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NEWS

ERRATUM: BLAKE SLIDES

In Everett Frost's Checklist of Blake Slides (Blake Newsletter 33), the fourth entry in column 2 of page 28 should read

Rare Book Room, Princeton University Library, Princeton, New Jersey 08540. Slides, $3.75. bw & (neg. $3.50), 5x7 $1.75.

This should be preceded by Philip H. & A. S. W. Rosenbach Foundation, 2010 DeLancey Place, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19103. Slides, $7.50. Color postcard, "The Number of the Beast is 666," 10c; 7x6 in. color print of same, 50c.

These two entries were inadvertently conflated when the list was compiled.

BRITISH MUSEUM BLAKE SLIDES

The Museum has raised its prices for slides from 30p to £1 per slide, a very sharp increase. Responsibility seems to lie with the Photographic Department, not with the Department of Prints and Drawings.

NEW ANNUAL

The subject of Studies in Iconography, edited by Thomas C. Niemann, is the pictorial and literary use of iconography. Subscriptions are $7. The first issue is free. Manuscripts should be sent to Niemann in the Department of English, Northern Kentucky State College, Highland Heights, Kentucky 41076.

CONSTABLE IN MILWAUKEE


BLAKE CARDS

Cards 4 1/4 x 6 1/2 inches printed with quotations from Blake and decorative cuts are available at $2.50 per packet of 10 cards from Robert Denham, Box 28, Emory, Virginia 24327. They are handset in Caslon Old Style, printed on an 1885 letterpress.

ALBION AWAKE

Alexandra and Ethelred Eldridge, in residence at Golgonooza on the Ohio, Millfield, Ohio, have printed T-shirts with the text "Albion Awake / Golgonooza" and a design. The editors do not know whether they are available for sale to the public. Direct inquiries to the Eldridges.

THE CHARACTERS OF SPENSER'S FAERIE QUEENE

The large color reproduction of Blake's Spenser painting originally published in Newsletter 31 with an accompanying essay by John Grant and Robert Brown is now available as a separate print. The picture is printed on a very large sheet of white enamel paper, with wide margins to allow framing. It is unfolded, and will be sent by first class mail in a cardboard mailing tube. The price is $4.50, which includes about $1.60 for postage and $1.25 for the mailing tube. Make checks out to the Blake Newsletter and send to Debra Sackett, Circulation Manager, Blake Newsletter, Department of English, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, N.M. 87131.

1976 MLA BLAKE SEMINAR

The discussion leader for the 1976 seminar will be Anne Mellor of Stanford University. The topic will be announced in the summer issue of the Newsletter.

FACULTY EXCHANGE CENTER

The Faculty Exchange Center publishes an annual catalog of faculty members in the U.S. and elsewhere who are willing to participate in an exchange program in which institutions pay the salaries of their own faculty members who are teaching in another institution. The current catalog lists about 400 professors. The next catalog will be published in early fall 1976. A listing costs $10. For a registration form, write Prof. John Joseph, Franklin and Marshall College, P.O. Box 1091, Lancaster, Pa. 17604.
MILTON O. PERCIVAL, 1883-1975

Milton O. Percival died 14 June 1975 at the age of 92. As a student at Ohio State Thomas Minnick got to know Percival:

I met Percival when he was 83. He had just lost his wife and was living alone in a huge home not far from the university. He really was lost for something to fill his time. He kept a cat, but he had no near relations in the state and wouldn't have cared for them in any case. He was always a short man, probably not much above 5 feet, but his clothes fit him as though he had shrunk some inches since they were made (back in the '40's). And so he looked like Yeats' aged man, "A tattered coat upon a stick, unless / Soul clap its hands and sing," as when one afternoon in response to what he regarded as modern critical heretics, he said that he would go to the stake declaiming that he who made the tiger also made the lamb.

After his death the Board of Trustees issued a Resolution in Memoriam:

The Board of Trustees of The Ohio State University expresses its sorrow at the death on June 14, 1975, of Milton O. Percival, Professor Emeritus in the Department of English.

Milton Ossian Percival was born in 1883. He took the B.A. degree in 1906, the M.A. in 1907, and the Ph.D. in 1914, all at Harvard University. After a year's study at Oxford University he accepted a position in 1915 at the Ohio State University as an assistant professor (having earlier held instructorships at both Oberlin College and the University of Minnesota). In 1925 he was advanced directly to the full professorship, a position he held until his retirement and advancement to the emeritus professorship in 1953. In recognition of his long and truly distinguished career, Milton O. Percival was in 1957 awarded the honorary degree Doctor of Humane Letters by the Ohio State University.

Dr. Percival was a distinguished man. His distinction was equally supported by his work as a scholar and his influence as a teacher.

As a scholar he was both a historian and a critic and interpreter of literature. His first major publication, an edition of the Political Ballads Illustrating the Administration of Sir Robert Walpole (Oxford, 1916), was primarily a contribution to the history of England in the eighteenth century. His other books, however, were works of interpretative criticism—and of major importance. William Blake's Circle of Destiny (Columbia University Press, 1938) was at once a brilliant interpretation of a difficult poet and artist and an enormously erudite study in the philosophy of mysticism. It combined knowledge of the history of thought with literary sensitivity in a book of the kind that only a handful of scholars achieve in any generation. In 1950 he published A Reading of Moby-Dick (Chicago University Press), in which he achieved a full, wise, and rich interpretation of what is probably America's greatest novel—and certainly one of its most difficult.

As a teacher in the English Department and as a member of the Department, Dr. Percival was one of the two major influences upon it in the period 1930-1950. His acute mind, his drive toward excellence, his combination of idealism with practical scepticism, his steady and powerful backing of what was good, and his devotion to the best in public state education gave him an enormous influence. It was as profound within the University as his reputation as a scholar-editor-critic had been outside. As a teacher in the classroom his work for thirty-eight years was quite simply superb. Ph.D. candidates and undergraduates alike received from him fine technics, discrimination and taste, great learning—and, what is more rare, wisdom. . . . .

THE NYPL BULLETIN, SUMMER 1975

The Summer 1975 issue of the Bulletin of the New York Public Library contains two essays on Blake—one on Blake and Erasmus Darwin, the other on the Chimney Sweeper—along with two on Coleridge (one on Coleridge and Cowper) and one on Defoe.

COLBY LIBRARY QUARTERLY

John H. Sutherland, editor of CLQ, announced in September that, although the journal will continue its regional emphasis, with special interest in authors represented in the collections of the Colby Library, CLQ is now soliciting articles on art and literature, with Blake high on the list. Since CLQ is also changing its format from letterpress to offset, black-and-white illustrations can be used freely. Address the editor at Colby College, Waterville, Maine 04901.

WORK IN PROGRESS

The Newsletter remains interested in news of work in progress on Blake and related subjects. Soon we plan to canvas our subscribers once again to find out what Blake projects they are doing. In the meantime we welcome a brief description of any work you would like the readership of the Newsletter to know about. Of course, we are also interested in hearing about courses being taught, lectures being given, conferences being planned, exhibitions being mounted—in short, any Blake news.

NEWSLETTER BIBLIOGRAPHER

Beginning with the last issue, we added an official bibliographer to our masthead: Thomas Minnick, of Ohio State University, whose special task it will be to compile the final version of our annual checklist of Blake scholarship, which has been growing steadily every year since its inception. Finally it seemed to us that we needed a professional bibliographer who knows Blake scholarship to handle what had become a very large, complicated job. Minnick will also help supervise our other bibliographical projects (bibliographical in the loose sense)—our checklists of Blake collections, of reproductions, etc.
NOTES

Blake's Relief-Etching Method

BY JOHN W. WRIGHT

(above) "The School Boy": An over-inked print from John Wright's fascimile plate (see Blake Newsletter 26) showing shadow line effects where platform edges picked up ink from the roller used and transferred it to the paper during printing which was done by rubbing the reverse side of the paper with a wooden spoon. Much fainter traces of this kind can be found in many copies of the Illuminated Books.
The unique medium of Blake's Illuminated Books involves aesthetically crucial relationships not only between words and pictures, as is now being more generally appreciated, but also between these "forms" of design and other still unfamiliar characteristics which are embedded in effects of the meanæ by which these works were produced. We cannot really appreciate the qualities of Blake's pages without knowing more than we do now about the technical means of their production, because technique generates qualities and sets limits to what is attempted as design and is the source of basic variables in the virtually alchemical matrix of his production process. Individual elements and qualities of Blake's work are decided features of concrete designs and should be seen as forms made particularly and as specific to his medium. They can and ought also to be distinguished from one another as forms potential in his varied treatments of the pages, lest we continue to discuss them as if they were only instances of "art" or "vision" in general (including Blake's general theory of art, which is a critical fiction) or of "pictorial and verbal" compositions or of "graphic and poetic genres."

Part of the uniqueness of Blake's medium is the potential variety of relationships between the prints and pages, and the technical and physical base of their production, the plates. My main purposes here are to describe these plates as artifacts (and the difficulties of "reading" them to recover the method of their production), to explain their character and their significance as part of Blake's special medium, and to interpret their possible contribution to the development of his vision. Specifically, this essay describes and analyzes some of the signs of etching techniques which appear in the Gilchrist electrotypes and in the only surviving Blake plate, the fragment of a rejected version of America a, now in the Rosenwald collection.

Current Opinion and the New Hypothesis

Geoffrey Keynes and others have written of Blake's relief-etched plates as if the electrotypes and the America a fragment were the same sort of artifact; and, in fact, no account of their relationship or the differences between them has appeared. As illustrations 1 and 6 readily show, they both do have the look of relief-etched plates, but they have very different aspects too; not only because the America a design is less dense and a fragment, but also because there the plate area surrounding the design and the general contours of the background copper are much less worked and are more evenly flat. Even simple comparison like this would suggest that Blake has worked in two different ways on these plates. Perhaps that alone accounts for the fact that their differences have not been remarked as particularly significant. But the current, generally circulated opinion about Blake's process implies that these plates have a much simpler appearance and actual structure than they do.

Of the electrotypes Keynes has written, "The interest of these blocks is very great because, being electrotypes, they are exact reproductions of Blake's plates so that something can be learnt from them of his technique" (Blake Studies, 2nd ed., p. 124). Then, however, he goes on to say of the etching process only that the plate was then etched with acid to no very great depth, but deeply enough to allow the text to stand out in relief. Blake then gouged out some of the larger spaces more deeply to prevent unwanted ink from showing in the print, and finally added more or less detail to the designs by means of the graver (124). But America a, which is certainly a Blake plate, shows no gouging (which would be a terrible waste of time across such a large background that could have been much more quickly etched away), and the electrotypes themselves actually show very little systematic gouging in the more open areas (see, for example, the inside of the hoop in The Barking Green [Illustration 3]); and many of these marks are attributable to the electrotypists. Nor is such gouging evident in the areas of the plates which, as the prints from them show, were most in need of that treatment. The Divine Image illustrates this very well. The surface characters of each design sit on platforms of fairly ragged and not gouged copper; these in turn rise above the relatively smooth background copper of the basin of the plate. There is considerable variation among the electrotypes in these characteristics, but the primary structure is distinctly uniform and much different from that suggested by Keynes' description of a shallow etching process supplemented by gouging. Actually, the electrotypes show clearly the effects of a process of etching away the unwanted copper by stages in the manner I described in Blake Newsletter 26.

Because I could not get good results by etching the facsimile Songs and other trial plates in single bites for various lengths of time in acids of different strengths, I went back to the Victoria and Albert Museum with a stronger magnifying glass to have a closer look at the electrotypes and discovered the process Blake invented for surmounting those difficulties in making his plates.

After a relatively brief initial bite to lower the copper surface around the design which had been laid down in acid resistant varnish, he removed the plates from the acid bath. He then minutely repainted the unbitten surface with maxi-

John Wright, University of Michigan, is the author of Shelley's Myth of Metaphor (1970) and Poems and Woodcuts (1976). He thanks Virginia Masi for exceptionally fine editorial assistance on the present essay, and he is grateful for financial support in the research from ACLS, NEH, and the Horace H. Rackham Foundation.
mum fidelity to the contours of the design to protect each character during further biting. This process was (usually) repeated twice more, first to produce the more readily visible and ragged platforms around the base of the characters, and finally to produce the basin areas most deeply recessed from the plate surface.

Evidence of these protective recoverings of the design during the etching process is consistently but not uniformly evident in the sixteen electrotypes. The first of these three recoverings is so faithful to the surface of the design it covers that it is always very hard to see, even on the enlargements used here for illustration. Part of the reason for this difficulty is simple. Where the repainting exactly recovers the surface of the first, shallowly-etched design (which it then better protects from foul-biting: one of the primary reasons for the second application of the varnish); it does not extend into the lowered area immediately adjacent to the surface. In such areas subsequent etching simply continues lowering the sidewall of the character. In many areas, and usually on only one side of a character, however, there is a slight overlap, which is evidence of Blake's method.

Before the structural characteristics of the electrotypes are considered more fully, however, it is important to attend to some of the procedural and methodological problems which bear on the present analysis (and will bear on future explorations in this area), and also to raise again the matter of the different appearance of the America fragment.

(1) Because there are no standards to describe the physical characteristics of the sort of artifact these plates represent, some special terminology will be needed. It will even then not be easy to see what physical conditions are being referred to. Lengthy and minute examination of the plates is the best remedy for this difficulty, but that is itself bewildering if one does not know what sort of map to apply to the terrain. Even when one knows what to look for—because one has seen it repeatedly before and thought about what the signs mean—one can still be overwhelmed by the countless small differences that fly into view as one moves the glass from area to area or plate to plate. Hence, the aim of this hypothesis about Blake's method is to serve as a map for the terrain of those sculptures and hopefully to be useful in ordering observation.

(2) A second difficulty is related to this first one. The descriptions above and the diagrams that follow refer to "structural" features of the plates—that is, to their manner of construction. The plates are illustrated here by photographic enlargements which simplify these features of the terrain from three dimensions to two and from varied available light to black and white reproduction. This alters one's sense of the designs and their functional elements, and the scale of the plates themselves. But "reading" these aerial photographs of that terrain affords very useful practice nonetheless in deciphering the causes of and the kinds of physical traces on the plates and on Blake's pages. Where appropriate hereafter, I will try to indicate how the characteristics of the photographs translate to the appearances of the plate surfaces.

(3) The third difficulty relates to the observational problems posed by (1) and (2). During close study of the surviving relief-etched plates, one sees that they are timeworn and now have characteristics which they did not have when they were first made and used: oxidation, cleaning, scratching and corrections in the case of the electrotypes, and these and hammering too in the case of America. Have in some places so altered the metal as to make it practically impossible to tell without complex metallurgical and graphic analysis whether Blake's or a later process has been the cause of the various characteristics.

This general textural problem is logically independent of the structural characteristics I will be considering, but practically it does bear on them in the case of the electrotypes. "Reading" the electrotypes means interpreting relationships between texture and structure in always individually handled plates. Up to a point, the more one becomes able to notice, the greater is one's uncertainty about the types of effects observed in the textural field of the plate. At first sight nearly everything is "textural," and it is all too easy to impose a simple explanation for the causes of texture and to distort the complexity of the actual characteristics of these artifacts.

Not only are the plates timeworn in various ways (which causes uncertainty about the significance of many particular signs); two of the electrotypes differ significantly in surface design from the printed and painted pages of the copies of the Songs I have seen, and the electrotypes generally have a textural appearance markedly different from the America fragment. These last two facts raise the question of whether the electrotypes were actually made from Blake's plates: from fourteen he regularly used and one or two others he did not, or whether they might not have been made from another set of plates.

One of the electrotypes, the title plate to Songs of Experience, differs in its characters, as Keynes noted, from the plate Blake always used for that page in the Songs. Erdman, finding signs of "forger's tremble" in this design, has disputed Keynes' assumption that it represents an extra, rejected plate which somehow turned up among the survivors given for electrotyping. He concludes that it comes "from a redrawing of the page made for Gilchrist's need" (The Illuminated Blake, p. 72). For two reasons this conclusion is not acceptable. The variant plate omits certain characters that the copyist could not easily have overlooked (including the date, 1794), adds others not in Blake's pages, and shows quite "perfect" handling elsewhere. More important still, it was etched in the same manner as the other plates, though more deeply. Its more open design required that for printing. That being true we
would have to suppose with the Erdman view that the plate from which this electrotype was taken was itself made exactly in Blake's minutely care­ful manner and indeed more carefully than the "trembling" design itself—a conclusion not likely given the requirements of the whole task.

