and its relationship to Blake's engravings.

Zeitlin & Ver Brugge, Los Angeles, Catalogue 234, Fall 1973
Item 3. Blake, sketch of a standing archer from the Blake-Varley Sketchbook (reproduced). $4,550. The sketch was purchased by Zeitlin at Christie's, 15 June 1971, for $3,044 (and previously offered in his catalogue 228 for $4,550). Apparently this is one of the few Blake items for which there is some market resistance.

PRINTS AND BOOKS: DEALERS

P. & D. Colnaghi, London. Original Printmaking in Britain 1600-1800, Fall 1972. This splendid exhibition and catalogue included a number of important works by Blake and artists of his circle.


Christopher Mendez, London, Catalogue 26: Old Master Prints, October 1973
Item 7. Blake, Job Illustrations, plate 1, proof state "c," the third of three working proof states, from the collection of Linnell and Palmer (reproduced). £875.

William Weston Gallery, London, Catalogue 10: The English Vision, October 1973. Included in the catalogue is a note by Graham Sutherland describing the influence of Blake, Calvert, and Palmer on his own work. All but items 31 and 37 are reproduced. The catalogue includes prices in both pounds and dollars, as listed here.

William Weston Gallery, London, Catalogue 10: The English Vision, October 1973. Included in the catalogue is a note by Graham Sutherland describing the influence of Blake, Calvert, and Palmer on his own work. All but items 31 and 37 are reproduced. The catalogue includes prices in both pounds and dollars, as listed here.


Item 5. Calvert, "The Flood," lithograph not from the Carfax portfolio. £275 ($668.00).

Item 6. Calvert, "Ideal Pastoral Life," lithograph probably from the Carfax portfolio. £275 ($668.00).


Items 11-22. Blake, Job Illustrations, plates 1, 4-8, 10, 12, 13, 17, 19, 21. All published proof states on India paper laid on Whatman paper. Each £250 ($607.50).


Item 24. Palmer, "The Skylark," etching, seventh state of eight. £175 ($425.00).


Item 26. Palmer, "Christmas--Folding the Last Sheep," etching, final state. £225 ($547.00).

Item 27. Palmer, "The Vine" or "Plumpy Bacchus," etching, final state, large paper issue. £75 ($182.25).

Item 28. Palmer, "The Rising Moon" or "An English Pastoral," etching, seventh state of nine. £230 ($559.00). In July 1971 Weston offered this same print for £90 ($216.00).

Item 29. Palmer, "The Weary Ploughman," etching, final state of ten. £140 ($340.20). In July 1971 Weston offered the much more valuable fourth state of this print for £90 ($216.00).


Item 33. Palmer, "The Homeward Star," etching, from the first edition, with verse. £130 ($316.00).

Item 34. Palmer, "The Cypress Grove," etching, from the first edition, with verse. £120 ($292.00).


Item 36. Palmer, "Moeris and Galatea," etching, from the first edition, with verse. £100 ($243.00).


Covent Garden Bookshop, London, Catalogue 52, Spring 1973
A total of 76 Blake items are listed in the catalogue, one of the largest collections offered for sale in recent years. Most volumes are reprints and critical works of only minor interest to collectors, but the following important books are included.

Item 173. Blake, All Religions Are One, Blake Trust facsimile, special issue with added materials, 1970. £120.


Item 180. Erasmus Darwin, The Botanic Garden, with the engravings by Blake, third ed. of part I, 1795. £125.


Item 185. John Gay, Fables, with the plates by Blake, 2 vols., 1793. £110.

Item 186. Blake, Illustrations to Young's Night Thoughts, thirty reproductions of the watercolors in portfolio, intro. by Keynes, 1927. £45.


The latest Blake Trust-Trianon Press prospectus includes the following volumes still in print and available from Bernard Quaritch, Ltd., London.


*Jerusalem*, monochrome facsimile of the Rinder copy, 1953. £10.

*Songs of Innocence*, 1954. £40.

*Europe*, 1969. £75.

*All Religions Are One*, 1970. £18.

*There is no Natural Religion*, 1971. Regular issue, £35; special issue, £88.

Blake's designs to the poems of Gray, 1972. £460, £640, or £590, depending on the binding.


Forthcoming Blake Trust facsimiles:

*The Book of Ahania*, 6 plates, 3 in color. Regular issue, £32; special issue, £85.

*Jerusalem*, 25 color plates from Lord Cunliffe's collection, 4 color proofs from the Preston collection. Regular issue, about £120; special issue, about £240.

Blake's *Illustrations for the Book of Job*, the engravings, including proof states, pencil sketches, and monochrome reproductions of all watercolors. With a new catalogue raisonné by Keynes. Prices not yet set.

*The Song of Los*. 8 color plates. Prices not yet set.
1 (above) Blake's design for a fan.  
2 (below) The central oval for the fan design, slightly enlarged.  
3 (p. 62) "Morning Twilight," from the Abbe Montfaucon's Antiquity Explained.  
4 (p. 63) A vignette engraved by Blake after Stothard for Ritson's Select Collection of English Songs.
The issue of the Blake Newsletter for spring 1972, listing Blake's works in the British Museum Print Room, refers on p. 226 to the verso of Binyon 32 as: "Design for a fan (probably not by Blake)." This entry seems to have been derived from Binyon's own description which reads: "Design for a fan. An oval with Cupid and Psyche. Not by Blake." In spite of this categorical rejection, the Newsletter checklist, with its "probably," reflects a doubt not unnaturally engendered by the fact that the fan design is on the same sheet as a characteristic pencil study of Blake's maturity, sketching an idea for a title-page; no one has ever disputed the authenticity of this.

The contrast between the loose, rapid pencil drawing of the title-page study and the neat, brightly colored decoration on the reverse is sufficiently great to have prompted the reaction that, when he made the rough sketch, Blake must have used a scrap of paper from some other artist's portfolio. The lower half of this reverse side of the sheet is empty; in the center, near the top, is an oval vignette measuring 7.9 x 12.4 cm. [illus. 1 & 2]. The subject is drawn in pencil, colored with bright pink, mauve and green watercolor, and strengthened with some outlines in pen and black ink. Above it a few curling sprays of foliage, with pink buds, soften the hard oval. To the left, a little below the central horizontal axis of the oval, is a putto with a loop of blue drapery, carrying a torch; to the right, opposite him, a fairy with small wings, curling yellow and pink drapery, and a garland. A sinuous tendril of scant-leaved ivy describes an arc over all three groups suggesting, as Binyon saw, that the drawing was conceived as a decoration for a fan. This is borne out by the typically fan-like placing of the central vignette, a common feature on fans of the late eighteenth century, often contained in just such an oval and frequently flanked, like this one, with supporting figures or ornaments. Binyon was wrong, however, in identifying the subject as Cupid and Psyche, since the girl holds a pen or stylus and not a lamp: it shows the incident of the "Corinthian Maid" or the daughter of Dibutades the potter, who, as Fuseli put it, "traced the shade of her departing lover by the secret lamp"; the incident, in fact, known as "the Origin of Painting," used by Joseph Wright of Derby and many other Neo-classicists, and actually engraved, in one version, for use on fan-leaves.

The choice of subject is not typical of Blake, who rarely used Classical sources, preferring (when he was not concerned with his own private myths) to illustrate English history or literature: his Edward and Elenor and The Penance of Jane

Andrew Wilton is Assistant Keeper in the Department of Prints & Drawings of the British Museum, currently cataloguing Turner drawings. He has done work on William Paine and other archæological artists, and he delivered a lecture on Blake and the antique at the Victoria & Albert Museum in 1972.
Shore are early examples. The theme, and the simple, stark design, have something in common with the Classical fantasies of Romney; but the drawing of the pen outlines, and the color, are very much Blake's. At first sight it is precisely in its color that the work seems farthest removed from Blake; but there are close parallels in the coloring of some of the designs which he was producing in the early 1780s. The small sketch of the composition of the Death of Earl Godwin, of about 1780, for instance, makes use of similar yellows and of the characteristic lavender-mauve; and, on a larger scale but with something of the same concentration, so does the dramatic design of Saul and the Witch of Endor, dated 1782. It is to some date such as this that the drawing under consideration should be assigned; Blake was at that time about twenty-five years old. If the colors, intensified and concentrated as they are here in a decorative context, recall the sweet, sugar-icing palette of Adam's decorators--Angelica Kauffmann and Biago Rebecca, for example--we should not be surprised: it was the kind of influence which any young artist of the period would have absorbed, and one particularly well suited to the ornamental purpose of the fan.

The composition itself, on the other hand, anticipates the mature Blake and furnishes the most striking evidence of his authorship. The upright figure beside a body stretched horizontally on a bed recurs, with increased austerity and grandeur, as the titlepage of Songs of Experience in 1794 (an early specimen of several comparable death-scenes by Blake). Here the recumbent figures are starkly supine, the arms rigid and not relaxed as in the fan vignette; but the stooping posture of the mourners is close to that of the Corinthian Maid, whose bent left leg is also echoed by the foremost of them. Even the figure of Cupid, flying in diagonally at the left of the vignette, is remembered in the 1794 plate, though transmuted into a robed spirit floating above the principal scene, to the left of the title lettering. This type of fairy, in a long curling gown, is characteristic of Blake's decorations and is closely prefigured in the right-hand "supporter" of the fan design. Unlike the Cupid, which has conventional angel or bird's wings, this figure is equipped with the small butterfly wings which are occasionally to be found in Blake's evocations of fairyland. The device is unusual at this date, although it was sometimes used by Neo-classical artists; it looks forward to Victorian painters of Faerie such as Doyle and Noel Paton.

By contrast, the left-hand supporter is taken directly from the Classical antique. Its loop of drapery recalls those of Poussin's nymphs, and of their Roman originals, especially those found in Pompeian wall-paintings. The putto may be assumed to represent Cupid again: the torch is as much an attribute of the god as the bow which Blake shows him holding in the principal scene; but, just as the fairy has no obvious symbolic function, this figure too may be simply a decorative motif. It does, however, allude unmistakably to the Roman figure of a boy holding a torch and a veil which is reproduced in the Abbé Montfaucon's Antiquity Explained, and stated there to represent "Morning Twilight" [illus. 3]. The position of the arm holding the torch differs slightly from Blake's design, but we should not expect Blake to copy any image precisely. In fact, the arm and torch of his putto can be exactly paralleled in a very similar figure in Pietro Testa's etching of the Season of Spring, a print well known to eighteenth-century collectors.

A more immediate instance of the putto-and-torch motif is to be found in one of the vignettes which Blake himself engraved after designs by Thomas	