The etching signatures being the same for all the plates, another possibility arises: that the whole series was produced from a set of plates other than Blake's. I have wrestled often with the idea of another means of production for the electrotypes and have concluded that it is not feasible, even though the evident differences between their textural and structural characteristics and those of America a might seem to support that possibility.

The only process that could have been used to produce plates with such accurate surfaces and the same genuine sort of step-bitten structure shown in the electrotypes is photoengraving, a process invented but not widely used between 1859 and 1862 (see the Encyclopaedia Britannica, "Photo-engraving"). But irregularities and variable characteristics of the substructure of the electro­type plates mark them as handmade; photoengraving produces more mechanical and uniform etching ef­fects. Thus, I reject the idea of other plates and will not examine the subject further here, except to say that the very structural character­istics which show Blake's own work most fully on the electrotypes do draw attention to the differ­ent textural qualities of the America fragment. The hypothesis being developed here will explain these relations.

Relief-Etching Signatures in the Electrotypes

From their experiments in 1947, reported in Print Collectors Quarterly, 29 (Nov., 1948), pp. 25-37, Ruthven Todd, S. William Hayter and Joan Miro concluded that Blake probably used a trans­fer method to get the text of his design from a sheet of paper where they were first painted in varnish onto the copper plates for etching, and that, judging from the extreme shallowness of the relief on the America fragment, he could not have used a roller to ink the plates but must have transferred ink from another plate to the surface of the one to be printed. In support of these ideas they observed that Blake's prints and pages frequently show a distinctive reticulation in the printed areas which they regarded as charac­teristic of plate rather than roller inking. They also noted that certain pages show tilting and/or curvature in the lines of text which might result from their being hand placed and pressed onto the copper by the transfer process. I have found, however, that some pages vary considerably from this rule. For example, the plate containing My Pretty Rose Tree, Ah, Sun Flower, and The lilly seems to show a slightly different direction of curvature for each text, and it would not be reasonable to suppose that Blake applied the texts to the copper successively to produce that effect. In other plates, too, the curvature of the text often may be an expressive part of the design, making distinct its spatial form and screen-like qualities.

On the question of roller versus plate inking, Todd and Hayter did not explain how Blake could have prepared the inking plate smoothly enough to give even coverage and to prevent small masses of ink from spreading out under pressure into subsurface areas, particularly into broad open areas and the special high platforms, which are even closer to the printing surface, as the America fragment clearly shows. Still more important perhaps, their hypothesis neglects to con­sider the facts that the proof Blake took of America a shows a distinct roller-inking trace and that many of his pages and proofs do not show significant reticulation of inking texture but rather a smoother surface more consistent with the effect of roller-inked plates. These and other considerations make it likely that Blake worked in all these ways and very experimentally. The relatively greater relief of the electrotypes supports that possibility and suggests that the America fragment was probably not given the usual one or two final etching stages.

Much work remains to be done before these discrepancies are explained, but at this point it is important to use a diagram to describe the etching method which Blake invented for his singu­lar medium.

The traces or signatures of the first repaint­ing are necessarily very slight marks and very hard to detect because they often cover exactly the surface characters of the design (as shown here at i in diagram 1). This technique both adds a further protective coating to the characters before foul-biting has time to do much damage to the lines, and as far as possible avoids getting the varnish used in the repainting out so far beyond the edge of the very shallow first bite as to start a platform that will pick up ink. Two rules about this practice should be kept in mind: (1) the larger the open area around a character, the greater the likelihood that it will draw ink during the painting; and therefore the deeper its eventual relief will have to be. (Plate inking reduces this problem, but Blake's pages frequently show platform traces and background dots which indicate the roller effects.) (2) A first re­painting must be general, not local; the more so if it is done very early, as Blake did. The invisibility of traces of repainting does not, normally, mean that it was only local, but only that traces or the ledges left by it are evident only where the brush went over the side of the character by accident or by design.

Diagram II (a) represents this ledging prob­lem as a platform extending from the vertical axis of a character. Blake often and with marvel­ous control painted very slightly over the edge of the original character, and from these traces we know that the first repainting occurred over the whole surface of the design.

On the plates these traces are virtually in­visible to the naked eye—unlike those of the
Diagram I (below): Schematic representation in cross-section of plate etched by Blake's method: showing different kinds of effects of that process as enumerated to the right.

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<td>5</td>
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- a. plate surface
- b. plate side
- c. original varnish on character in design
- d. varnish area of first repainting
- e. varnish area of second repainting
- f. varnish area of third repainting
- g. character platform from first etch
- h. foul-bite area in character
- i. ledge from varnish overlap of first repainting
- j. unledged platform from open bite through stages 2 and 3
- k. ledges from varnish overlap of second repainting
- l. ledge from varnish overlap of third repainting
- m. groove from strong etch at join of basin and sidewall
- n. underbitten area from prolonged etch
- o. ring mound, basin area
- p. striated basin area from strong final etch

Diagram II (below): Schematic representation in cross-section of two characters as etched in the America a fragment: showing particularly and roughly in proportion the difference between the large problematic ledges of the mended characters (on the left) and the straight sidewalls of the characters more exactly overpainted during the etching stages (see diagram I).

- a. set I traces
- b. set II traces
- c. set III traces
- d. strong etch grooves
- e. surface character
- f. flat sidewall of character perfectly overpainted through stage 4
second repainting (the third stage of the process), which are visible. They can, however, be seen with a strong glass (and will be found, thin as they are, still to vary in thickness from plate to plate). They can, with a little practice, be discerned as a pattern in the enlargements at the locations listed below. In looking for or at these fine traces, two things should be noted: (1) details become less sharp the further they are from the center of the camera's focus. (2) It is helpful to look for grades of shadow between the surface lights and the basin lights; among these tones the platform made by the first repainting is recorded as a faint shadow between the illuminated side walls above and below it.

The Lamb (illus. 1 and 5): see the bottom edge of (1) the title words, (2) the upper rightmost inward curving branch of the tree at the left, and (3) the long horizontal line just below the boy and sheep.

The Divine Image (illus. 2): see the bottom edge of (1) the top margin line (especially the center of its right half), which shows well that the traces are discontinuous; (2) the curved area dividing the stanzas, which represents well how evenly Blake could follow the edge of the character while overpainting it very slightly; and (3) the similar line above "The Divine" in the title. Area (3) and the line below "Divine" are good places to look for the whole range of main steps.

The Echoing Green (illus. 3): see the bottom edge of the baseline of the upper half of the plate, especially above G and slightly to its right, and also the vine line below "Green." Below the lines forming the shoulders of the woman nearest the center of the tree, the first traces of repainting are particularly clear, as are those of the second (to be considered in a moment).

A Cradle Song (illus. 4): see the inside edge of the two right-most curves opposite the space dividing stanzas two and three. These lines indicate particularly well the problem posed by the photographic lighting conditions and the extreme thinness of the first repainting traces. Generally the first repainting of the plate was done with exceptional fidelity to character surface. (Note that the d of "dreams" in line three is missing on the plate and in the electrotype prints. It appears in Blake's pages, and, when examined under a strong magnifying glass in several copies, it proves to be the same shape and the same quality of pigment as the rest of the print. It was, therefore, not added to the prints as a character lost through foul-biting or undercutting would have been; probably it was lost accidentally in the moulding phase of the electrotyping process.)

One effect of the first repainting with varnish over the edge of the surface platform is usually a very slight flow of varnish down the side of the character and out into the basin, which at that point in the process is very shallow. This spreading of the varnish means that during
The Lamb

Little Lamb who made thee
Dost thou know who made thee
Gave thee life & bid thee feed,
By the stream & o'er the mead
Gave thee clothing of delight,
Softest clothing, woody bright
Gave thee such a tender voice
Making all the vales rejoice,
Little Lamb who made thee
Dost thou know who made thee

Little Lamb I'll tell thee,
Little Lamb I'll tell thee;
He is called by thy name,
For he calls himself a Lamb,
He is meek & he is mild,
He became a little child,
A child dost thou a lamb,
We are called by his name.
Little Lamb God bless thee,
Little Lamb God bless thee.
The Divine Image

To Mercy, Peace, and Love,
All prayer in their duality.
And in these virtues is delight
Flower them than dullest.

For Mercy, Peace, and Love
Is in our father's face,
And Mercy, Peace, and Love
Is in his child and core.

For Mercy, love, and human form
Is of a human face;
And Love the human form divine.
And Peace, the human face.

That every man of every time,
That every face in his distincts,
They live in the common wealth
Love, mercy, and peace.

And all must love the human form
In its own kind and age.
Where Mercy loves aselected
Where God is dwelling.
The Echoing Green

The Sun doth rise
And make happy the skies
The merry bellring
Do welcome the Spring
The skylark and thrush
The birds of the bush
Sing louder around
To the bells cheeryful sound
While our sports shall the scene
On the Echoing Green

On John, with white hair
Does stand at the core
Singing in the oak
Amidst the old folks, etc.
A CRADLE SONG

Sweet dreams o'er my head
Over my lovely infant head,
Sweet dreams of pleasant streams,
By happy, silent mooney beams.

Sweet sleep with soft down,
Weave my brows a lovely crown,
Sweet sleep Angel mild,
Hover over my happy child.

Sweet smiles in the night,
Hove over my delight,
Sweet smiles, Mother's smile,
All the living night be mine.

Sweet moans, by all his sighs,
Chase not slumber from my eyes,
Sweet moans, sweeter smiles,
All the dote like moans he cries.

Sleep. Sleep, happy child.
All creation, silent and still.
Sleep, sleep, happy sleep,
While o'er the starry mother weep.

Sweet tears in thy face,
Haste, measure out in trace,
Sweet tears, once like these,
Now dried away, wherefore? weep.
The Lamb

Little Lamb, who made thee
Dost thou know who made thee
Gave thee life, and bid thee feed.
By the stream and o'er the mead
Gave thee clothing of delight
While the morning sparkled bright.
Gave thee such a tender voice
Making all the vales rejoice.
Little Lamb, who made thee
Dost thou know who made thee.

Little Lamb, I'll tell thee,
Little Lamb and tell thee.
He is called by thy name,
He calls himself a Lamb.
His meekness, he is mild;
 babes and little children
Lamb is he, that a lamb;
We are called by thy name.
Little Lamb, God blest thee.
Little Lamb, God blest thee.
words in his mighty tent:
who rise in silent night.
Gates, Franklin, & Green;
From Albion's ferry Prince.

Look over the Atlantic.
the second bite the acid will lower the copper from the wavy line of the second coat of varnish, not from the original smooth edges of the character. The signature of this second stage of etching is clearly evident as the outer edge and wall below all the traces already noted.

But, of course, to re-emphasize the key point about structure, wherever the first repainting has covered only the surface of the character, the second biting is virtually invisible (necessarily so on the photographs). It can be detected only as a slightly greater undercutting of the character (which is often impossible to see in the photographs; \( n \) and \( j \) on diagram I), with beaded traces of copper sometimes jutting out from the face of the platform cliff. See, for example, the inside edges of the \( o \) of "Song" in the title of A Cradle Song. Generally, Blake's second bite was also fairly shallow, not twice the depth of the first.

After the second bite (stage 3), all the denser passages of the design have enough relief for printing. At that point Blake could simplify the repainting process by selectively painting over whole groups of characters as local conditions permitted for protection during the later stages of biting. Diagram III represents these effects, and they can be seen in the photographs around the first "little" of the second stanza of The Lamb, "pity" and Peace" in the first line of The Divine Image and "divine" in line 11. (These effects should be compared with the similar but, as I shall indicate later, probably functionally different platforms evident in the America fragment: there see especially "[b]urns"). See also "Among the old folk" in the last line of The Echoing Green and the area around "Song" in the title and "Hover" in line 8 of A Cradle Song.

After the second repainting has preserved the (usually) double relief of the primary characters, more selective and varied ways of repainting are possible. Because of this, the texture and structure of the electrotypes vary greatly within the plates and from one plate to another at the level designated stage 4 in the diagram. Part of this variety was caused by numerous places where Blake's brush did not extend the varnish signifi-

Diagram III (below): "The Lamb" A and B: Replicas of a revarnished design showing on A and B respectively typical effects of the repainting process at stages III and IV of the etching process (see diagram 1).
cantly over the edge of the platform established by the second bite, so the second bite traces were only inconsistently preserved by the third repainting. Examples of the relatively flat-wall effect of this narrower repainting (which is always apt to become more pronounced because of the sideways action of the acid) can be seen clearly at the lower edge of "pleasant" in line 3 of A Cradle Song (contrast this with "smiles" in line 9) and the outer edge of the curve of the main branch of the flame next to line 8 of The Divine Image (contrast this with the traces of the second repainting immediately above the opposite lines 5 and 6).

Echoing Green illustrates well the technique of generally repainting groups of characters after the second bite. The two areas of text stand on a general plateau (later routed and perhaps etched further) above the primary basin evident at the left of the first stanza by the boy and beside the wavy line dividing the stanzas. The extra etching and gouging around this line and the etched (not, as it may appear, gouged) area below the last stanza, show the method of lowering the basin by continuing the third and/or initiating a fourth bite in the open areas most likely to receive ink from a plate or roller.

In contrast to the general plateau of the Echoing Green, The Divine Image shows how Blake applied the second repainting locally, along lines of text to word groups as well as singly to characters and then, as a final stage, deepened the basin around them. The three-stage etching process is particularly fine and distinct throughout this plate. In the enlargement, "divine" in line 11 shows clearly the technique of strong local biting of the basin areas. The texture of these areas which have slightly different light qualities; say on the space immediately to the right of the second repainting (again compare "[b]urns" in America). This plate shows another characteristic effect of Blake's process: a dark dot below the σ of "Peace" in line 12 is all the information the photograph can provide about a marked undercutting or erosion of the sidewall of that area during the third bite. Caves such as this (which appear elsewhere at that level in this plate and others) are particularly important because they indicate that the third bite was a prolonged one, a fact which helps to account for the unusually rounded or beaded quality of many of the traces of the third repainting. There is also much evidence of foul-biting on the surface characters; the upper curve of the flame below the last line in the lower left hand corner of the plate shows most clearly the technique of strong local etching and stepped-biting process used in making the electrotypes. In the photograph and my notes on the plate are not adequate support for the inked printing surfaces, as above the second "sleep" of "Sleep sleep happy child"--would seem to indicate that these areas are mainly etching (rather than gouging) effects. Moreover, many of these areas show a relatively deep undercutting of the platform walls not characteristic of the routing process. In this case Blake repainted all the characters once to establish the top platform in the usual way, bit it a second time quite slowly, and then generally repainted certain areas, like the lower right hand corner (see the edges of the wheat or leaf). He then repainted the other characters individually or in groups for a third etching (but the details of this are hard to determine from the photograph and my notes on the plate are not sufficiently clear about it). After the third etching he repainted nearly all the characters, grouping them in various ways under the varnish and, as just noted, bit much more strongly the deepest areas which generally appear as the brightest (nearest) lights in the photograph.

The observations made thus far on the technique Blake used in making the plates for his Songs provide sufficient evidence to establish the fact and the character of the repainting and stepped-biting process. I hope they will prove useful as a guide for "reading" the photographs and the plates themselves, from which there is still much to learn.
The enlargements (illustrations 6 and 7) indicate how the America fragment appears to differ significantly as a relief-etching from the electrotypes of the Songs. They are somewhat more deeply bitten and generally worked over as plates and show, as we have seen, use of the stepped-biting method throughout. The less deeply bitten fragment has been etched in stages in a few areas, those of the bird, the flying figure, "[b]urns," "Albion's," "fiery," "Prince" and the like; but the rest of the plate (even in the enlargement), probably at first sight appears to have been bitten in a single step. But this general appearance is misleading: knowing what to look for in the substructure of a relief-etched plate (using a strong glass if one is looking at the actual plate), one can find in addition to the immediately obvious platforms, other sorts of traces of repainting. From these different traces it is possible to reconstruct in part the etching process Blake used on this plate and to show its consistency with the method recorded in the electrotypes. Because the physical particulars are difficult to discern and because their kind and degree are essential to an interpretation, I shall first present detailed evidence of the three classes of characteristics and then discuss their significance. To clarify this procedure I shall use the term "set" now for each group of physical traces sharing similarities of location and treatment and, as before, the terms "character" and "characteristic" for any component of the surface design, distinguishing where necessary between figure, letter and word.

The first of the sets of physical traces of the etching process includes the immediately evident and comparatively spread-out platforms already noted. They appear within and around "[b]urns," "nightly," "[g]low," "America's," "shore," "nightly," "Gates," & "Albion." From these different traces it is possible to reconstruct in part the etching process Blake used on this plate and to show its consistency with the method recorded in the electrotypes. Because the physical particulars are difficult to discern and because their kind and degree are essential to an interpretation, I shall first present detailed evidence of the three classes of characteristics and then discuss their significance. To clarify this procedure I shall use the term "set" now for each group of physical traces sharing similarities of location and treatment and, as before, the terms "character" and "characteristic" for any component of the surface design, distinguishing where necessary between figure, letter and word.

Another striking difference between these platform areas in the America plate and the electrotypes is easily seen in the enlargements. The characters around or within these platforms were not repainted singly as Blake had done earlier to optimize relief for the printing process, but in clusters. The nearness of these platforms to the surface risks drawing ink down into the space immediately around the characters. Some of them, those around "[b]urns," the "G" of "Gates" and the ampersand, for example, would produce the shadow line effect noted earlier (see a in diagram II). When Blake could do such fine repainting as we have seen already, why did he here work so much more crudely? Ink does indeed spread around these character groups easily and all Blake's earlier plates would have provided a more than sufficient awareness of that problem. Most likely these areas involve a special local mending process and reflect a mistake of judgment rather than a purposeful exercise of his usual method and skill. The mistake probably has two main elements. First, the fact that the other characters were not given this heavy repainting points to the possibility that something went wrong in certain areas during the etching process, requiring special local treatment--some of the varnish began to break down for some reason, for example. In correcting this local breakdown, Blake made an error in repainting the trouble spots, the second element of the mistake. Where he should have repainted each character singly, he misjudged the depth of relief established and repainted characters in groups as though they were ready for a third etching.

One problem apt to occur during relief-etching clarifies further the physical and technical basis of this situation. Areas along the edges and vertical sides of the characters which are too thinly covered with the repainting varnish break down (progressively) under the action of the acid. Areas which are too thickly overpainted cause too wide a platform ("[b]urns") to appear next to the character; its edge will pick up ink and the thick area of varnish must be scraped back to the vertical wall of the character or platform before the etching can continue. Scraping back such areas is more practicable in a relatively open design like this one, but it risks minutely scratching or puncturing the protective blanket of varnish, resulting in fouling or erosion of the critical edges of the characters. Any of these minute accidents are likely to escape detection in work of this scale.

If a plate is watched constantly while in the acid bath (which is perhaps unlikely, considering the length of time required for etching with a mordant of reasonably safe strength), the effervescence of the nitric acid Blake used would show bubbling in areas supposedly protected by varnish and so signal trouble. However, in designs like this one particularly, the proximity of the relatively large areas of the plate undergoing open biting to the sides of the protected characters would make it considerably more difficult to trace bubbles to (minute) areas defectively painted or otherwise opened (especially for fine lines with bubbling arising on both sides). The very density of design in most of the Songs makes it likely that such erosions would go unnoticed for some time, and the condition of the surface bears it out as a constant problem. The fact, too, that some of the repainting was done partially, across the characters rather than evenly over them in the usual way, points to remedy of local problems.

It is also possible that a defective batch of varnish or some unnoticed grease on the plate itself might have caused the painted design to lift off the surface (and require local repainting to repair it). There are also signs that the acid used after this local repainting, and possibly before it, was unusually strong.
Turns in his mighty tent:
Now to America's shore,
Who rise in silent night,
Gates, Franklin, & Green;
From Albrans very Prince.

1st look over the Atlantic.
All the signs, then, point to the conclusion that the traces of set I are the effects of repaint­ing done in the course of a mending process when (untypically, judging from the electrotypes) Blake's first repainting began to give way under the action of the acid.

The second set of etching characteristics cannot at first be detected by normal eyesight, or usually, even with a strong glass, unless one has practiced looking for things of that kind. Set II consists of a number of minute traces of a repaint­ing prior to the areas marked out by the obvious platforms of set I and preserved within them. That these traces are not more widely in evidence does not tell against the fact that a general first stage repainting occurred. In relatively open areas like those of the Amaranthus design, it is essential to minimize the ledging effect of the first repainting and cover only the character surface wherever possible. What counts as a trace is the presence of any distinctive contour of copper which, given the action of the acid, should not be present unless protected by varnish.

In their depth and exactness these set II traces resemble closely the stage 2 repainting signatures of the electrotypes. Some of them can be seen (where the photographic lighting has permitted) in the enlargements reproduced here. By a very close examination of the plate with a 7-X lens (a stronger one would be better), I found them around \( r \) and \( a \) of "burns," the \( a \) of "his," the \( A \) of "America's," the \( b \) of "Albion's," the \( f^2 \) of "fiery," the \( x \) of "Prince," notably within the circles of the \( g \) and at the upper side of the tail of the \( z \) of "night," and elsewhere. On the enlargement, illustration 6, these traces appear most clearly within the triangle at the top of the \( A \) of "America's," within the \( g \) of "nightly," and "night," at the bottom left edge of the \( z \) of "Albion's," at the bottom of the tail of the \( z \) and at the right outside edge within the platform area of the \( y \) of "fiery." Minute though they are, marks of this kind cannot occur accidentally in the etching process and must, therefore, be the effects of a general repainting prior to that of the heavier platform areas within which they were preserved. In every case these traces are so close to the edge of the surface of the characters or in positions so well guarded from contact with a roller or inked plate that, unlike the edges and interval areas of the set I traces, they present no printing problem despite their nearness to the surface. A moderate excess of ink on an inking plate or roller would spread first to the set I edges as is shown by "burns" and several other heavy characters in Blake's proof (illustration 8). In shape, location and depth, these traces bear the signature of the first repainting process.

The third set of etching signatures poses a more difficult problem of interpretation. Physi­cally they vary considerably in area and form; they are in several instances more evident than the traces of set II, and they are located below the platforms of set I, which might signify that they were made at a later stage of the etching process. Their extreme shallowness (making them useless as relief platforms), however, as well as their absence from areas where they might have been expected to occur if they belonged to a later etching stage, could tell against that presumption. To make these problematic characteristics clear and useful for further study, it seems advisable to treat the interpretive questions raised by them in the form of a pair of qualified hypotheses based on the physical characteristics of these traces and the technical means by which they might have been produced. These traces are, in any case, actual effects produced by Blake's process, and either of these hypotheses confirms the account given earlier of his use of stepped-biting and repainting. According to one of the hypotheses the traces belong with those of set II (that is, to the first repainting); accord­ing to the other, they signify an interrupted and unfinished second general repainting (stage 3) undertaken in the usual way after the mending process evidenced by the set I traces had been com­pleted. (They cannot belong to set I.)

The signs of etching that compose set III are to be found spread around on the basin of the plate at the sides of the characters and nowhere else. On the complete enlargement, illustration 6, they can be seen outside the loops of the letters of "Prophecy," cut off at the top, around and within the human figure and, especially around the line trailing from that figure. They are also to be found around such letter groups as "silent," the \( a \) of "his," "nightly," "tent," the \( a \) of "America's," "shore," the \( t \) of "to," the \( e \) of "rise," the first "in," "silent," "gates," and with singular thickness around the \( A \) of "Albion's," and so on. In illustration 7 they appear most clearly around the flying figure, the first "in," "tent," "gates," and the \( A \) of "Albion's."

Like the traces of set II these marks are all but invisible to the unpracticed or unaided eye. On the enlargements, again, as the angle and light­ing permit, they appear as a discontinuous series of irregular and very slightly raised mounds of copper; they are uniformly located outside the deep (dark) groove which marks generally the base of the etched characters and platforms. That groove marks the place where the acid, characteris­tically, has bitten in more fiercely than elsewhere because it worked on the larger area of exposed copper formed by the intersection of the sides of the characters and the basin area. It is physically impossible for traces of a wanted repainting...
The Guardian Prince of Albion burns in his nightly tent:
Sullen fires across the Atlantic glow to America’s shore.
Piercing the souls of warlike men, who rose in silent night,
Washington, Hancock, Paine, Warren, Gates, Franklin, & Greene:
Meet on the coast glowing with blood from Albion’s fury.

Washington spoke: Friends of America, look over the Atlantic sea;
A beaded brow in heaven is laid, & a heavy iron chain
Descends link by link from Albion’s cliffs across the sea to bind
Brothers & sons of America! hail our faces pale and yellow;
Heads deprest, voices weak, eyes downcast, hands’ work bruised,
Feet bleeding on the sandy sands, & the furrows of the whip
Descend to generations that in future times forget —

The strong voice ceased, for a terrible blast swept over the heavens.
The eastern cloud rent, on his cliffs stood Albion’s fiery Prince.
A dragon form clashing his scales at midnight he arose,
And frond fierce meteors round the band of Albion beneath.
His voice, his locks, his awful shoulders, & his glowing eyes.
prior to that etching stage to appear outside the groove; wherever the varnish is put down, the plate below is preserved as a platform, unless some unwanted varnish is scraped back to allow the acid to bite. The traces to be explained do exist outside that boundary, and the first hypothesis requires seeing them as effects of such a scraping process. It will be useful first to describe a few of them together with the circumstances of painting by which they were produced.

The top and bottom sides particularly of the line trailing from the figure at the bottom show signs of relatively slight overpainting of a type which occurs characteristically around such long, thin, wavy lines. The brush hairs spread over the edge where the line curves change or the hand shifts and the load of varnish tends to run off the narrow plateau. By contrast, the broader curved lines at the top of the plate supported the movement of the brush more securely, and the traces of the scraped areas are really marked only at the points where the line sharply changes direction. (Again, the spillage proves the line was repainted.) The even character of the rest of that line indicates that Blake aimed, in his usual and necessary way, at an overpainting which did not extend significantly beyond the area of the varnish of the first bite. Something more like a slip of the brush is evident at several other points: at the second t of "tent," and where the bottom trailing line meets the hip of the figure, for example. That same effect or perhaps the effect of an overloaded brush is evident around the bottom leading line of the A of "Albion's."

We have already seen in the electrotypes that the traces of a first repainting are evident only where the varnish spreads over the edge of a repainted character, thereby preserving some of the copper at the base of this very shallow platform as a ledge. Some plates show more of this second stage effect, The Divine Image, for example; some less, as in On Another's Sorrow. The question didn't occur to me when I was looking at the electrotypes, but I have not yet found on the photographs of them any signs of a first repainting done as crudely as some of the set III traces of America are. But that should not automatically tell against the first repainting hypothesis: the repainting of "[b]urns" and "fiery" and the like is also poor by the electrotype standards, as are some of the other characters on the proof but not on the plate fragment. The absence of this sort of undesirable trace from the electrotypes might be owing to the fact that those plates were etched twice after the first repainting. Had such big slips occurred they would have been scraped away before or after the etching. Traces of a scraping process prior to further etching would probably have been reduced very considerably by subsequent etchings; as would those of the America plate had it been deepened further in the usual way.

The physical properties of the varnish, copper, and acid, and the relationship between them are important technical circumstances which bear on the possibility that the set III traces really belong,
with those of set II, to the first repainting. Varnish has oil as its vehicle, and the presence of any oil or grease on a plate impends the action of any mordant (an effect frequently found in the electrotypes). The visible traces of excess varnish can be scraped away if one wants to correct an area on a painted plate—i.e., open it for biting—but the scraping process is tricky both because of the risk of damaging the design and because of the likelihood of leaving an oily residue. (Even the grease from fingers will form a mild resist on the surface of a plate and permit a fingerprint to be etched into the surface. One such fingerprint appears above "nightly" on the America plate.) As the acid lowers the surface of the copper, the greasy area is lowered as well, but at a rate slower than the area around it, resulting in the slightly raised areas of copper which constitute the traces of set III.

It is possible that the set III traces were scraped back during the first repainting process because, had they been etched, they would have caused ledging even worse than that evident in the set I traces. The chief objection, beyond the delicacy of the scraping process, to this conclusion is comparative; the width and crude form of many of the set III traces is unlike the effects of Blake's usual masterful first stage repainting. But accidents will happen. The real force of the first hypothesis must be determined in part by the qualifications which must attend the second one, according to which the traces are effects of a typical, general, second repainting made after the mending operation of set I had been established in relief.

The set III traces appear in the basin area as the lowest raised material on the plate, as well as outside the etching grooves; their shapes and general qualities resemble the effects produced by the third repainting and etching effects on the electrotype plate. (Compare, for example, the traces below "gates" and around the line trailing from the trumpet with the lines dividing the stanzas in The Echoing Green and The Lamb.) The fact, however, that they do not appear more frequently outside the primary platforms of the characters raises a question about their function which must qualify acceptance of the second hypothesis.

Many of the finer lines used as tailpieces or as the ends of the letters—the top of final a's or the bottom curves of the t's, for example—are already at a limit of thinness. Without another repainting they could easily be damaged by undercutting during the stage 3 etching to follow. The electrotypes show that the second general repainting frequently covered the sides of the characters needing special protection. So Blake was probably more particular in repainting some characters at this stage than he was in repainting those actually marked by the set III traces. More difficult is the question why he gave the plate so brief an etch at that point, because the bite was obviously interrupted before it had lowered the basin significantly, and the plate was then, presumably, cleared of the varnish so laboriously applied to take the proof.

Actually the relief he had already obtained by the first bite plus the special bite used to establish the mending platforms is nearly as deep as the relief obtained by the first two stages of etching in the plates for the Songs. He could have taken the proof with much the same effect after the etch of the mending process. Could he have miscalculated this and wasted the considerable amount of time required for so fine a general repainting as must be supposed according to our second hypothesis? I think not. It is much more plausible that he meant to complete the second general etch (stage 3) in the usual way but interrupted it for a reason which I will formulate with the conclusion.

In summary now, the location, width and ragged-edge characteristics of the set III traces closely resemble the signatures of the second general repainting of the electrotypes, but their frequent absence from areas where such repainting would be most needed, and the oddity of a (hypothetically) very careful repainting not etched to a significant degree, weigh against the second hypothesis that the set III traces really belong to the usual stage 3 treatment of the plates.

I conclude that the America plate was not completely etched before it was abandoned. The technical problems that doomed it probably included physical ones, such as a bad batch of varnish or too strong an acid, and spiritual ones, such as doubt about the design itself. These problems, along with the different etching requirements of the more open design of the fragment, caused Blake to vary the repainting and stepped-biting techniques (also used for the Songs) that he had invented for his relief-etching process.

If we accept the first set III hypothesis about the manner of etching the plate, we can only conjecture that further biting was planned. We might then suppose that the three- to four-stage etching process was not a general rule. (Perhaps the surface characteristics of various sets of pages can bear that out eventually.) But the hypothetical scraping and the uncharacteristic crudeness of the traces of, in that case, the first repainting process tell against that conclusion; whereas according to the second set III hypothesis the scraping is eliminated and the quality of the traces is comparable to the elec-
trotype traces. It seems simpler and more consistent with this other evidence to suppose that doubts about the design were primary in his decision not to continue the second general etching to the usual depth. Had he wanted to use the plate, he could have scraped away the set I problems after all the etching was completed; no convenience of technique or amount of labor is sufficient explanation for abandoning a work.

The first America plate, then, was stopped because Blake saw it didn’t work as a design. The second general repainting had been done. The etching problems he had encountered—plus perhaps the new design formed by the varnish at that point—led him to see his original design differently and then to make the one he printed in America. By comparing the prints of these two versions of the America plates with other related designs, one can see why Blake changed his mind in this case.

The significance of the evidence of Blake’s repainting and stepped-biting technique for making the America fragment has many sides. It confirms the hypothesis formulated from the electrotype evidence and clarifies the method his medium required. The fragment may eventually provide a broader basis than the electrotypes alone for discerning and appreciating what went on in the course of making the later Illuminated Books. Broadly speaking, this whole range of evidence has a geological or archeological relation to the finished pages. This relationship could help us determine, for example, which plates or prints Blake had trouble with and why; it could provide considerable evidence about the care with which copies were made. Correlating the etching signatures with printing signatures will provide a whole new kind of evidence about what was made; hence, we may be able to discover the state of the plates from the presence or absence of patterns of ledge or basin marks in prints.