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7 Produced about 1778. Now in the Tate Gallery.
8 British Museum, register no. 1964.12.12.13. The finished drawing was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1780 (no. 315).
9 In the New York Public Library, Department of Prints.
10 Compare also the pose of such figures as that on the right of Ruth and Naomi in the Victoria and Albert Museum.
11 For example, on p. 1 (pl. 3) of The Book of Thel; and, larger, in the "Sunshine Holiday" illustration to Milton's L'Allegro in the Pierpont Morgan Library.
12 Such as Richard Westall and Henry Howard. Butterfly wings were also used by Baroque artists, especially the French. They seem to derive from those in the Raphael School such as the Cupid and Psyche in the Villa Farnesina, known through the engraving of Nicolas Dorigny in Payden et Amors Baptême an Fabula (Rome, 1693), and consciously imitated by James Barry in his composition of Pandora (a drawing now known only from an engraving by Louis Schiavonetti).
13 Bernard de Montfaucon, Antiquité Expliquée et représentée en figures, 5 vols. with 5 supplementary vols. (1719); translated into English by D. Humphreys as Antiquity Explained and represented in Sculpture (1721-25). See the Supplement, Vol. 1, pl. 4 and facing page.
14 Bartsch XX, 36.
Stothard for Joseph Ritson's *Select Collection of English Songs*, published in 1783. It shows a Magdalen-like figure leaning mournfully against a rock while two cupids fly away from her. One carries a flaming torch, the other a bow and quiver; this second also has a loop of drapery fluttering in an arc. Both the putti of Blake's fan design are thus to be found together in this vignette. Another illustration to the same book shows Cupid standing with a lamp behind a lady who is penning a love-letter by moonlight; here, beyond the incidental appearance of Cupid, there is no direct connection with the fan design, but it is worthy of note that the whole scene, with figures confined to the extreme left and the background a plain wall broken only by the vertical of the door-post and the moon beyond, is of an austerity unusual in Stothard and altogether closer in spirit to Blake.

Although Blake turned his hand to conventional book-illustration like Stothard's, and occasionally produced designs to order for commercial and other purposes, there are few instances of his work as a decorative artist in so overtly frivolous a vein as this fan-leaf. It is impossible to say precisely why it was drawn, or why it was never cut out and used, but its probable date of around 1782 prompts the sentimental conjecture that it was intended for Blake's new bride, Catherine, whom he married in August of that year. At about the same time he was introduced by Flaxman to the circle of Mrs. Mathew, and the drawing might have been a response to the more elegant social milieu which Blake encountered there. These however are suggestions without circumstantial support, and they must therefore remain speculative and largely fanciful.

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17 The Blakean character of the illustrations for Ritson was noticed by Gilchrist in his *Life of William Blake*, 2nd ed. (1880), I, 51; quoted by Russell, no. 55.
18 Such as his advertisement for Moore's Carpet and Hosiery Manufactory; see Keynes, *Separate Plates*, no. V, pl. 10.
19 Gilchrist, I, 41.
20 Gilchrist, I, 43.
DISCUSSION

"With intellectual spears, & long winged arrows of thought"

GEOFFREY KEYNES

The Blake Trust Gray Catalogue and the Blake Trust Facsimiles

In *Blake Newsletter* 24 (Spring 1973) recently issued, Professor G. E. Bentley, Jr., has published an article in which he chooses to question the accuracy of the facsimiles of Blake's Illuminated Books published by Mr. Arnold Fawcus of the Trianon Press on behalf of the Trustees of the William Blake Trust—a non-profit-making educational charity founded with the help of a bequest from the estate of the late Walford Graham Robertson and greatly assisted by generous contributions from Mr. Lessing J. Rosenwald and Mr. Paul Mellon. Professor Bentley's object was to rebut a favorable review (Newsletter 21) of the Catalogue of the Tate Gallery Exhibition of Blake's Illustrations of Gray's Poems, issued for the convenience of the visitors to the exhibition. As Chairman of the Trustees I would like to reply.

Professor Bentley writes that he has detected "some serious minor defects" in the Catalogue, the plates of which he regards as having been "simply falsified." This "tampering" with the reproductions he says brings into question the reliability of all the Blake Trust reproductions. It seems that the

ROBERT N. ESSICK

Jerusalem 25: Some Thoughts on Technique

In the Fall 1972 issue of the *Blake Newsletter* Deirdre Toomey presented her interesting discovery of three states of *Jerusalem*, plate 25. As a bibliographic description of a page from five copies of *Jerusalem* her article is perspicacious and thorough, but as a chalcographic description of a copper-plate it seems to me that it leaves several important questions unattended.

The additional lines pointed out by Toomey to distinguish between the three states are of two different types. The white lines in the hair of the central and right females in the third state were very likely added to the plate by removing some of the copper with an engraving tool, as Toomey states. An alternate method for making white lines is "Woodcut on Copper," as Blake called it (Keynes, ed., *Writings*, p. 440), but this would require covering the entire plate with an etching ground—certainly more work than necessary for the limited area reworked. All the other added lines described by Toomey, such as the body contours on the right female in the second state, are far more puzzling. They print black, and thus must be in relief. How were these lines produced? No matter which etching or engraving process is used, copper can only be subtracted from a plate, and thus it has always been my assumption that adding relief lines to the parts of a plate already bitten in by acid or graver is very difficult, if not impossible. The only way that comes to my mind for adding relief lines is to work the plate up from the back and then engrave away the whites, leaving in relief only those areas to be printed. But the new lines on the second state of *Jerusalem* plate 25 have a delicacy and a spontaneity suggesting etching rather than engraving. If etched, they could have been formed on the worked-up areas by applying a stopping-out material with a small brush or pen, covering all other
The most serious "inaccuracy" found by the Professor was an inscription added to the jacket of the book which carried a reproduction of Blake's title-page. Publishers do not commonly provide a careful hand-colored facsimile on so ephemeral an object as a book-jacket, but do often add information on this expendable feature. The other inaccuracy was in another inscription made by Blake in dim pencilling on the same title-page. This would have been invisible when reproduced by the offset process and was consequently rewritten slightly.