Conclusion

But more immediately, the general hypothesis of a uniform or usual method of production involves, as we have seen, at least two and normally three minutely particular paintings of a plate. Sometimes every character and always each of the more distinct (isolated) details of every design were recovered twice. A third or sometimes even a fourth painting at the lower levels of their substructure produced radical transformations of the imagery of the plates as he worked on them. With those changes of configuration came a special awareness of a process in the method. Chronometrically, as a count of the number of times he applied himself to painting his designs, Blake’s plate production might be reckoned at two and one half to three times what it has been thought to be; horologically, the reflexive, practical effect of the method on the artist who used it can be estimated qualitatively in terms of the cumulative effect of light-years of most intimate communion with the golden land, burning sea, and bright, reflecting sky of his technical environment. Patterns of persevering individuality in his minutely expressive forms became known to their painstaking and inspired creator as a family of visionary figures whose real life is by no means confined to the illusive heaven of his problematical “meanings.” The self-reflexive, gestural quality of the final plate of Jerusalem, for example, should be appreciated not only in relation to the other ninety nine designs of that work, but also in relation to all the other plates, prints and pages of the Illuminated Books and beyond: it speaks of the hammer and foreps of the labor of the process of coming and going in the spirit through which, in Blake’s polymorphous freedom of verbal and visual metaphor, all the Illuminated Books were realized in a medium of visionary re-enactment whose technical base lay in the archtropal matrix of his plate-making process.

From the beginning Blake was aware of a many-sided practical symbolism in the antithetical modality of his newly invented means of production. Aspects of that initial awareness can be constructed or inferred from the evidence we have. But Blake would certainly not then have envisioned a cumulative symbolism in the minute particulars of the medium itself; for it was only by his arduous and immense labors in that medium that he could have come to see, as I believe he did, in the stages of his process and in the cosmolgraphy of his sculptural plates an analogue or emblem of the layered structure of the hierarchic, allegorical system of the cultural world he sought to anatomize and to represent by transfiguration. The pertinence of his later thematic system of wordings to the Songs of Innocence and other earlier works has been doubted many times (without any attention to their visual relations). But The Book of Thel itself makes specific use of the layered and polysemous structure of allegorical design, and its pictorial forms hover between being symbols and emblems. That is another story, but it may help call attention to the influence very early of Blake’s method of making one by one his revisionary plates for the Songs of Innocence. From that process, I am convinced, he became aware of a poetics of inscription inherent in the means of production in his medium. Its conditions enabled his visions to be "printed" and his readers’ "perceptions" of them to be seen in a new light, one which could treat metaphorically as tropisms the familiar modes of artistic production and response.
Widely revealed, edited, and studied in Great Britain and in the United States, the visionary English poet, William Blake (1757-1827), is but fragmentarily known in France.

Though the modern sensibility is prepared to enter into what the writer's contemporaries called his "obscurity," the French public still never has had the means to satisfy its interest in Blake. Gide translated him partially; Julien Green, Georges Bataille, and Marcel Brion wrote essays on him. Yet, the main task remained undone: a French edition of his complete works.

The first volume of Blake's "Oeuvres" has just been published by Aubier-Flammarion in a bilingual edition, with Pierre Leyris as a "maître d'oeuvre." He has proved himself for thirty years the most accomplished translator from the English language, mostly of poets: Shakespeare, E. Bronte, T. S. Eliot, Hopkins. He is an enthusiastic discoverer, as evidenced by the catalogue of "Domaine anglais," a collection which he has been editing for ten years at Mercure de France. Pierre Leyris is above all the "introducer" of the poets he translates.

Now, his subject is Blake, whose significance he discusses in an interview granted to Francoise Wagener.

Q: How relevant is Blake today?

A: He appeared in court for having said something like "God damn the king and the king's soldiers" as he showed an impertinent foot soldier to the door. That was but a short-lived incident. However, on account of what the police were like under George III, Blake would certainly have been deprived of his liberty in the days of the French Revolution if his writings had been printed, instead of remaining in manuscript, or instead of a few copies engraved and illuminated in his own hand. Nothing could be more violently revolutionary than his "Song of Liberty." Nothing could more strenuously advocate women's erotic liberty than his Visions of the Daughters of Albion. He was a radical libertarian, you know. He could not accept monarchy, the army, churches, and prisons. Nor the existence of rich and poor. Nor strict monogamy and conjugal jealousy. Nor the "satanic mills" of nascent industry and the would-be sorcery of its technology. Nor even schools, for they warp and frustrate childhood.

Q: Did he remain such a radical all his life?

A: He did basically. As he saw the turn of events in France, though, he ceased believing in a revolution carried out by iron and blood, and began to aspire solely after a revolution in the human breast. There reside all deities; there cosmic forces are confronted; there the great intellectual battle is waged. Man must free himself of the "mind-forged manacles," of the delusions of the senses. He must "cast the spectre into the lake," in other words, get rid of the guilt-inducing superego--to use the contemporary jargon--and also escape, through the poetic imagination, from the embrace of matter which is but illusion, or Maya. On the one hand, every energy is good; the only evil is the coercion of others and the repression of one's own desires. On the other hand, the only reality is mental, a fact which man must understand in order to realize the deity that is within him.

Q: You used the word "Maya." Was Blake familiar with Hinduism?

Francoise Wagener's interview with Pierre Leyris, the most recent translator of Blake into French, appeared originally in Le Monde, 12 July 1974. It is reprinted here by permission, in a translation done for us by Simone Pignard, who teaches literature at the University of Madagascar.
were Swedenborg, Jacob Boehme, Plato and the Neo-Platonists who, moreover, pervaded the Pre-Romantic atmosphere owing to Taylor's brand-new translations. Yet, all this is swept up and transformed in the vortex of his own thought. For everything in his work is in motion. In a beautiful book, 1789 and the Emblems of Reason, Starobinski quotes something Goethe said concerning symbols, a sentence which perfectly describes Blake's creative process: "Symbols turn an appearance into an idea, the idea into an image, but in such a manner that the idea in the image remains active and out of reach." That is why the great mythical figures that are constantly moving and becoming in the Prophetic Books cannot be contained in static concepts.

Q: Do you intend to publish them too?

A: This edition—a bilingual one—is launched with the ambitious aim of being nearly complete someday. I did not have "Complete Works" inscribed on the first volume to allow for the omission of adolescent, minor works, and of epigrams originating in outbursts of temper that the French translation would divest of their documentary interest. With the exception of those utterly negligible scraps, however, I hope to bring out everything, even the marginalia Blake wrote down while reading, and the letters which are so revealing. There the poet, the visionary, expresses himself in a remarkably natural way. Read the ones I published in "Éphémère" no. 12; it is one of the best ways to approach Blake.

Q: What will the next volumes include?

A: Apart from the fragmentary, burlesque prose, "An Island in the Moon," the first one includes the youthful Poetical Sketches, and, chiefly, the peerless, little dialectical pair, Songs of Innocence and of Experience. The second volume will comprise the rest of the lyrical work, in contrast to the Prophetic Books which will appear afterwards. That distinction, in fact, is a merely formal and convenient one. Those are poems that Blake never engraved, nor of course printed, but they sometimes are of major consequence. They are mostly derived from his "Note-Book," now at the British Museum. It is a notebook Blake had kept as a relic all his life, as he received it from his younger brother who died in his arms at the age of 20. Erdman has lately worked out an extraordinary facsimile of it, revealing in particular almost invisible sketches, by means of infrared. Incidentally, let us acknowledge the tremendous work the English have done since the beginning of our century to provide insight into Blake's symbolic imagery, and to reconstruct precisely the socio-historical background to which the poems often allude. A large part of the poet's work would have otherwise remained a "selva oscura."

Q: Is Blake's reputation for obscurity well-founded then?

A: Aren't there enigmas in Dante's work, since I just quoted him? And, closer to us, in Rimbaud's, and in Mallarmé's? Blake's obscurity is partly due to the transmuting dynamism of the visions which present themselves to his inner eye. He does not strive to summon them abstractly. They are present, personified, and as unpredictable as . . . Dionysus, for instance. There is another source of obscurity, an important one for excessively rational readers: it is never clear whether Blake speaks of England as he knew it, or of the seventh heaven. Do you know what the Hasidim said about Enoch, the patriarch who passed for a former cobbler? "Not only did his awl link the leather above with that underneath, but also all that was above with all that was underneath."

Q: Those obscurities must be dreadful obstacles to the translator?

A: The greatest difficulties are to be found elsewhere: in the transparency of the Songs of Innocence, in the use of words so simple that they do not admit of any transposition whatsoever. One must, accordingly, refrain from producing, at the expense of faithfulness, a poem that is too regular, too accomplished. One must be honest and keep to an allusive imperfection.

Q: How would you define faithfulness with respect to the translation of poetry?

A: It would take a whole book to answer you. I was chiefly thinking of faithfulness to concepts and images, as faithfulness to the rhythm is a matter of course. To be faithful to a text means that, to begin with, you permeate yourself with it, with its values properly perceived; then, you let it circulate through you—as if involuntarily—during the passage from one language to another. In translation naturalness is obtained suddenly, like a dispensation of grace, after patient efforts. You cannot imagine the degree to which a text can be grasped once you have long battled with it. You even think you have found out the secret of its genesis. For instance, I am sure that it did not take very long for Shakespeare to write a scene, once he had greatly pondered over it. His thought can be seen leaping, by associations of ideas, from image to image, without regard to the syntax, or to the ambiguities that are scattered along, in a flight of genius. This flight is what you must arrive at, in Blake's work as in Shakespeare's, yet without passing the relays—sometimes secret—where the poet changed horses.

Q: What is it, in your opinion, that sustains this flight?

A: Imagination, of course; which brings us back to the core of Blake's thought. For him, the Poetic Imagination, which he boldly identifies with the body of Christ, is what constitutes man's divinity. Spiritual visions are what "exist eternally, really and unchangeably," in opposition to the transitory world.
Before the middle of the eighteenth century the Ghost scene in *Hamlet* which attracted artists and engravers was that of the apparition in the Queen's "closet" (III. iv). In the latter half of the century, however, artists shifted their attention from this scene to that of the Ghost's earlier appearance on the battlements and, sometimes, below (I. iv, v). One of the first such depictions was "Garrick as Hamlet," by Benjamin Wilson, with the mezzotint by McArdell; here Hamlet, alone in the picture, seems with slightly raised hands to listen almost incredulously to the unseen Ghost. The Ghost appears with Hamlet in John Hamilton Mortimer's version, engraved in 1782 by Walker; here the two figures are isolated, as they are in the scene (I. v) which Blake later favored. Of course Mortimer, like his successors, represented the Ghost as the text prescribes, clad in armor from head to foot, with beaver up, and with a "sable silvered" beard. Doubtless Blake, who admired Mortimer's work, knew at least the engraving; but Mortimer's Hamlet, though with drawn sword, seems little perturbed and is weakly represented.

Far more influential upon Blake's *Hamlet* scenes was Henry Fuseli. In addition to an inept pen sketch done in his teens, Fuseli thrice did the scene on the battlements (I. iv), each time with Marcellus, Horatio, and Hamlet balanced against the Ghost. Weakest artistically of the three is the last, engraved in 1804 by Joseph Smith for the Chalmers Shakespeare, for here the very corporeal Ghost, centrally placed in a vertical design, faces away from us; and Hamlet, made less important by the dominance of the Ghost, seems rather surprised than agonized. Far stronger is a pencil sketch, which Blake, however, may not have seen; it incorporates some of the main features of terror and sublimity infused into the scene by Fuseli. Strongest of all is the version Blake almost certainly knew, that engraved in 1796 by Robert Thew for the 1803 Boydell Shakespeare.
Shakespeare (see illustration). In this version, as in the sketch, the violence is heightened by the tension of the struggling group, as Horatio attempts to restrain the outrageous Hamlet, who is determined to make a Ghost of whoever "lets" him. Here, as in the other versions, the Ghost points toward a rendezvous, and the sulfurous moon behind the ghostly head and the turbulent sea in the background (tied to the Ghost by his trailing cape) give a sense of unreality and violence to the scene. The staring eyes of the Ghost, moreover, suggest a goblin damned.

This scene deservedly attained with artists a success second only to that of Fuseli's "Nightmare." Perhaps because he despaired of excelling Fuseli in this scene, Blake selected for his representations the subsequent scene (I.v) instead. Although it does not lend itself to as much movement, it provides even more concentration of figures and allows as much terror.

Blake's sketch of the Ghost's appearance to Hamlet, here evidently first reproduced (see illustration 2), has been generally overlooked by Blake bibliographers. An unfinished pen and ink dilute India wash over pencil, it measures approximately 31 x 43 cm., on laid, undated Whatman paper. The verso of a scene from Robinson Crusoe, it has been in the collections of Admiral Popham and Samuel Timmins; it is now in the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery. The sketch differs markedly from the finished 1806 watercolor (an extra-illustration for a copy of the Shakespeare second folio) in the British Museum (see illustration 3). It does so particularly in shape, background, the appearance of the figures, and their relationship. Since the finished watercolor is vertical in design, the two figures are naturally closer together than in the horizontal sketch; there they are separated by a massive pillar. In the watercolor the mysterious moonlit background is made effective by a less localized foreground. The two figures seem to be placed on the shore of Fuseli's vexed sea. In the sketch the heavy pillars suggest a stronghold beyond which we see only a slightly sketched, generalized background devoid of mystery. Though the watercolor seems superior to the sketch in these regards, the sketch seems at least equal to the watercolor.
in its presentation of the two figures. In the sketch the Ghost is given the traditional luxuriant beard balanced below by thick calves and th'ghs; the watercolor replaces this corporeal figure with a comparatively wraithlike one. In both versions, however, the massive armor of Fuseli is replaced by armor which fits tightly and suggests, following Shakespeare's lines (I.v.11-20), far more of the Ghost's corporeality. More important, the Ghost in the sketch appears much more sorrowful, more pitifully tormented than does the watercolor Ghost, who, like Fuseli's, appears threatening, even accusatory, with piercing eyes and rather stiff body. The Hamlet of the sketch is almost featureless; but his wildly violent gesture toward the Ghost suggests an even more violent emotion than Blake first intended: originally, perhaps following Fuseli, Blake had Hamlet stretch his right hand just above the center of his body. In the watercolor Hamlet's slightly raised hands follow the pattern set by Benjamin Wilson. Fear of the frightful apparition has set Hamlet's hair on end (Cf. I.v.18-20), yet one misses the unrestrained emotional abandon which characterizes the sketch. Here, even more than in the watercolor, Blake equalled the intensity of Fuseli.

1 W. Moelwyn Merchant, *Shakespeare and the Artist* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), pp. 53, 58; plate 12 (a). We are indebted to Mr. William Gaither (research assistant at the University of Georgia) and to Mr. Robert N. Essick for numerous suggestions. For permission to reproduce the Blake sketch, we are indebted to the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery; for the watercolor, to the Trustees of the British Museum.


3 Gert Schiff, *Johann Heinrich Füssli* (Zurich: Schweizerisches Institut für Kunstwissenschaft, 1973), II, 28; plate 201.

4 Schiff II, 409; plate 1296.

5 Schiff II, 216; plate 818.

6 Schiff II, 179; plates 731, 732.

7 Schiff I, 145-46.

QUERY

Gates of Paradise and Quarles' Emblems
By Detlef Dorrbecker

While I was doing some research for an article on For Children: The Gates of Paradise, I examined the numerous editions of Francis Quarles' Emblemata (first published 1635). I also came across the last "regular" reprint of Quarles' epigrams, a book produced in 1839 and furnished with totally new emblem-icons, the woodcuts done by Charles H. Bennett and W. Harry Rogers. Blake drew massively on the original illustrations in Quarles' collection of emblems when making his designs for GP in the Notebook, and in turn the latter artists, it appears to me, must have known and used Blake's inventions when engraving their designs. Does anybody have some information on Bennett and Rogers, or some idea where they might have seen works of Blake (especially GP), etc.?

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1 This essay is shortly to be published in the Stüdel Jahrbuch, N.F. Bd. V, hrsgb. Klaus Gallwitz & Herbert Beck, Munchen 1975.


DISCUSSION

1974 Blake Seminar
By E. B. Murray

I am pleased the December 1974 MLA Blake Seminar ("Perspectives on Jerusalem") approved of the general tendency of my "Jerusalem Reversed" paper (see Newsletter 32, Spring 1975, p. 105), though I'd suspect it took a smug dealer in unconscionable paradox to confuse my Vala-Vahlu, Luvah-Lava syllabic reversals and consequent correspondences with the wholesale importing of extraneous readings into Blake's text that I was (gently) questioning. Another case of the saw posing as a razor's edge to hack up minute particulars—in lieu of an armed vision to see through them. The reversals are closer to their nominal sources in the text than much Blakean word-play of these and other days (e.g., earth-owner, horizon, lethe—and "lover" [come back to me?]), perhaps even as close as that famous back-formation, Enitharmon. When this generation's Blakean establishment has been laid to waste, they'll come glimmering through as well as these. (I shall not promise so much for "nada-nada" as Udan Adan without evidence that a bit of simple Spanish had some currency to Blake.)

It was too bad I could not be at the meeting. I accept the wrist-slapping of its reporter with understanding. But sometimes things close in. Someone should suggest to those running Blake meetings in the future that they really should give an appropriate by-line to the people actually contributing papers. While my reasons for not showing were more substantial than this, I couldn't tell from any listing in the MLA program that I was really aboard—and so it came to pass. Also--the general carping tone of reported commentary, though in keeping with the spectral self-righteousness of Blakean commentary everywhere evident these days (perhaps contagious--Ecce Signum), suggests that, with only two of the paper-contributors in absentia, the group had one too many warm bodies to pick at.

University of Missouri,
St. Louis

MINUTE PARTICULARS

"Fields from Islington to Marybone"
By John Adlard

Blake's conviction that "The fields from Islington to Marybone, / To Primrose Hill and Saint John's Wood" were once "builded over" with Jerusalem's pillars may have something to do with the fact that the Order of St. John of Jerusalem (whose Priory Gate still stands in Clerkenwell, adorned with a lamb) once owned much of this area. St. John's Wood itself is named after them (there was also a Little St. John's Wood in Islington) and Pieter Zwart, in his Islington (London 1973), p. 118, notes that the "fields to the west" belonged to them.

London

Blake's Appearance in a Textbook on Insanity
By Raymond Lister

From the viewpoint of the unprofessional reader, one of the most fascinating books on insanity is Mad Humanity its Forms Apparent and Obscure by L. Forbes Winslow, which was published in London by C. A. Pearson Ltd. in 1898.
Winslow, who was born in 1844 and died in 1913, was well qualified with degrees at both Oxford and Cambridge. He had also been lecturer in insanity at Charing Cross Hospital, London, Vice-President of the Medico-Legal Congress, New York, and Chairman of the Psychological Department, and he was founder of the British Hospital for Mental Disorders. In addition to the foregoing book he wrote several others, including Handbook for Attendants of the Insane and Lunacy Law in England, Mad Humanity, which is 451 pages long, is full of details of the medical and legal aspects of insanity, although many of the author's opinions and conclusions would doubtless carry little authority in the medical climate of our own times. There are also many intriguing anecdotes of madness, and, most arresting of all, a series of photographs illustrating various aspects of insanity, such as "Delusions of Persecution in Monomania," "Hallucinations of Seeing and Hearing" and "Suicidal Dementia." These photographs vary from the pitiful to the horrific, with, among the physiognomies shown, expressions of terror, cunning, bewilderment, mistrust, and even a species of sardonic humour.

The whole of Chapter XII—a long one—is devoted to what Winslow describes as "Madness of Genius." For the author believed that genius was so abnormal as to be a species of neurosis. "Genius," he wrote, "like every other disposition of the intellectual dynamism, has necessarily its material substratum. This substratum is a semi-morbid state of the brain, a true nervous erethism. . . ." (p. 337).

The main part of the chapter consists of a series of studies of varying length of the alleged madness of certain men of genius, and a very strange collection they make, ranging from such undoubtedly examples of madness as William Cowper, John Clare and Christopher Smart, through such borderline cases as Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Robert Southey and Percy Bysshe Shelley, to intellectual giants like Shakespeare and Samuel Johnson. In this somewhat motley assortment, William Blake makes an appearance, but when the author's account of him is read, one's confidence begins to abate, for surely, even when Blake's reputation was at its lowest ebb, there can have been no more muddled account of his visionary experiences. Indeed, one is left with the impression that if this is how the author remembered a reading of Gilchrist's Life of Blake (from which most of the details presumably originated) he would have been a candidate for inclusion in his own book. But it is probably no more than an example of shoddy scholarship, repetition, perhaps, of loose chatter. Nevertheless, the passage was printed in a scholarly book and it probably did Blake's reputation a certain amount of harm at a time when it was beginning to emerge from the shadows. Here it is, in full:

**Hallucinations of Demonomania and Strength**

(William Blake, 1757-1827).—An artist of considerable fame, he was also a poet, and his compositions were innumerable, leaving behind him one hundred MSS. for publication. He was regarded by his many admirers as the equal of Shelley or Byron. He suffered from hallucinations, and being invited to Brighton to illustrate his edition of Cowper, he was met on the Downs, in his own imagination, by the spirits of Dante, Virgil, and Homer, whom he describes as coloured shadows and with whom he held high converse, watching the fairies and their funerals, and all the milder and gentler forms of demonolatry. For some years he had sighed for an interview with Satan, whom he had considered to be a grand and splendid spiritual existence, and whom he ultimately alleges he saw as he was going up the stairs of his house, in his mind's eye, the fiend glaring upon him through the grating of a window, when his wife, conceiving that he was suffering from one of his poetical hallucinations, induced him to execute a portrait of his infernal visitant, and in consequence of this vision he conceived the idea that he had abnormal strength, and, whilst suffering from this delusion, he attacked a soldier, and was tried for high treason. Many of the critics of the time described him as eccentric, another as visionary, a third as an enthusiast, a fourth as a superstitious ghost-seer; but that he was mad they had not the slightest doubt. (pp. 371-72)

*Postscript: Blake's Abnormal Psychology*

*By Morris Eaves*

Lest we drop off to sleep and dream that a few decades ago the subject of Blake's lunacy passed quietly into the innocent and nostalgic half-light of primitive psychology, it might not be a bad idea to add a short postscript to Raymond Lister's note. Abnormal Psychology: Current Perspectives is a hefty and up-to-date textbook widely used, for instance, in upper-level undergraduate courses, the early years of medical school, and the like. It was edited by a board of "contributing consultants" so long and so peevish that it would put the editorial pages of some scholarly journals to shame. It professes the radical tolerance for mental differences of Laing and like-minded thinkers: "To see the manifest problems and illnesses of our society is to question the concept of the 'well-adjusted person.' To know the effect on language, literature, and art of the work of 'mentally disturbed' individuals is to be hesitant in pressing the claims of the homogenous 'normal' society as the greatest good." "Acceptance means understanding." "Establishing standard norms of acceptable behavior and labeling so-called inappropriate acts 'abnormal' has important consequences in terms of sanctioning a form of social control. Only by recognizing the importance of diversity and change does a society foster individual freedom and growth."
Then, in the section on "Psychoses," a couple of pages after three of Van Gogh's paintings are reproduced with a caption remarking how his paintings "are a powerful representation of the blending of psychotic chaos and artistic genius," we come across a reproduction of Sin, Death, and Satan at the Gates of Hell, from Blake's illustrations of *Paradise Lost*, accompanying a caption that I suppose the *Paradise Lost* picture is intended to document.

An early-nineteenth-century writer referred to William Blake as "an unfortunate lunatic whose personal inoffensiveness secures him from confinement."

A retrospective diagnosis of Blake would probably label him a paranoid schizophrenic, for he made no secret of the fact that he was "... under the direction of Messengers from Heaven, Daily and Nightly." Blake's first hallucination involving divine personages occurred at the age of four, and succeeding "visions" probably provided much of the material for his illustrations of works such as Milton's *Paradise Lost*, which includes *Satan Comes to the Gates of Hell*, shown above. This watercolor illustration depicts Satan advancing from the left, preparing to confront Death, right. In the center, thrusting them apart, is Sin. Flames writhe in the background, and to the right is Hell's latticed gate.


University of New Mexico

A Contemporary Reference to Blake
By Janet Warner

A reference to Blake which does not seem to have been previously noticed by scholars can be found in *Ackermann's Repository* for June 1810, in an article entitled "On Splendour of Colours &C" by Juninus, pp. 408-09. It reads as follows:

Flaxman's *Illustrations of Homer*, *Aeneid* and *Dante* engraved by Piroli, of Rome, and Blake's plates from Blair's *Grave*, lately engraved, are excellent studies for a young artist. Blake has lately received much deserved commendation from Fuseli. Perhaps this engraver has more genius than any one in his profession in this country. If he would study the ornamental requisites more, he would probably attain much higher celebrity than he has already acquired.

Isn't it odd that this mentions Flaxman's engraver, Piroli, but not Schiavonetti, who engraved Blake's designs and who died 7 June 1810? It also mentions Blake as an engraver rather than an artist. Would 1808, when the Blair engravings were printed, be "lately engraved" in 1810? Interestingly enough, we know that Blake's own exhibition had opened in May 1810 and the "much deserved commendation from Fuseli" may refer to that, but it is odd that the exhibition is not mentioned if Juninus knew about it. We know that Crabb Robinson had seen the exhibition in April 1810 and that he took Charles and Mary Lamb to see it on 11 June (G.E. Bentley, Jr., *Blake Records*, p. 226).

In September, 1810, in the same continuing article, Junius again refers to Blake. Two women are speaking of prints, and after a description of *The Fall of Rosamond*, one says:

This artist seems to have relinquished engraving and to have cultivated the higher departments of designing and painting with great success. His works show that he must have studied the antique with considerable attention.

The other replies:

If those ingenious men, the engravers, were to ask the man of genius why he abandoned his profession, he might with truth answer to most of those by whom it is followed, in the words of the poet:

"I hear a voice you cannot hear
That says I must not stay:
I see a hand you cannot see
That beckons me away."

This is interesting since we know very little of Blake's actions in the years 1810 to 1814. This suggests he gave up engraving for a while, and indeed he exhibited three paintings at the exhibition of the Water Colour Society in 1812, (*The Canterbury Pilgrims*, *The Spiritual Forms of Pitt and Nelson*) and "Detached Specimens of an original illuminated Poem, entitled Jerusalem the Emanation of the Giant Albion."

Who was Juninus? I would appreciate hearing from anyone who has ideas on his identity. Morton Paley has found in his researches on Ackermann that even he did not know the identity at first of this anonymous contributor, and when he did learn and sent him a gift of money, Juninus' contributions ceased. Whoever he was, it is significant that he retained a high opinion of Blake's work at a time following Hunt's attack in the * Examiner*, September 1809, when Blake's fortunes, as far as we can tell, were beginning to decline.

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REVIEWS

America, Everyone?


America a Prophecy. (Unbound facsimile pages.) Published by Blake Newsletter, 1975. 1 p., 41 pls. $2.50.

Reviewed by David V. Erdman

By a coincidence years in the making, two sets of black-and-white facsimile pages of America have been published within a few months of each other—and can conveniently be described by comparison. Let me call them by their initials, ABF and BNL, and can conveniently be described by comparison. The BNL packet consists of 1 page explaining the project (it was suggested and assisted by Everett Frost), large reproductions of America i-ii, 1-16, a-d (all except i and d in two styles of reproduction, back to back), and no commentary. The paperbound ABF volume consists of full size reproductions of America i-ii, 1-16 (confusingly referred to as 1-18 despite the convention generally accepted since Keynes; but the facsimile pages are not numbered, so one may write in either set of numbers, or both), with prefatory matter and brief Introduction and Check-List. The clothbound ABF volume adds nine plates: canceled plates a-d of America (plate d, "Thiralatha," in color); photographs of the extant copper fragment of plate a and of two impressions from it; familiar variant plates (pl. 2 from copy N, with "The stern Bard ceas'd ..." uncanceled; pl. 13 from copy B, with a single tail on the serpent); and two drawings, the "Chaining of Orc," and an early sketch for the title page, about which more anon. Both the Foundation and the Newsletter publications use the uncolored Rosenwald copy, E, except that BNL substitutes for plates 9 and 13 the somewhat clearer proof pages of copy a*.

The 300-line ABF reproduction of canceled plate c should be best for the textual revisions penciled between lines and in the margin, though the text.)

Carelessness can defeat any process, however. The 300-line ABF reproduction of canceled plate c ought to be best for the textual revisions penciled between lines and in the margin, though ideally the photograph should have been infra-red. But the ABF plate-maker picked up a fleck of dust attempt to improve on the uninspired drabness of Blake: Book Illustrator, the Foundation's earlier venture. And each plate is unnecessarily encumbered with a heavy gray panel of paper tone which creates arbitrary edges that correspond neither to the edges of Blake's plate (often hard to locate) nor to the edges of the image or of the paper. In using a very light gray tone and avoiding such misfitting, the printers of VFD (Blake's Visionary Forms Dramatic) and of TIB set precedents ignored by the printers and editors of ABF and BNL. The latter make a to-do about the "overall grayness" of their halftones—which are even darker than those of the ABF—but ignore the question of misfitting borders and mistakenly suppose that the only alternative is to go to the other extreme. "All but two plates of America here are reproduced twice, once on each side of the page," they announce. "The starker, less 'harmonious' reproduction is taken from a high-contrast photographic print; the grayer, muddier reproduction is taken from a medium-contrast photograph and printed as a standard halftone." The contrast of the first is increased by the process called "dropout halftone." Both employ a halftone screen of "a good 150 lines per inch." (Why not try the dropout with the medium-contrast, or the high-contrast without dropout? If the student of these materials is a printer, he will see the purpose of seeking the golden mean.)

A screen any coarser would hardly be good enough. The ABF halftones use a screen of 300 lines per inch. TIB uses the 150-line screen, VFD the 300-line. The finer paper in VFD makes a greater difference than the difference of screens. In the reproduction of such simple black-and-white images as the uncolored pages of America, these differences prove to be of almost no significance. The canceled plates, with some shading and pencil lettering added, are another matter. Significant differences appear when we compare the reproductions of these. For canceled plate b, the BNL halftone is the most satisfactory; it reveals the shading in the bottom left corner to have been made by unlifted pencil, a detail less evident in the ABF halftone, and scarcely to be guessed at from the TIB. The differences of screen matter less than those of photographic exposure or inking. Reduced size is a part of the trouble with the TIB image; yet the still smaller image in VFD (with better paper and 300-line screen) is more adequate. If we look now at the 150-line dropout halftone on the reverse side of the BNL sheet, we see that the penciling has lost its shading variations, while details in the human and dragon forms are blackened out. (If I were using the BNL sheets in class, I'd use the halftone pages for the illuminations and turn to the dropouts for the reading of the text.)

David Erdman has been putting several fascinating articles on Blake into BNYPL, hoping for more subscribers.
confusingly attached to the of "anci[ent]"
(partly cut away) beside line 11, making the ABF print inferior in clarity to all but the BNL dropout.

It is a bit disconcerting to see, when you hold them to the light, that the BNL dropouts vary in size from the halftones they are printed behind. Curious about the closeness of size to the originals, I have made a table of comparative measurements, using the Berg Collection copy L as base. (When the image edges were vague, I measured between two precise points such as the top and bottom of the text lettering.) All facsimiles, including that of the Blake Trust (of copy M), vary somewhat in size from each other and from the original. The Blake Trust plates are almost consistently a quarter of an inch shorter than the originals, with three a bit above and two a bit below that. The ABF plates are all short, with a mean of 5/16" shorter than copy L and plate 7 as much as 11/16" shorter. The ABF plates are twice exactly right and most of the time slightly taller or shorter by a small fraction (a mean between 1/8" and 3/16" taller), only twice going as variant as 3/8" taller. The BNL dropouts have a mean of 1/4" shorter than L, with plate 15 a half inch shorter and plate 9 shorter by 9/16". The figures are puzzling but reassuring. One must add, however, that in BNL the canceled plate d ("Thiralatha") is printed on its side and almost two inches too wide, obscuring the fact that it is a fragment, or rather that the picture is painted over a fragment of a printed page. In ABF the Thiralatha plate is the right size, and it is in color—but with too coarse a screen, 133 lines, which makes it blotchy. (I haven't compared the original for accuracy of colors.)