One simple way out of these technical difficulties remains. Toomey writes that the considerable differences between the Pierpont Morgan copy (Census copy F) and the Fitzwilliam copy (H) can be accounted for by differences in printing. It is certainly possible, as well as convenient, to consider all the black line changes in the five Impressions reproduced with Toomey's article as the result of inking and printing differences, either accidental or intentional. In the British Museum copy (copy A, first state) the faint and poorly inked outline of some of the contours on the right female can be seen, even though these lines were, according to Toomey, added in the second state. The gray wash shading in copy A which Toomey points to as an indication of reworking to be done for the second state may actually be Blake's attempt to improve on poor printing. The Rosenwald copy of America (copy E) shows a good deal of added wash for just this purpose. Printing a copper-plate, either relief or intaglio, is a tricky business, and great differences in impressions can be caused by the way in which the plate is inked, wiped, and imposed on the paper. Even the texture and moisture content of the paper can make significant differences. Copy C of Jerusalem (not discussed by Toomey) offers ample testimony to Blake's problems with, or cavalier attitude towards, clean printing. Many plates in this copy (almost all of which are in Chapter 2, later rearranged and reprinted) have smudges in the white areas that result from sloppy or too heavy inking--or a failure to clean out the hollows properly before imposition. On the other hand, excessive or careless wiping can eliminate fine lines surrounded by relatively large white areas (i.e., just the sort of lines missing from plate 25 in Toomey's first state). In copy C, the text area and major lines on plate 25 indicate that it was very lightly inked, and thus it should be no surprise that this impression shows (at least in the Blake Trust facsimile) even less evidence of the fine contour lines than copy A. The method of inking can also affect impressions in a way that seems like a change in the copper itself. Inking with a dabber or soft roller will cover all raised surfaces, but also get ink into the hollows; inking with a very hard roller or from an unengraved plate (as Ruthven Todd did during his experiments with relief etching in 1948) can miss fine lines slightly below the level of the major relief areas. One or more of these variables can account for the differences in black lines described by Toomey.

My point here is not to dispute the particulars of Toomey's article, but rather to suggest the need to consider the technical potentials and limitations of Blake's processes before making too many assumptions about changes on a copper-plate. Armed with a heady combination of patience, twelve-power magnifying glasses, and a tendency to promote all differences in impressions to the rank of different states, we can end up with a bibliographer's (or botanist's) nightmare—that is, as many species as there are individuals. In "The Suppressed and Altered Passages in Blake's
He complains further that in the eclectic facsimile of *There is No Natural Religion* (1971) the size of the pages is not exactly that of Blake's original leaves. In none of the facsimiles is the leaf guaranteed to be of exactly the same size as that of the original copy. Blake himself varied this relation of print to leaf, and in any case it seems to me to be immaterial to the value of the color print. It is almost the equivalent of complaining that the pulp of which the paper is made is not of the same composition as that used by Blake. In fact the paper was specially made in an attempt to produce an approximation to Blake's paper, though with a distinctive watermark.

Professor Bentley also refers to the slight inaccuracy in the facsimile of *All Religions are One* (1970) in that the various shades of green are not quite true to the unique original. This may well be so, and the reason for it will be obvious to anyone with any knowledge of the difficulties of reproduction. As was stated in my description of the plates, the reproductions had to be made from photographic ektachromes of each plate except one, which were supplied by the H. E. Huntington Library because they were unable to loan the original. The implication was that subtle variations of this kind could not be caught. The single original print available from my collection had to be used as the standard for color. This partial failure should be attributed to the regulations under which public institutions are administered and not to the craftsman. Private owners can allow themselves to be more co-operative, and the Blake Trust has been fortunate in enjoying this generous co-operation in every other instance.

Professor Bentley concludes with a solemn warning against accepting any reproduction as "perfect." This seems hardly necessary, since the term "facsimile" in its usual acceptance carries with it the assumption that no reproduction is so perfect as to be the equivalent of a forgery. This very small degree of imperfection is wholly desirable and I have no wish to claim that any of our facsimiles have surpassed it. Yet the Trustees are satisfied that during the last twenty-five years they have been able to rely absolutely on the integrity of Mr. Fawcus in his efforts to produce facsimiles which are extraordinarily faithful to Blake's work. This is the more remarkable in view of the volume of work turned out and of the technical difficulties presented by some of the subjects. Brinkley, 6 May 1974

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Jerusalem" in *Studies in Bibliography*, 17 (1964), 1-54, David Erdman points out that it is "almost impossible" to add new words in black line to a relief etching. His statement serves as an ample warning to those eager to find textual additions (as distinct from easily made deletions) on Blake's copper-plates. The same warning must be extended to include any additions of black lines to a relief plate. When confronted with a black line addition in a print made from a relief etching, three possible explanations should be considered in an ascending order of technical difficulty, as listed below.

1. The additional lines were added in wash or pen and ink. No change in the copper-plate. Wash or pen and ink work can usually be discovered through close scrutiny of the original print. For example, in the article cited above Erdman writes that the additional lines covering deleted text on plate 3 of *Jerusalem* in copy D were drawn on the print, even though the Pearson facsimile of this copy reproduced these lines in such a way that they look identical to the lines printed from the plate. If however the additional lines are unquestionably printed, as I assume Toomey found the additional lines on plate 25 to be, then the second alternative explanation requires consideration.

2. Differences in inking and/or printing caused the differences in the impressions. No change in the copper-plate. Almost every impression from one of Blake's relief etchings shows some variance from all other impressions due to these variables. The changes in the size and darkness of the patch of ink on Albion's right knee on plate 25 of *Jerusalem* in the five copies reproduced with Toomey's article are a good case in point. A list-
Nature and Art in Milton:
Afterthoughts on the 1973 MLA Seminar

The 1973 MLA seminar "Perspectives on Blake's Milton" (based on five papers published in advance in Blake Studies, 6 [Fall 1973]) produced some stimulating discussion, but like most such sessions it opened up more avenues for thought than it fully explored. In the following comments I seek the rare gratification of saying at leisure some things that I lacked the wit or opportunity to say during the seminar.