Now let's consider the quality and usefulness of the supplementary material and commentary in the ABF editions. It is a shame that only the costly edition lives up to the promise of its "formats." The "Editorial Comments" by Easson claim a "student-oriented" purpose yet admit that only the limited edition goes beyond serving "the general reader." Nor is it plausible to argue that the difference of editions is one simply of "formats." It is plainly one of contents, the reason: money. Many publishers today are putting their clothbound prices sky high (this happened to TIB) to keep the paperbound prices low—but at least without robbing the paper "format" of essential matter. May I urge the fourteen eminent Directors of ABF, whose names use up a whole leaf of paper, to reconsider this policy and to make the difference between the cheap and costly versions of the next volume one actually of mere format, i.e., quality of paper and binding, and not of contents?

The Foundation's Directors might also assert some authority to give better copy-making attention to the "bibliographical essays" which they have invited "leading scholars" to contribute, if they wish them to keep in the lead. The "Bibliographical Introduction" by G. E. Bentley, Jr. for this first volume seems to have been put together and sent to press in great haste. True, even some of its flaws can be put to use by an ingenuous teacher, if only as pitfalls to be escaped by learning the wariness that transforms a general reader into a scholar. Here is an example. "Blake," we are told on page 7, "evidently often sold America and Europe together, for eight of the twelve known copies of Europe were bound with America, and America copies O and P were clearly produced as companion copies to Europe copie and M." The alert student will learn from the next page that copy P was produced posthumously "by Frederick Tatham" and so rule it out as evidence of Blake's packaging. Then, to get any further, he will hunt up a copy of the Keynes and Wolf Census, where he will find listed only 11 known copies of Europe. (Has Bentley found another? He makes no comment upon the Census.) He will find that only five of these were ever bound with copies of America: B, I, K, L, M of Europe with G, N, O, Q, P of America, respectively. He will find that America Q, as well as F, was posthumously printed and bound, that bound only after Blake's death. Of Bentley's declared eight copies, that leaves only N and O. On p. 7, however, Bentley wonders if N is a posthumous printing; on p. 8 he becomes certain of this. One copy, Q, was indeed bound with a copy of Europe (K) in Blake's lifetime—for his friend Linnell, not necessarily at Blake's direction.

As students what do we learn from this? That G.E.B. is careless about his own declarations of fact, treating posthumous printings and bindings as acts of the living Blake? No. Bentley does not say that Blake had copies bound up together, only that their binding together is evidence that he "often sold" them together. But now suppose the copies of Europe, I, L, M, that were bound with posthumous copies N, Q, P of America, were also posthumous copies? No evidence of Blake's selling them. Or, suppose they were copies made by Blake? Negative evidence: if he had sold copies of America to go with them, there would have been no need for someone to make posthumous copies of America for that purpose. Perhaps we are learning something about reasoning. Even the fact that Linnell had the two works bound together doesn't demonstrate that he acquired them at the same time or was advised by Blake to combine them. (The titles just might have suggested the idea.)

Bentley does update the Census with the information that copies D and Q, unlocated by Keynes and Wolf, are now in Princeton. Copy R he continues to list as "untraced"—but magically proceeds (p. 6) to give it a date (1797) and to describe it as colored (p. 7). Recently? The Census described it as uncolored. Also (p. 6) Bentley describes copy R as having a masked plate 4 and as the source of an Edwin Muir facsimile in color in 1887 (p. 9). Before we jump to the plausible conclusion that Bentley has been shown copy R by a private owner and been sworn to secrecy, we must note that he does not know, as he does for all other copies, what watermark the paper has or how many serpent tails there are on plate 13. It may be that he is deducing his information from the Muir facsimile and taking the precaution to refrain from assuming that the serpent tail treatment there is
faithful to the original. And yet, he confidently asserts that R is printed in green (p. 6), not the blue of the Muir (p. 15).

The student will also need to resist being daunted by the odd contradictions between the dating table on page 6 and the paragraphs facing it on page 7. The table shows colored copy K (in the cluster "I-L") as dating approximately 1794. On page 7 we are told that "all eight early copies" are uncolored, giving the cluster as "C-I, L" and thus removing K from the early copies; then K is designated one of the "late copies." But in the sentence beginning "There is evidence that the late copies were colored," the circular hopping about of dates for A, K, O, R does indeed daunt this student. The fact that each is given a firm approximate date on the table (except that the date for A is queried) only increases the confusion.

A different kind of resistance is set up by the garbled citation, in footnote 4, page 4, of a passage from my textual notes in Poetry and Prose (p. 724) which may or may not discourage the student of Blake's materials from looking up the reference but has certainly kept Bentley himself from calling attention to the points he obscures by misquotation. "Erdman," he says, "finds, somewhat implausibly, that the 'spirit and quality of drawing' and the tone of plate 4, lines 19-20 suggest '1794 or 1795 as the date of etching.' Put that way, the remark is more than merely "something implausible."

What I actually wrote was: "The final plates seem very different in spirit and quality of drawing from the canceled ones"—meaning that all plates in the complete copies of America differ markedly from the three canceled plates, a-c, which represent an earlier version we may designate version One. The final version, which we may call Two, is dated 1793 on the title page and was advertised in October. The text of One already has Blake's idiosyncratic leftward serif on its g's which implies a date not earlier than perhaps 1791, more probably early 1792. Differences between One and Two in iconography and in aesthetic power are evident, for instance between the flag and proclamation on plate a and the upsweeping flames on its revision as plate 3, or between the text and design of plate b and their revision in plate 4. To me these changes suggest a considerable interval of time between One and Two, and this seems the sort of thing that might profitably be studied in these materials.

My other point, conflated with this one in Bentley's garbling, was that "the 'harp-shattering' lines (19-20) on Plate 2"—the lines expressing the bard's shame in his own song, his 'sick & drear lamentings,'—also suggest a considerable passage of time between version One, which presumably lacked the Prelude on these lines, and version Two. Further, since when Blake finally "published" America he masked the lines of bardic lamentation, plucking up his bardic courage again, another lapse of time, between the etching and the printing from the masked plate, ought to be postulated. (It would be further to the point here to note the evidence I discuss in TIB p. 392 that version One lacked the Prelude.) What the lapses of time may have been we may only conjecture; my suggesting a date of 1794-95 as the date of publication (I should not have said of etching) was meant simply to indicate the extremes of possibility: version One ca. 1791-92; version Two with bard's lines, 1793; version Two without bard's lament, 1794-95.

The garbling here may well have been an accidental byproduct of condensation, but it suggests that similar misconstructions may underlie other paragraphs. The confusion produced in a two-sentence effort by Bentley (pp. 9-10) to declare how "very reliable" (or not) certain modern reproductions of America may be is a model of unreliable categorizing. It singles out as the "only" reliable facsimile besides that of the Blake Trust "a facsimile edited by Ruthven Todd" (entry 9 in the list on p. 16). It considers entry 11, on the other hand, unreliable—and rightly so. But entry 11, a facsimile prepared by George Quasha for the magazine Stony Brook, was reproduced from the Todd facsimile. Bentley does not conjecture the source for the Todd but guesses copy C or D for the Quasha; yet if he knows not the source, to what original does he judge the copy to be faithful or unfaithful? Inspection will reveal that the maker of the Todd facsimile retouched the words of Blake's text letter by letter all through, producing at least one wrong word ("bound" for "flam'd" in 3:16), whereas that word was corrected by retouching for the Quasha text. But neither of these facsimiles should be considered reliable, literally or graphically. Both also use colors of ink and paper that are none of Blake's. Among those listed as not very reliable (for what, we are not told) is the reduced halftone reproduction of colored copy K in VFD, of which I have spoken above. It is at least photographically reliable as to the text and the details of illumination.

Bentley's list of "Important graphic variants in America" (pp. 12-13) is meager, and sometimes imprecise. It ignores the plates of version One altogether; it describes the rolled-up mattress in plate 12, copy 0, as "a coiled snake"; it raises the question whether the pencil inscription on plate 6 of copy F, "The Slave delivered," is "by Blake?"—as though there were no available samples of Blake's handwriting to test against this very different hand. (It is not Cumberland's either.) Whether other variants are to be found, which the student may consider important, is an easy and rewarding task to be set for copy M (of the Blake Trust facsimile) or K (of VFD). He will discover that human figures are sometimes painted as leaves or flowers, dismissing their narrative or symbolic function, but are sometimes revised in function. For example, in uncolored copies the naked woman in plate 15 who stands first from the right in the cluster of three among the grapes shows her left profile, her face being turned inward. In copy M a face has been painted on what was her hair, so that she looks outward, front right. An unimportant revision, or a development of the theme of movement out from the group?
Bentley, who has evidently compared all copies, might have given us a fuller report on these matters. But one detail which Bentley does call attention to inclines me to forgive him all his errata.

Under "plate 2" (ii) in his list of variants Bentley notes that there is "a quite different design (in the British Museum Print Room) ... apparently inscribed 'AMERICA' in large, obscure letters, as if for a title-page." In the cloth-bound ABF this design is reproduced as plate 27, with Bentley's (or Easson's) caption: "An untiiled drawing often identified as a rejected design for the title page of America, courtesy The British Museum." (The lack of cross-references either way might lead the user of the paperbound "format" to go all the way to the British Museum to look.) I have been mulling over a photograph of this page, and trying it on other people, for some time. The artist's note to himself, on the drawing, reads: "Angels to be very small as small as the letters that they may not interfere with the subject at bottom which is to be in a stormy sea & rain separated[sic] from the angels by Clouds." For some time I have had a note ready for the revised Double-day text (if that ever gets published) observing that the phrase "stormy sea & rain" suggests the title pages of Visions and America; that the bottom scene is a variant of that in the America title page; that the first word of the title is "The"; that the second and third words, roughly blocked in, could have become "MARRIAGE" and "HEAVEN," though the latter would need much more space. Bentley's reading of the second word as "AMERICA" provides the missing clue. I see now that the word is "AMERICAN" and the third word, so much too short for my earlier guess, is "WAR": "The AMERICAN WAR!" One remembers Blake's letter to Flaxman of 12 September 1800: "The American War began. All its dark horrors passed before my face ...." Probably Blake was recalling his first idea for the poem that became America a Prophecy—a version possibly different far from extant versions One and Two.

Can we date this title page? Here is a matter for students, though the suppliers of material don't tell us about possible watermark or about what may be on the back of this drawing. My own notes say it is a watercolor design for a fan, perhaps by Stothard. And I pull down from the shelf at my elbow a copy of Blake Newsletter 27 which displays this fan design on its outside cover—and contains an article by Andrew Wilton identifying the fan design as Blake's, of "around 1782." I pass along the shivery thought that Blake's planning a poem on "The American War" may have begun as soon as the war ceased! But of course it is more likely that the verso of the fan design was sketched upon only much later, when the fan had lost interest. Too bad there isn't a lower-case g in the title.

The only other plate that seems newsworthy is plate 26, a pencil drawing inscribed "Chaining of Orc," offered as "an analogue for plate 3[K 1]." It is that, but again the student would be helped by some dating and bibliography. The symbolism of contrasting domed and spiraled churches, as in Jeru-

edalem 46, probably belongs decades after America. In Keynes, Separate Plates (1956, p. 51), not mentioned in this book, the drawing is identified as a fairly close preliminary sketch for the plate on which Blake etched the conveniently dated caption, "Type by W Blake 1812." Keynes does mention that the scene, Enitharmon and Los standing over Orc chained, bears some resemblance to America Preludium 1. But thrown at the student this way, dateless and undiscussed, this sort of material seems more for bewilderment than study.

The "Check-List" by Roger Easson (pp. 14-21) is perhaps properly lean, but it seems odd that the fullest recent commentary on America line for line, the notes in W. H. Stevenson's Longman Annotated Blake (1971) is not mentioned, though his unpublished dissertation is (p. 18, footnote).


Reviewed by Leslie Tannenbaum

As the title of the book indicates, and as Mark Roberts states in his first chapter, The Tradition of Romantic Morality deals with Romanticism as a moral phenomenon rather than as a literary or artistic one. Roberts' thesis is that there is at the center of Romanticism a moral position that he calls "energy of the soul," the establishment of energy as the exclusive source of values and as the sole guide to human conduct. Furthermore, Roberts asserts, while Romanticism as a literary impulse has exhausted itself, this Romantic morality survives and exerts an insidious influence—insidious because unrecognized—that has revealed itself most blatantly in the ideas, attitudes and actions of dissidents during the last decade.

Robert's purpose, then, is to establish the presence of this moral tradition, examine some of the forms it takes and evaluate it. He begins with a discussion of John Osborne's Look Back in Anger to define the problem he is confronting and to postulate his answer to it. Disturbed at Osborne's sympathetic portrayal of Jimmy Porter, whose antisocial and frequently cruel behavior ordinarily would not warrant our sympathy, Roberts sees this "failure of moral perspective" on Osborne's part as a serious aesthetic flaw in the play. The popularity of the play in spite of this flaw can be explained by the presence of a moral tradition that permits the audience to identify with Osborne's "over-simplifying emphasis upon 'energy of the

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works or ideas. More concerned with the historical whose glorification of energy Ephemera 1965-70, whereas Browning, Nietzsche, Ibsen and D. H. while Carlyle's thinking carries a less dramatic morality he has been tracing. He states that while The concluding chapter analyzes an anthology of Roberts most explicitly condemns the Romantic reaction to this moral position is described in a series of chapters that follow the same method as the first two: each is devoted to a single author, focusing on one or more works by that writer. Appropriately, the chapter on the established orthodoxy is followed by one on Blake, whom Roberts finds to be the major spokesman of Romantic thought. The fourth chapter offers an almost Blakean reading of Wordsworth, in which Roberts maintains that Wordsworth, despite his technical innovations, was essentially orthodox in his thinking. Emily Bronte, in Wuthering Heights, is caught between the claims of that Roberts is a critical analysis of Romantic morality, whereas Browning, Nietzsche, Ibsen and D. H. Lawrence endorse that morality in varying degrees. The concluding chapter analyzes an anthology of dissent called BAW: Outlines Manifestation and Ephemera 1865-70, whose glorification of energy and mistrust of order and determinacy are cited as evidence of the continuing and pervasive influence of the Romantic moral tradition. Here Roberts most explicitly condemns the Romantic morality he has been tracing. He states that while the proponents of neo-Stoicism erred in separating Reason from the passions--siding with the claims of Reason--the Romantics did not heal this break by swinging to the opposite pole. Ultimately, says Roberts, the Romantic morality is an escape from the complexities of moral problems, a regression to a childlike state.

Although the discussion of Blake is crucial to his provocative thesis, it is an essentially orthodox reading of Blake—orthodox in that it does not offer any new critical interpretation of Blake's works or ideas. More concerned with the historical ramifications of those ideas, most of Roberts' discussion relies upon ground that has been broken by previous scholars and critics. He is sensitive to the limitations of the approach he is using and renders an accurate and tactful exposition of the moral ideas contained in Blake's writings. The discussion relies heavily upon The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, identifying Blake—as one would expect—with the energetic proponents of the Devil's party; but Roberts also cites Blake's later works to note that the poet's emphasis upon energy shifts to an emphasis upon the imagination as a source of values. However, Roberts insists upon the centrality of energy in Blake's thought, maintaining that Blake's concern with the imagination is really a concern with the proper outlets for energy.

The chapter's main virtue is the clarity with which Roberts deals with the complexities of Blake's thought. Perhaps the best part is the discussion of Blake's annotations to Watson's An Apology for the Bible, where Roberts delineates the precise grounds upon which Blake parts company with both Paine and Watson. Equally helpful is Roberts' careful consideration of the ways in which Blake's morality would work in practice. Only once does Roberts depart from this standard: when he asserts that Blake's radical conception of the Fall included the idea that "the corruption of nature had gone so far that one could not find beauty in it"—an oversimplification that is the result of ignoring Blake's mythopoetics.