In his opening remarks Karl Kroebber, the discussion leader, challenged the group to consider, among other problems, the ways in which Milton is an expression of Blake's critical or aesthetic ideas. Though none of the five papers deals with this question directly, it seems to me probably the most important one to ask about this particular poem. Milton has often been compared with The Prelude, and for good reason. Here Blake not only comes to grips with his personal role as poet-prophet, but, like Wordsworth in his autobiographical poem, he explores the nature of imagination in general, and in particular the relation of the poet's mind to nature. Only the first two of the five papers touch on this topic at all, and neither deals with it in a satisfying way. Mary Lynn Johnson's quite penetrating essay emphasizes the importance of the Christology that underlies Milton, but does not go on to relate this valuable idea to the poem's central theme, the relation of the artist to salvation. Thomas W. Herzing cogently analyzes "Nature's cruel holiness" as it is portrayed in Book I, but by failing to point out the equally true contrary of sensuous Nature's necessary place in Los's task of regeneration, leaves a misleading impression about the direction of the poem as a whole.

The discussion of the papers was similarly more tantalizing than satisfying. Alicia Ostriker asked Mary Lynn Johnson about the other eternals who were not, like Milton, moved by the Bard's song--does this imply that only the artist can respond properly to visionary inspiration? Johnson replied first by citing Blake's wish that all the Lord's people were prophets, 'and then went on to say that Milton's response is not to write a poem but to begin to act in a way that leads to self-annihilation. Stuart Curran also asked Johnson a pertinent question about the relation of theology to art. But these lines of discussion were cut off before they were much developed.

What needed to be said at the seminar was, first, that Milton's descent, union with Ololon, and triumph over his selfishness are events simultaneously theological and aesthetic in their implications--indeed, the two are hardly separable in Blake; and, second, that the great problem that is solved in the poem is precisely the paradox that physical Nature, while a delusion of fallen humanity and the source of man's continuing error, is nevertheless the only means by which the poet-prophet, or the divine humanity in every man, is able to regain Eternity.

Herzing is misleading when he says in his essay that "All of being ... possesses two forms: the external form is perceived by the easily enticed and easily deluded sensate eye; poetic vision perceives the inward form, the infinite and eternal character" (p. 30). But Blake is a monist; for him the very existence of those external forms is only an illusion we fall into when our mental powers become dormant, and we allow our selfhood to impose its limitations on our perception of the infinite. Our souls return to wholeness, to renewed participation in Eternity, by casting away the limiting selfhood (i.e., by self-annihilation) and sharing more fully in true reality through imaginative activity. The external forms are not cruel and delusive per se, but only when we see them as detached from Eternity, from the infinite within, as Natural Religion does. The energies of Eternity seem terrible when reversed in "the Printing-Press of Los," but that is because we are viewing them with dulled and fragmented vision. In Milton Blake believes as he did in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, that "Body is a portion of Soul discerned by the five Senses, the chief inlets of Soul in this age" (Plate 4, E 34). When we see "the Constellations in the deep & wondrous Night ... the gorgeous clothed Flies ... the Trees on mountains," we are seeing true "Visions of Eternity" (Plates 25-26, E 121-22), visions which are valid to the extent that our limited minds can handle them. We see only "the hem of their garments": the phrase implies limitation but not derogation. As participants in the MLA seminar pointed out, the phrase alludes both to the angels' limited view of God in Paradise Lost (III, 380) and to the curative powers of Jesus' hem (cf. Matthew 9:20-21). Hence it is through acceptance and assimilation of the sense world rather than rejection of it that man--and preemminently the prophetic artist--returns to Eternity. That is what Los is doing when he builds Golgonooza, and

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what Blake is doing when "All this Vegetable World appeared on my left Foot," and he binds it on as a bright sandal "to walk forward thro' Eternity" (Plate 21, E 114). We must remember that Beulah—where, to put it crudely, Eternal forms take on world are prominent in Coleridge, Wordsworth, wandering spectres (Night VIII, p. 100, E 358). Very similar versions of this paradox of using the senses as a stairsteps to transcend the sense world are prominent in Coleridge, Wordsworth, Shelley, and Keats; it is in fact a form of the familiar Platonic ladder of love.

None of these Romantic poets, including Blake, draws a line between poetic and religious inspiration. Coleridge's phrase in "Dejection: an Ode" for the happy consequence of his "shaping spirit of imagination" operating with the intense energy of Joy is the apocalyptic "New Heaven and a New Earth" (Revelation 21:1) also echoed in the millenial promise that follows Christ's decision to descend to man in Paradise Lost III (line 335). Both religious and aesthetic vision involve the ability to see the Divine—the One Mind—that is always immanent in experience for those who can see through the corporeal eye and not with it. Coleridge's famous definition of the primary imagination as "the living Power and prime Agent of all human Perception, and as a representation in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM" is a good gloss for Blake's four levels of vision: the greater the intensity at which the imagination operates in all perception, the more fully we share in the infinite creativity of the Divine mind, and approach fourfold vision. The fool sees not the same tree that the wise man sees, because the wise man perceives with a well developed primary imagination, whereas the fool, victim of his selfhood, cuts himself off from divine vision by depending on what Coleridge would call the fixities and definites of understanding and memory.

Blake consistently identifies Christ as the imagination in every man (e.g., in the London inscriptions, transcribed E 271). A Blakean Christology must therefore in some sense be an "Imaginationology." Milton, one of the supreme embodiments of imagination, in Blake's poem closely parallels Christ's career: his incarnation—that is, his decision to go to Eternal Death—resembles Christ's decision as described in Paradise Lost III; Milton has a temptation in the wilderness, well described by Thomas Herzing's article; his crucifixion and atonement is his choice of self-annihilation rather than opposition to Satan, his spectre—a parallel to Jesus' self-sacrifice in Jerusalem, 96, and, incidentally, to the refusal by Shelley's Prometheus to curse Jupiter; his resurrection is, as Mary Lynn Johnson says, "the emergence of the Real Human from the dead selfhood"; and his ascension is his final merging with Jesus in Plate 42.