It is this dealing with Blake as a polemicist that makes the chapter on Blake the least interesting one in the book. The chapters on Bronte, Browning, Ibsen and Conrad show a greater sensitivity to the ways that ideas operate in the context of a work of literature. The book's delineation of the historical significance of Blake's ideas, which Roberts claims to be his contribution to current discussion of Blake, offers very little on that subject. While it is pleasant to hear another voice affirming that Blake is at the center—perhaps even at the head—of the Romantic movement, the net result of this assertion is to make Blake the fountainhead of the "permissive morality" that has become a favorite target in the political rhetoric of the past decade. Despite Roberts' obvious intelligence and his constant effort to avoid facile judgments, his book contains the oversimplifications of a finger-pointing moralist who is attempting to lay present moral ills at the doorstep of the Romantics. His method necessarily begs the question when he selects particular authors and works, at the expense of others, to support his thesis. An obvious omission is Shelley, whose "Speculations on Morals," Prometheus Unbound and A Defense of Poetry are central documents of the morality of the Romantics. Roberts briefly notes that Shelley was concerned with moral questions, but dismisses him on the grounds that "his moral influence is comparatively restricted"—a peculiar statement in light of Blake's comparative obscurity and Shelley's wider exposure during the nineteenth century. Similarly, Byron is quickly dismissed as not being "a major moralist or a major moral influence" because to English readers he represented "something far more complex and more equivocal" than the figure he cut in the eyes of other Europeans.
These and other exclusions make Blake not simply the major Romantic writer to assert the Romantic morality that Roberts describes, but the only writer in the nineteenth century to do so—as all the other literary figures discussed in the book, with the exception of Lawrence, see that morality as problematical. Therefore, one doubts the viability of the term "Romantic morality" and Roberts' belief that the morality he is describing is essentially literary in its origin and influence. Clearly there are forces other than literary ones that need to be accounted for. The book's chapter on Nietzsche is a step in that direction, but Roberts' need to justify the inclusion of the philosopher in a literary study points to the book's main problem: it attempts to walk a tightrope between literary history and the history of ideas, failing at the former because it often ignores important works and contexts, and failing at the latter because it is too narrow in its selection of evidence.

Because of these failures, The Tradition of Romantic Morality can be most accurately described as a series of individual essays—some of which offer significant insights—which Roberts attempts to unify with an untenable thesis. The readings of Wuthering Heights, "Bishop Blougram's Apology," The Master Builder and Victory have a value that is independent of the flaws in the book's main argument. However, the author's obvious lack of sympathy for his subject gives the entire book a particularly cranky quality, and in its attack on the now dated ephemera of the sixties, Roberts' argument becomes what it beholds.


Reviewed by Frank M. Parisi

In his engraved works Blake addressed himself to "the intellectual powers," which means he intended his work to be not just an aesthetic treat for the eye and the ear, but a total communication from mind to mind through many senses at once. Since Blake's time the graphic arts have followed many programs less synaesthetically complete than this; but one art form, the ballet, has preserved the fullness of Blake's vision. Of all the arts of the twentieth century, it is the ballet which "unites music and drama on their common basis in the dance, just as the Job engravings unite poetry and painting on their common basis in hieroglyphic, and it can hardly be an accident that Blake's vision of Job makes an excellent ballet."1 "The Sick Rose" has also been successfully choreographed, and following the lead established by these adaptations of Blake's art to dance, the Oothoon Dance Theatre presented "The Mental Traveller, a dance-drama based on the ballad by William Blake. Presented 19 August-7 September 1974, Crown Theatre, Hill Place, Edinburgh. Cast: Heidi Parisi and Neil Tennant. Lights: Sonia Mez. Score: Wanda Laukenner. Sound: Cameron Crosby. Choreographer: Heidi Parisi. Director: Heidi Parisi. Producer: The Oothoon Dance Theatre in association with the Edinburgh University Theatre Company. Costumes: Megan Tennant.

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Reviewed by Frank M. Parisi

In his engraved works Blake addressed himself to "the intellectual powers," which means he intended his work to be not just an aesthetic treat for the eye and the ear, but a total communication from mind to mind through many senses at once. Since Blake's time the graphic arts have followed many programs less synaesthetically complete than this; but one art form, the ballet, has preserved the fullness of Blake's vision. Of all the arts of the twentieth century, it is the ballet which "unites music and drama on their common basis in the dance, just as the Job engravings unite poetry and painting on their common basis in hieroglyphic, and it can hardly be an accident that Blake's vision of Job makes an excellent ballet."1 "The Sick Rose" has also been successfully choreographed, and following the lead established by these adaptations of Blake's art to dance, the Oothoon Dance Theatre presented "The Mental Traveller, a dance-drama based on the ballad by William Blake. Presented 19 August-7 September 1974, Crown Theatre, Hill Place, Edinburgh. Cast: Heidi Parisi and Neil Tennant. Lights: Sonia Mez. Score: Wanda Laukenner. Sound: Cameron Crosby. Choreographer: Heidi Parisi. Director: Heidi Parisi. Producer: The Oothoon Dance Theatre in association with the Edinburgh University Theatre Company. Costumes: Megan Tennant.
"Traveller" at the Edinburgh International Festival Fringe in 1974 to a warm reception by the critics. Of all Blake's works, one might ask, why choose "The Mental Traveller"? With an unlimited budget and an audience of perpetual insomniacs, the company might have been able to mount a production of one of the prophetic books. But without either of these, some compromises had to be made. The problem was to determine which of Blake's shorter works would lend itself to the dramatic and symbolic expression of the choreographer, and at the same time not become too allusive for a general audience. "Mad Song," "The Book of Thei, Visions of the Daughters of Albion, The Gates of Paradise, and "The Crystal Cabinet" were all considered for a time, but "The Mental Traveller" was eventually chosen because it too contains the familiar cycle in the fallen world, which, though it turns through many of the same phases Blake described in his engraved works, yet moves to a simpler and more ordered cadence. The poem relies more on event than on dialogue, character, or conceit, thus easing the translation from verse into dance. In addition, since the poem was never engraved, the choreographer is not bound to literal fidelity in illustrating a particular line or stanza. With "The Mental Traveller," instead of probing into the lengthy cadences, the catalogues, digressions, and in general the epic sweep of the prophetic books, one simply submits to the brevity and honesty of the ballad form. Yet within this short and conventional poem, Blake's life-long concern with perception and human desire still commands one's attention.

All the characters in the poem were portrayed by two dancers, Heidi Parisi and Neil Tennant. In their interpretation the poem was seen to embody a struggle between male and female, each longing for the other and soon swept away by desire itself. A viable relation never develops between the two sexes, for one of them always begins to eye the other with relish, devising ways to enjoy the other. In seeking the other, each sex mistakes possession for love; and in possessing the other, each becomes a hideous monster devouring an unrecognizable victim (illus. 1). During these transformations, which were quite sharply pointed in the production, the audience was given the chance to see that while the poem seems to tell of birth, growth, and change, all of these end in a reversion to barbarity (illus. 2).

This schematic interpretation simplified many complicated passages in the poem, and confined the drama to a field somewhere between the two fixed poles of innocence and wrath. In the brief intervals between the portrayal of innocence and its domination by wrath, the stage was blacked out. To portray the innocence of the maiden in lines 57-64, Ms. Parisi used the postures of the human marygold in plate iii of Visions of the Daughters of Albion, of the child in the Frontispiece to Songs of Innocence, and...
of the spritely figures dancing in flames in "The Blossom." To portray wrath and its megalomania, Mr. Tennant made repeated use of the tormented facial expressions of the characters in plate 1 of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*; plates 1, 1, and 4 of *America*; plates 2, 3, and 4 of *The Gates of Paradise*; plates 4, 7, 11, 14, 19, and 22 of *The First Book of Urizen*; and plates 37 [41] and 51 of *Jerusalem*. Some commentators mistakenly referred to the production as a ballet, but the leaps of Ms. Parisi in her portrayal of the maiden, and the expressions of Mr. Tennant in his portrayal of the old man, as well as a number of other details, should establish it as modern dance.

More precisely, one may distinguish it as a specific kind of modern dance, one based on Blake's iconography. The differences are crucial. While all dance relies on firm control of the lower back, the classical, conservative type of ballet performed, for example, by the Royal Ballet, uses the lower back largely for support, so that formal beauty can be achieved by the elongation of line in the extremities of the body (illus. 3). The legs and the arms, and the manner of their movement attract more interest than posture, which is uniformly correct in any case. In the Graham technique of modern dance, on the other hand, the torso remains the base of movement and energy, as well as the center of attention; and energy which extends into the arms and legs can only derive from the torso. The type of 'dance' Blake created in his art appears to be much closer to modern dance than to ballet in this respect. Blake's dance is based on outline and continually underscores the importance of boundaries. The shape of the body and the way it defines space are more important than the parts of the body; and while "the hands and the feet" are no less important than "the lineaments of the countenances," both are subservient to overall form, which can only be distinguished by outline (illus. 4). Whereas in ballet the torso remains upright while the legs plié, in preparation to sauté or relevé, for instance, in modern dance the pelvis contracts by tilting, and the torso twists and coils as the dancer focuses his energy for release into another movement. Whereas in classical ballet the dignified, vertical body is the standard behind which decorum is never violated, and a mode of expression is prescribed for every conceivable maneuver, in modern dance the body may grovel or crawl in abandon, or even turn belly up in defiance of the vanities of taste. Without the weight of a long tradition, and with fewer necessary idioms, modern dance can accommodate the grotesque as well as the sublime, the pathetic, and the
beautiful in the same mode. So too, in dance based on Blake, levels of style do not have to be discrete. A figure can be heroic and satiric at the same time, or sublime and demonic. The counterpart of the plié in ballet and the contraction in modern dance is the low solidified crouch in Blake (as in plate 37 of Jerusalem), in which energy is first compressed to "the limit of contraction" before it can be released outward into a complete and meaningful movement. This posture, of despair, symbolizes the most unfortunate and painful condition one can suffer, and its place in Blake's dance as the primary posture should come as no surprise when one recalls Milton's assertion in "Aeropagitica" that evil is the primary condition of man in this world, where we all must suffer "that doom which Adam fell into of knowing good and evil, that is to say of knowing good by evil."

While Blake's dance is more closely allied to modern dance than to ballet, it is distinguished from both of these by its own set of characteristics. Perhaps the greatest distinction is to be found in the area of meaning. In both ballet and modern dance, any movement—an arabesque, for instance—can be given an almost unlimited range of meanings. The choreographer can alter head, arms, or legs to any angle, depending on what he wishes to convey. The arabesque alone, without context, has no prescribed meaning, and invokes no necessary response from the audience. But Blake's postures, despite critical controversy as to their exact meaning, at least have the distinction of a specific, prefigured meaning, both generically, and in specific contexts. None of Blake's postures is merely "expressive." On the contrary, each is articulate and definitive. Each posture, like each image, illuminates a conception in Blake's moral allegory, and all of these are capable of being precisely stated. The severe crouch, for instance, the crowding of mad Tom in "Mad Song," can only indicate despair and melancholy, so that the man who exists in this state becomes despair itself. Blake's postures and gestures are, therefore, not steps as in the repertory of ballet and modern dance, but symbols.

We know that Blake's symbolic postures derive largely from the allegorical figures in Medieval and Renaissance art, and we also know that Blake was attracted to this material partly because it seemed to coincide with the recently revived (though no less fanciful) notion of the "hieroglyphick." Now despite the fact that there never was a language of "hieroglyphicks," inherited from prelapsarian Adam, codified by the Egyptians, turned to parables by the Jews, and diluted into rational discourse by the Romans, Blake was nevertheless able to create a viable "alphabet of human forms" based on what he assumed this primeval language must have been. Between Blake's two extremes of the catatonic collapse of humanity, as depicted in plate 37 of Jerusalem, and humanity fulfilled and beatific, as depicted in "Albion rose," there are a thousand other postures of every attitude and variation. When one sees a group of these presented dramatically, it is possible to glimpse an underlying structure in the plenitude of forms. In the production of "The Mental Traveller" the alphabet of human forms was visible not only in the phrasing of the dance, which accentuated particular postures from Blake, but also in the cumulative effect of so doing. In scene three, for instance, which depicted the old woman cutting "his heart out at his side," Ms. Parisi moved in turn through the postures of Vala, Rahab, and Tirzah from plate 25 of Jerusalem. And in scene four, which depicted the boy struggling to "rend up his manacles," Mr. Tennant moved in turn through the postures of Bromton and Theotormon from the frontispiece to Vision of the Daughters of Albion, the tortured pose of Urizen from plate 22 of The First Book of Urizen, and the even more pressing agony depicted in plate 7 of Urizen. In order to phrase these passages adequately—that is, to dance through the poses rather than simply present a dumb show—both dancers had to assume a whole range of intermediate postures interpolated from Blake. Expanding the cardinal points of the dance in this manner supplied a certain euphony and momentum which cemented one's memory of Blake's separate images into a single, seamless story, which, it seemed, could only derive from a single, consistent alphabet.
If future choreographers follow leads of this kind, dance will surely attract more attention in the study of Blake. Indeed, in adapting Blake's art for dance, the dancers may have been approaching William's (and Catherine's) own method of composition—that is, composing directly with the body rather than copying from the antique or from models. As some of Erdman's students know, working out Blake's postures with one's own body is a valuable heuristic tool capable of revealing meanings which scholarly scrutiny has been at pains to discover.

In this production of "The Mental Traveller" there was perhaps only one significant departure from current interpretations, and this because a dramatic presentation required the tone to be fixed unambiguously from the outset. The character of the traveller-narrator was seen not as one of the Eternals, nor as the boy himself, nor as William Blake the poet, but rather as someone who could only be describing events in which he took a part. Like the Ancient Mariner, he would not have gathered his information from hearsay. The tale which begins with the old woman torturing and killing the young boy must be the story of the traveller's own struggle for life and salvation. Thus the traveller himself must embody the entire cycle with its repeated failures and tyrannies. The figure with the most appropriate appearance for this task, and the one which would also be recognizable to the audience—remember, the traveller has only a tiny part in the drama itself—was Death or the Angel of Death. This gruesome character, with an ashen face the tone of gunmetal, and wearing a black swallowtail coat and a wide black raven's-wing hat, entered the stage in semi-darkness to tell his tale. While he lingered silently, the audience noticed a smooth, pink bundle under his coat, a child of three months. As the traveller began his journey off the stage, a malicious crone strode venomously forward, and the traveller's tale unfolded according to the following scenario.

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**SCENARIO**

**Act One**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lines</th>
<th>Scene</th>
<th>Score</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9-12</td>
<td>Two</td>
<td>Béla Bartók, <em>Hungarian Folksong</em>.</td>
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<tr>
<td>20-22</td>
<td>Four</td>
<td>Samuel Barber, <em>Sonata</em>. Opus Twenty-six.</td>
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</tbody>
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**Act Two**

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<tr>
<th>Lines</th>
<th>Scene</th>
<th>Score</th>
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**Act Three**

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<tr>
<th>Lines</th>
<th>Scene</th>
<th>Score</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>53-56</td>
<td>One</td>
<td>Hugo Wolf, <em>Das Spanische Liederbuch</em>. Fourth Song</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57-64</td>
<td>Two</td>
<td>Béla Bartók, <em>String Quartet Number Four</em>. Fourth Movement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>93-103</td>
<td>Six</td>
<td>Béla Bartók, <em>Hungarian Folksong</em>.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reviewed by Robert F. Gleckner

From 1964, when she published *Eras and Modes in English Poetry*, to her 1973 essay on "Blake's Frame of Language" Josephine Miles has been grappling with the problems facing all who wish intelligently to study the language of poetry and prose. Her work has ranged from the early Renaissance to British and American writing of the twentieth-century, including a number of young poets writing today. This book is a compilation of ten of her previously published essays, substantially unaltered, plus excerpts from *Eras and Modes* and *Style and Proportion: The Language of Prose and Poetry*, shaped into what is intended to be a coherent study of change in literature, with particular emphasis, as the subtitle informs us, on "Donne, Milton, Wordsworth, and the Equilibrium of the Present."