All of these events have significance in terms of Blake's aesthetics, i.e., of his beliefs about imagination. When he decides to descend to Eternal Death, Milton takes off the "robe of the promise"—that is to say, he rejects a legalistic Puritan theology for one of Christlike self-annihilation; the aesthetic equivalent is rejection of a rational, Lockeian use of the senses and the daughters of memory, in favor of living imagination and the daughters of inspiration. Christ's incarnation is the necessary clothing of the Word in a form assimilable by fallen humanity: "God becomes as we are, that we may be as he is." Even the Eternals converse in "Visionary Forms Dramatic," and "Man cannot unite with Man but by their Emanations" (R 88, E 244). Milton must be perfected through a fuller and more imaginative acceptance of the natural world, of the body and the senses, than his poetry originally achieved; it culminates in his proper union with his purified emanation Ololon. In Blake's plot, Milton's temptation and agon are the sorting out of the right and wrong uses of sensation. When Milton's shadow, or spectre, finally separates from him, and he refuses to fight it, this is itself victory over selfhood and the Not Human: it is inevitably followed by—in fact, it constitutes—an apocalypse for Milton (though not quite yet for Blake and the rest of the world) and by his union with the similarly purified Ololon in Jesus, the Divine Humanity. The Revelation to Milton of a new Heaven and Earth includes an explicitly literary aspect: he is able "To cast off the rotten rags of Memory by Inspiration" and to reject "the tame high finisher of paltry blots," and those "Who pretend to Poetry of Natures Images drawn from Remembrance" (Plate 41, E 141). In other words, sensation is wrongly used whenever it ceases to be a living part of the Divine mind shared in the act of imagination, and the error is worst when embodied in Poetry, which ought to be the highest expression of Vision. Such abstraction in Poetry is spiritual death corresponding to Mystery in religion. The Bard's song in the first third of the poem, it should be noted, is a kind of Preludium presenting, in different terms, a misuse of imaginative powers similar to that which Milton eventually overcomes.

Thus in his poem Blake winnows out the eternal, Reprobate Milton from his Elect portion in a literary as well as a theological sense. As a personal document Milton records the impact on Blake of his predecessor. We recall that the Bard in Book I says he is himself inspired by the Divine Humanity; the Bard enters Milton's bosom, Milton enters Blake's heel, and Blake simultaneously merges with Los. In other words, Milton's writings—in spite of some reservations Blake has about them—allow Blake to participate more fully in Eternal reality, and to contribute to Jerusalem's return to England's green and pleasant land. Significantly, Milton and Los appear to Blake as he is binding on the material world as a sandal in which to walk through Eternity. From the placement of this circumstance at such a climactic moment in Book I, it would seem that one of the things Blake learned from Milton was the proper use of the sense world.
REVIEWS


Reviewed by Hazard Adams

Well, we've come a long way! In his interesting essay on Jerusalem, one of the editors of this volume, Stuart Curran, writes confidently: "Difficult it may be, but no sophisticated reader confesses himself lost in its midst, unable to comprehend the plate he is reading. In addition to the range and subtlety of the epic style, in Jerusalem Blake attains a clarity and a sense of driving purpose beyond his previous efforts." Curran is compelled then to say again that the poem is not easy. He knows that his optimism has been only recently shared even by the most sophisticated Blakeans. The need to make the remark at all indicates an awareness that much is to be done before Jerusalem is truly delivered. (The last essay in the book by Karl Kroeber is called "Delivering Jerusalem.")

This volume, which faces the issue of interpreting the major prophecies, marks, along with Erdman and Grant's earlier Blake's Visionary Forms Dramatic (1970), a phase in Blake scholarship. We have an opportunity to take stock and to observe the trends.

First, community. Of the fifteen authors represented in Blake's Sublime Allegory, six appeared in the earlier volume. Several essays in the earlier volume are alluded to in the later one. The issues that the authors address are interrelated, and the various authors are intimately aware of each other's work. With a few exceptions the book represents a new generation of Blake scholars. The influence of Frye remains strong, but several issues are those that in recent years have been given primary attention by Erdman and Hagstrum. The temper of the essays is one of an industry, rather than the received style of individual search. There is a sense of belonging—not to the reprobate class, as the earliest Blake scholars thought of themselves—but to a sort of guild. Does the appearance of two collections of original essays on two loosely conceived subjects mark a new style for scholars? Perhaps this community is simply a reflection of the social fashion and group psychologizing of the age. But it has not often been present among literary commentators. On the other hand, all of this may merely be a sign of Blake scholarship settling into the same slough of deadening commentary that plagued the Spenser industry about thirty years ago. I hope not. Yet, clever and intelligent as many of these essays are, none of them grasps the imagination as some previous work on Blake still does.

A few years ago John Grant wrote an essay in Blake Studies entitled "You Can't Write About Blake's Pictures Like That"; and he pretty conclusively showed that a previous essay had fallen into numerous errors of approach. What remains to be asked is not whether one can write in a certain way about Blake's pictures, but which of the possible ways is really worthwhile. In the preface to Blake's Visionary Forms Dramatic, Erdman wisely observes, "In the reading of Blake's illuminations, the advance has been slower and less steady; common ground has been gained, plate by plate, but some has been lost." There are probably many reasons for this. For the most part, the art critics have not wished to concern themselves with Blake. Supposedly reliable histories give him short shrift. Thus, the job of commentary has been left largely to literary scholars. The result has been a curiously literary commentary on his designs, aside from those discussions which are little more than attempts to describe clearly what objects are depicted in the pictures. Even the latter literalize the picture, turning it into a sort of text. There is nothing wrong with this, but it does not seem to help us much toward answering the fundamental question of the relation in form between poetry and design, even as we admit (as we must) that Blake's designs are literary in the sense that they present us with symbolic figures. But what about symbolic style? I am constantly being lectured, it seems, that the designs are integral with the text and that one can't understand the text without them, or that one more readily understands the text with them, or vice versa. However, I know of relatively few instances in which the design is a crucial aid of the sort claimed and no instance in which the design is indispensable. I have had to conclude that it is not in the area of the literary reading of the picture or the interpretation of symbolic figures that the connection is critically important. Indeed, one senses too often in commentary on the symbolism of a picture that the discussion is somehow at the wrong level or trivial, for the very reason that it is turning the paintings into verbal structures. We are wary enough of discussions that turn poems into visual scenes or tapestries, and there is a whole critical tradition devoted to the problems in this sort of approach. It must be the formal relations of poetry and design which, beyond the literary symbolism, produce a single artistic whole or im-