The first section of the book, comprising three chapters, sets out "Present concepts of parts and wholes in their linguistic and artistic norms" (5) and includes tabular material on the major vocabulary of selected poets and on the proportions of adjectives, nouns, verbs, and connectives in the work of sixty specific poets from Wyatt and Surrey to Lowell and Gunn, and in sixty prose writers from Ascham and Holinshed to Wain and West. Part II, with chapters on Donne, Milton, Blake, eighteenth-century prose, Victorian prose, and E. A. Robinson, is intended to relate both individual writers and contemporaneous groups of writers to the temporal developments established in Part I by means of the agreements and variations these writers maintain in language. And Part III is intended to give us "some sense for the present of where we are moving" (5)—despite the implication of a lack of "moving" in modern times indicated in the subtitle.

Professor Miles adopts certain basic assumptions about language that are difficult to quarrel with. The poet, first of all, is a sharer, in both his language and his culture, "accepting and explaining the sensory values of the aesthetic for his time" (3). Consequently he works with the "availabilities" of language, producing "patternings" which constitute the "clue in art" (4), discarding what is outworn in language, initiating or emphasizing other linguistic availabilities as new essentials to the norm. The range of these choices, she assumes, is relatively small, "there being after all not so many fundamentally different ways to order and transform the language" (4). The poet selects among a fairly easily categorizable "repertoire of transformations" (5), the result being a "design" which does not cause but rather confirms "what is in the language" (8).

The elements of this final design, however, are often subtle, difficult to talk about, through modern linguistic study (to which Professor Miles acknowledges a major debt) helps us to discriminate "not merely obvious visual surfaces but auditory echoes, semantic associations, structural similarities which may work below the surface but are also implied in the surface richness" (9). With a sense of these, "the articulable parts of language," we can "see and hear more,... feel more, of the poem's entity" (11). Style, then (in which Professor Miles includes not only use of language but also "style of moral judgments" and "style of attitude toward the reader"), is a product of a "number of small recurring selections and arrangements working together," a process of "creating and reshaping expectations which design contrives" (16).

The change in poetry observable through the years operates perforce within rather severe limits, so that any writer must be read not only in context of the language and literature he shares, his acceptances and assumptions and what he does with them, but also of an array of "cultural and professional determinations" (17). The surface design of his work carries the reader in the direction of expectation, the implications of its subsurface alternatives in the direction of change and variation. Similarly, in order to know a poet's style "we need to know not only disposition or arrangement of what materials, but also choices from what materials—the prior gives, the limits and potentialities of thought and attitudes already weighing the available materials as well as the accustomed manners. The loaded materials and manners are met and confirmed or counteracted by the specific loadings of the specific artistic structure of the specific artist work" (25).

So far so good. As I say, there is little to quarrel with here—and if there is not a lot that is new, Professor Miles' presentation is clear and suitably remindful. From here on, however, there are difficulties—perhaps partly (though not solely) because the book's attempt to assimilate previously published essays into a coherently progressive argument is only partially successful at best. The crucial statistical Chapter III aside (I shall return to it later), the book as a whole tends to resolve itself less into an essay on "poetry and change" than a revision of the generally accepted nature of the "Donne Tradition" and its "influence" on modern poetry. Along with Donne there is also a good deal of Milton but, contrary to the titular expectations, very little of Wordsworth.

At any rate, very early on (49) Professor Miles establishes "the poetic tradition" as that of Sylvester, Milton, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Swinburne, de la Mare, Muir, Nicholson and the "newest American poets"—the tradition of "objective exactitude" that Pound called for, as opposed to

"emotional statement and general diminuendo," the vocabulary tradition of "sensory nature" and black, white, leaf, water, light, love, night. The Donne tradition, she says, has survived much more obliquely: "His was rather a vocabulary of concept distinguished by its concern with time, cognition, and truth, positive and negative"; his terms were of "formal logic," "powerful descriptive relative clauses and active prepositions." "His are the extremes of the century's norms" (66-67), with Cleveland and Cowley being closest to him and Sidney as his predecessor—though later Professor Miles sees even Sidney as "far—from [his] basic contexts" (81). She agrees that Donne is "metaphysical" (and goes to some pains to clarify that much-vedxed term) but almost seems to say that he is virtually the only metaphysical—and that critics like Eliot, Lewis, Brooks, Gardner, Martz, Archer, Mazzeo, Bredvold, Duncan, Bethel, Unger, Williamson, and Stein tend, in their acceptance of Donne as the center of the metaphysical tradition, to see "parts rather than wholes" (73), thus quite incorrectly reading his influence on modern poetry. Her argument here is that most, if not all, Donne critics have missed the "simplicities" of his language and structure or design in favor of their own predisposition toward his complexities of image, figure, and theme (62).

Professor Miles sees "our greatest modern metaphysical poet," and perhaps our only one, as Yeats—though she does include in certain ways in this category Warren, Cummings, Jeffers, the younger Rukeyser, Wilbur, and Rothenberg. "To garland the Donne tradition," she writes (148), "as the chief seventeenth-century tradition...is to garland a highly special and limited tradition in the twentieth-century." His "essential metaphysical vocabulary" of "conceptual evaluation" and logical disjunction, concession, expression, explanation did not survive in his seventeenth-century followers and was not revived by the moderns. Why was he hailed by so many, then, as the guiding light of modern poetry? Because "modern critics stressed less what they found new in Donne than what they found familiarly their own, the 'imagery' and feeling" (157)—not the "effortful articulation of thought,... spelling out of problems, analyzing of motives and situations, learned exploring of extremes of the planes of existence now and hereafter, of the cosmos below and above" (159). What they, and we generally, thought to be Donnian belongs rather to Herbert, Marvell and Vaughan, to what Professor Miles calls "the more aesthetic mode which shared affinities with symbolism" and hence with our modern predisposition to symbolic modes (160).

I find this whole argument both interesting and provocative, and were the book shaped more firmly in the direction of redefining the Donne Tradition and examining the nature of modern criticism and its evocation of that tradition in relation to poetry in general and modern poetry in particular, I think it would have been a better, and ultimately more valuable and influential, work. This is not to say, of course, that it does not have other virtues: Professor Miles' work rarely does not. But here they belong less to the book than they are inherent in several of the originally published essays. There are also some annoying tactical flaws. Her technique of quoting words, phrases, and clauses in staccato succession from a single poem to illustrate its "procedure" or basic structure is far less clear than she seems to think, as are the too frequent full quotations of passages and poems with virtually no accompanying comment or analysis. Some statements about poetry seem perfectly meaningless, or seem to say something important that doesn't come clear or are so obvious as to make one wonder why they are made... For example, "the poet keeps using certain main terms because they signify what one wants to consider" (16); "one good way to read [the poem] is in its own terms of emphasis" (90). And finally, her tendency to cite single words as somehow belonging to, or being associated especially or even uniquely with, individual poets is, to my mind, absurd. For example, E. A. Robinson is said to "share" his verb "touch" with Sill and Swinburne, his "human" with Sterling and Stevens, his "face" and "nothing" with Poe and Stevens, and his "sick" with modern poets of the mid-twentieth-century.

This brings me to the chapter on Blake, and to Blake generally in relationship to the statistical findings of Professor Miles' Chapter III. While it is difficult to deny that "Blake's is an extremist structure" (94), the generalizations about "Blake's Frame of Language" are suspect in various ways. For example, she cites death, dark, daughters, children, mountains, man, fire, and cloud as central "major terms," recurring throughout Blake's work. More accurately they recur throughout some of his work, and the different measure of their recurrence is at least as important to understanding Blake, and Blake's place in any tradition, as any over-all generalization. Thus, while death occurs eleven times in the Poetical Sketches,1 almost all those occurrences are in two poems, "Fair Elenor" and "Gwin, King of Norway." The frequency of the word here tells us more of these poems than of the "Poetical Sketches as a whole, and tells us nothing of the other poems in the volume. Even including "Elenor" and "Gwin" the word daughter occurs only once in the Sketches, children three times, mountain once, and fire twice. Dark does not appear at all. Does this mean that the Poetical Sketches are un-Blakean? Or that "Elenor" and "Gwin" are more Blakean than the other Sketches? Or, quite possibly, that it is unfair to try to measure one group of poems from the total canon against the vocabulary norms established from that totality?

Let us, then, take a work which by any measure cannot be assumed to be un-Blakean. In the Songs of Innocence and of Experience we find death four times (all in Experience), dark four times, daughters and mountain not at all, and fire but three times. Predictably child (and rarely, children) occurs 28 times. Citing Blake's doctrine of contraries, Professor Miles finds the opposites of the "major" words death and night (i.e., life and day) "not much more than half so frequent." In the Poems perhaps so. But in the Songs, death occurs only four times, life five;
night appears 29 times, day 22. In the Poetical Sketches there are eleven thirds and only seven
life, thirteen nights to only six days, indicating presumably that the Sketches are more characteristic
than the Songs. Turning her attention to Blake's verbs Professor Miles lists see as primary "along
with behold; hearing and knowing are supplementary." In the Poetical Sketches there are only ten sees
to thirteen hears, and both are outnumbered by cry, which she ignores. See appears 23 times in the
Songs, but so does hear (has only seven), but both of these are outnumbered by weep (26). She cites
as a "chief descriptive" eternal, supported by
divine, but eternal and divine do not occur at all in
the Sketches and only twice each in the Songs. The "countering" term to these, human, is absent
from the Sketches and occurs only seven times in the Songs. Dark-bright is seen as a clear pair . . .
with dark consistently the stronger," but there is
no dark in the Sketches along with four brights, four darks in the Songs completely outweighed
by twelve brights.

Of the "chief" Blakean adjectives that
Professor Miles lists (all, no, every, one, none,
eternal, dark, sweet, human, divine, bright, deep,
golden, little) eternal occurs only twice in the
Songs, dark four times, every nine, human seven,
divine two, deep eight, golden three. Only
sweet (28), bright (12), and little (23)
significantly recur—and of all of these eternal,
dark, human, and divine do not appear at all
in the Sketches and little only once. Instead
fair, sweet, and golden top the adjectival list.

What does all this mean? It means, among
other things, that poems like "Fair Elenor" and
"Gwin, King of Norway" radically skew any word-
frequency tabulations in the Poetical Sketches
as well as, to a lesser extent, in the complete
works; that the Songs are very different kinds of
poetry from the Sketches on the one hand and from
the minor and major prophecies on the other;
and that "averaging out" the word counts through
the Sketches, the Songs, and the prophecies
really tells us very little about those poems or
about Blake. What is interesting and provocative
is what Professor Miles does not comment upon.
For example, if it is not surprising to find no
marry in Experience (ten in Innocence) and over
twice as many uses of happy in Innocence as
compared with Experience, it is at least interesting
to find twice as many brights in the latter than in
the former. Green and white are almost totally con-
fined to Innocence, sweet occurs 20 times in Innocence
and only eight in Experience, but black in Innocence
outnumbers black in Experience five to three.

Among the nouns night and child outnumber
all the others in the Songs with joy, father, and
day close behind. Mother, lamb, love, and tear
are others significantly frequent. Properly night
appears twice as often in Experience as in
Innocence, and for joy the proportion is reversed.
Father interestingly appears eleven times in each
set of songs, and mother divides almost evenly as
well. There are only one lamb in Experience
more day and love in Experience than Innocence,
while tear splits almost equally.

Finally, Professor Miles sees Blake's chief
verbs as see, stand, rise, know, come, go, love,
let, say, hear, behold. In the Poetical Sketches
the frequency of these is as follows: see (10),
stand (4), rise (3), know (0), come (9), go (6),
love (12), let (5), say (0), hear (13), behold (5).
Her list ignores cry (13), fly (8), make
(7), rush (7), sleep (7), sit (10), shake (7), and
walk (8). In the Songs Professor Miles' list
of chief verbs has the following frequencies:
see (23), stand (5), rise (13), know (7), come (14),
go (13), love (13), let (4), say (11), hear (23),
behold (2)—with no reference in her list to weep,
the most frequently used verb of all in the Songs
(26) or sit (15) or bear (13) or sleep, sing, and
make (12 each) or give (11) or have, laugh, and
seek (10 each). These discrepancies are disturbing
enough in themselves, but the word lists raise
other major issues, particularly in the study of
Blake, that are not even alluded to—e.g.,
the purposeful distinctions in the vocabulary of
the Sketches as compared to that of the Songs (or of the
prophecies, for that matter), which have little
to do with any innate preferences Blake might have
had for certain words above other words. The
assumption of a relatively homogeneous vocabulary
can thus lead to substantial confusion not only
about the "place" of one of Blake's works in the
total canon, but also Blake's place in whatever
"tradition" is established.

Even more crucial in the study of Blake is
the fact that contextually the angel, let's say,
of one poem may not "mean" angel in another, and
the holy of one poem may be positive, of another
poem negative in its implications. Thus Blake's
contraries, which Professor Miles tries to
 corroborate verbally by pairing opposites like
black-white and hot-cold, may operate within the
contextual confines of a single word. The more
frequency of the word's occurrence tells us little
or nothing of Blake's world of values or even of
his verbal proclivities—and least of all does it
place him neatly in any such tabulation as
Professor Miles makes.

Finally let me turn to those tabulations. In
the chart indicating the proportions of the
adjective-noun-verb-connective relationship in
the works of 60 poets, Blake's is listed as 3-6-2-6--
i.e., three adjectives to six nouns to two verbs
to six connectives. I have not had time to chart
the connectives, but my count of the other
syntactical forms yields something much closer
to 3-8-4 (more precisely 2.875-8.138-4.25 or
1.92-5.46-2.83—this sort of mathematics is very
slippery) in the Songs and 2-6-4 in the Poetical
Sketches, which puts the Songs interestingly nearer
Sidney and Gascoigne on the one hand and, perhaps
unsurprisingly, Whitman on the other. But is it
interesting after all? Even assuming the 3-6-2-6
as accurate (and indeed it may be accurate if one
does not limit the count to two works as I have),
the syntactical differences between the Songs and
the Poetical Sketches are more interesting and
revealing to me, as are the even greater differences
between both of them and the prophecies. They are
all Blake to be sure, but the extraordinary range
of his use of language's "availabilities" is surely
a more reliable measure of his uniqueness—as well as his relationship to tradition—than the homogeneity of his syntax or vocabulary.

Table 3, entitled "Examples of Major Vocabularies of Poets of Three Different Modes in Three Different Eras," is also misleading when seen in the light of word frequencies in the Poetical Sketches and the Songs. Of the 7700 total words included in Professor Miles' survey of Blake's poetry, 1200 were adjectives, 2400 nouns, and 1030 verbs. In the Poetical Sketches there are 294 adjectives, 922 nouns, and 573 verbs, clearly a substantially different proportion. In the Songs the same major proportional discrepancy appears, since they contain 460 adjectives, 1310 nouns, and 680 verbs. Aside from raising real questions about the validity of Professor Miles' computations, at least as regards Blake, these discrepancies show further that the adjective-noun-verb proportions of these two works separately, or taken together, will severely skew the proportions of the same syntactical units in the entire canon.

While it is true that in surveying statistically only two relatively early works of Blake, I have been deliberately unfair at least to the spirit of Professor Miles' inquiry, to find an almost equally long continuous text so at odds with her findings casts serious doubts certainly on her conclusions about Blake—and perhaps, indeed, the procedure she follows and the conclusions she comes to overall in this book. As indicated earlier, I do find considerable interest and much to ponder in her analysis of the "Donne Tradition" (partly because there vocabulary counts are anchored solidly in structural and stylistic patternings and habits of thought), but I'm afraid that I have not been converted to her way of studying the phenomenon of change in English poetry, and the relationship of the poets' "world of values" to this change. I think I'm prepared to believe that at any one time "half the [vocabulary] usages persist, a quarter decline, and a quarter newly appear" (217), but I cannot say that Professor Miles' evidence and argument are compelling substantiation of my potential faith. If change in British and American poetry (and prose) is "steady," as she concludes, the patterns of that change are simply not as neat as they are made to seem here. Too bad. For all literary historians and literary critics, would that they were.

1 All my counts of words in the Poetical Sketches exclude "King Edward the Third," the "Prologue ... of King Edward the Fourth," the "Prologue to King John," "A War Song to Englishmen," "The Couch of Death," "Contemplation," "Samson," "Then She bore Pale desire," and "Woe cried the muse." Six of these are in prose, the others quite unrelated to the main body of poetry in the Sketches. A quick glance through them, however, will show that tabulation of their vocabularies would skew Professor Miles' statistics even more.
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