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pression or effect. It is with the total presenta-
tion, seen as a "presentation" perhaps in Langer's
sense, that we are concerned. Beyond Frye's 1951
essay, cited by Erdman, we have not come very far.
Nor does this book travel any greater distance
than that achieved by W. J. T. Mitchell in his "Blake's Composite Art" in Visionary Forme Dramatic.
Mitchell began his essay by asking "how" the rela-
tion of Blake's poetry and painting may best be
understood. His essay strikes toward the heart of
the issue by at least getting the question right.
It seems also to have passed muster with Grant,
the most severe of our scholars in insisting on
examining Blake's pictures with great care. The
effects on Jerusalem in the present book stay pretty
much with the text, and Wilson the same, except
for Irene Tayler on the Comus designs. There the
interest is in symbolic figures, as in Morton
Paley's essay on the figure of the garment.
Third, new critical fashions and concerns.
Some of these are worth serious notice; others are
seriously worth noting for their triviality. A
definite sign of incursion into Blake studies of
what I cannot resist calling pop phenomenology is
offered by the lead essay, portentously entitled "The Aim of Blake's Prophecies and the Uses of
Blake Criticism." The author Jerome J. McGann
attacks "objectification" as
. to the degree
that one regards Blake's art as an object of analysis
and interpretation, to the degree any criticism
fosters such a view, to that degree has Blake been
misused; even, I would venture to say, misread." The
effects of Blake do not offer "an explanation of,
but an occasion for experiencing . . ." (I do not
know of any sophisticated modern criticism that
regards poems as explanatory.) The terms "I" and
"Thou" are specially invoked, and the Blakean poem
is regarded as requiring its meaning from the
reader, the only personality who can experience in
vision that for which the poem is the occasion. The
language here is very much what one would derive from a criticism centered upon the "phenomenology of reading," to
borrow Georges Poulet's term. Blake is quoted to
justify treatment of his work as a "vehicle for
vision." McGann disapproves of the objectivity of
the poem, as apparently hypothesized by the Anglo-
American new criticism. The term "objective,"
however, seems to me to do double duty in such
attacks as this. Objectivity in the old Lockean or
Cartesian senses, generates its opposite, the
subjective. But the new critical sense of the term
was not this. To talk of making the poem an
aesthetic "object" is a sort of shorthand for freeing it
from the objectivity of Locke into that
connection with the reader paradoxically described
in Kant by the terms "disinterest" or "purposiveness
without purpose" and the like, or in Valéry by the
image of dancing. This latter sense, sometimes
called "distance" is, in fact, the opposite of the
objectivity of the Lockean. This tradition of
thought, which fully appreciates the ironic relation
of commentary to text, is anti-scientistic and
anti-positivistic. The "object" in this profoundly
anti-objective sense is often described as having a
"life of its own." Analogies of organicism and
miraculism are frequently invoked.

Why all of this? There was something quite
practical about it. Critics wanted to develop a
way to talk about a poem that was useful. There
was before them the sorry example of critical
impressionism, which had solipsistically accepted
the subject-object split. Flying from this extreme,
critics eliminated the writer and reader as useful
points of reference and began with the poem
hypostatized. This was, as I say, a purely practi-
cal act in order to make contact with something
present and not requiring fictive reconstruction of
"author" or "reader." Critics like Poulet attempt
to collapse these entities back into the terms
"consciousness" or "intersubjectivity." Philosoph-
ically, as Kenneth Burke says of Sartre on le Monst,
it's "good showmanship," but when all is said and
done whatever one locates one locates in or as a
text, and in this sense one objectifies it, which
is to say that one frees it. The problem with the
criticism of consciousness or "vision" criticism
is that after the showmanship there must come
silence. McGann denies "meaning" to Blake.
Logically, his essay should end here at this
point, but instead he proceeds to find meaning
everywhere. He proceeds as Frye has observed every
commentator must: to allegorize, and thus to
establish a meaning he has already denied.

The phenomenological fashion is to proceed
through a series of denials of the objectivity of
the text, which is often confused with its
entention, either to exhaustion of the critical
impulse itself in the face of the formal and
technical qualities of the work or to the "showman-
ship" of self-reflexive dwelling upon the critic's
curious position, whether heroic, tragic, absurd, or
whatever. It is no surprise that phenomenological
criticism in many varieties rarely sticks with the
text.

McGann knows he is employing logic to destroy
logic. One is reminded of certain remarks by Yeats,
but Yeats wisely chose poetry as his bow.
Phenomenology is, as we see, a quest for the ultimate
form of philosophy and must endlessly discard
critical languages. Poulet's master is not Plato,
Aristotle, or finally even Descartes. It is Mallarmé
gesturing. But criticism must always finally
objectify in the second sense I have mentioned
above, protesting eloquently as it does so. Or it
must dissolve itself into the forms of art. Perhaps
a philosophy of being can rescue us from this
situation, but for the interpreter the Kantian idea
taken up by Schiller that we objectify the work in
order to free ourselves and it into another realm
is definitive. The ultimate criticism for McGann is
silence, but, as we see, he wishes to speak. He
takes as definitive, incidentally, Shelley's view
that when composition begins inspiration is on the
wane. It would be well to submit this idea to
rigorous analysis before making it a rule of art or
attributing it to Blake. I don't myself think Blake
believed it, and I'm sure Jerusalem says he thinks
his vision is complete in the work, even discovered
by the act of its creation. In any case there are
numerous critics who have questioned Shelley's point
seriously.

Still McGann's heart is in the right place. He
hates to see Blake deadened by pedantic analytical procedures. He feels that Blake had a silent message for us that our act of reading him was to regenerate. No quarrel, really, with that. Or with the idea that every movement generates its pedantic objectivists, when inspiration becomes memory. In any case, the first essay is in the best modern way, as we say; and it suggests that we are to be faced with uses of Blake criticism that will right a balance now tipped toward deadening objectivity—the condemnation of Blake to the art museum, as Merleau-Ponty would put it, perhaps.

The last essay in the book also follows this line to some extent. Karl Kroeber asserts that Blake's Jerusalem needs to be delivered from its interpreters rather than from oblivion: an example Kroeber offers of interpretive error is to think of Jerusalem as related in certain ways to Finnegans Wake. I am prepared to acknowledge that there are many differences, but the relation of Finnegans Wake to Blake's later prophecies is substantial, as any close attention to Finnegans Wake ought to reveal. Yes, indeed, let us all insist on delivering Jerusalem as unscathed as possible but remember that it has been delivered at least partly to us, and probably saved from oblivion, by the efforts of preceding critics and scholars, that understanding of Blake's work has come slowly, and that the progress to date is a tribute to those who have helped us by being in some way not quite right.

It is time also to deliver terms like "ingenious exegesis," for ingenious exegesis isn't all bad. In a very ingenious scholarly essay, which incidentally gives us a possible model for understanding Joyce's relation to Blake, Joseph Anthony Wittreich shows us how Blake is related to the "epic tradition that by Spenser and Milton was tied to the tradition of prophecy." Blake's Jerusalem is "not only a consolidation and continuation of Blake's previous poems...; it is also a consolidation of the visions contained in Milton's epics and in Revelation prophecy." Jerusalem "subsumes" previous prophecies and takes its structure from them, trying to reach beyond or to "complete" them. This is an essay that is not only ingenious but also exegetical--the most valuable in the book, I think.

Of the several other essays, many deal with more specialized topics. Ronald Grimes writing on time and space in Blake gathers together a lot of information scattered through Blake criticism and corrects some misapprehensions. Though not entirely original, it makes some excellent points and offers an especially interesting discussion of Blake on "reasoning historians." Edward Rose's essay on Los is more or less a journeyman's piece of work with few surprises. Jean Hagstrum's essay on Luvah and Vala provides us with a model of helpful, lucid commentary. Morton Paley's essay on the figure of the garment in Blake gathers together our sense of this image and clarifies it, but is more specialized in its use than Hagstrum's. Then we have sixty-one pages of John Grant at full throttle telling those of us who can't see what is in front of our noses--and we are legion--what's really in those designs for Vala.

Next we come to the essays on Milton and Jerusalem. We may notice by now that McGann's essay did not, in fact, set forth a theoretical position that others would follow. The essays thus far are works of scholarship and commentary without the sort of self-conscious theorizing that McGann's essay tends to predict. Mary Lynn Johnson and Brian Wilkie take us through The Four Zoas and try to give us what a few years ago we would call a "relevant" reading: The Four Zoas as contemporary soap opera or what the sophomoric will dig. The essay seems entirely out of keeping with the immediately surrounding essays, operating at a much more simplistic level. It does nothing with the really difficult problems of interpretation that The Four Zoas presents—those of structure and transition created by the curious state of the text. There is, of course, a sense in which the essay fits with the first and last essays of the collection. It is trendy. We hear of "mental law and order," "male chauvinism," the "youth culture," and the like. But trendiness runs as fast as it can to stay in the same place.

Irene Tayler, James Rieger, and W. J. T. Mitchell--the last the most interesting, I think--help us in various ways with Milton, a poem on which there has been a good amount of recent work. Someone is going to have to put it all together. On Jerusalem the collection offers considerable ingenuity. Roger Easson appears at first to have taken up the challenge laid down in McGann's essay. He analyzes the relation of the reader to the poem and to Blake in Jerusalem. Actually, though, he finds, instead of phenomenological intersubjectivity, an allegory of the relationship of author to reader projected objectively in the poem. The character Jerusalem, both a city and a woman, is also the poem. Jerusalem is seen as a metapoem. Either this is problematical, or it is a truism, with all successful poems made into metapoems by critics. The essay's most interesting aspect is the discussion of Blake's idea of the reader.

Stuart Curran follows with an elaborate piece declaring for the existence of seven structures in the poem: "... a primary structure of four divisions, obviously linked by calls to various classes of readers; a two-part structure delineating the marked contrast between Ulro and Eden; a three-part structure whose pivots are climactic representations of the fallen state; a threefold and a fourfold division within each chapter stressing the dialectical mode of the poem; a sixfold division emphasizing the continuity of major events; a second three-part structure, derived from the sixfold, which surrounds the central two-thirds of the work, the World of Albion, with the perspective of Los's visionary labor; and a sevenfold structure stressing the poem's genre as epic prophecy and recalling its heritage within the tradition of Christian apocalypse." Curran's collaborative effort with Wittreich in making this collection goes beyond a general interest in Blake. Their two essays are closely related in approach; one is tempted to imagine another book, a collaboration of authorship rather than editorship, in which their two essays would be chapters, the subject
being the generic structure of the prophecies. I must confess to some skepticism about all of the structures Curran finds, however, even as I applaud Curran's extremely ingenious and insightful essay. Did Blake, or Curran, stop at seven for occult reasons? Would Curran demur from a follower's attempt to discover that magnificent all-containing eighth lurking in the forests? Which is to say, with all the good will in the world and with all respect for the labors of these editors and authors, that Jerusalem remains yet to be fully delivered, but not, I think, from its critics.