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**Iris & Morpheus: Investigating Visual Sources for
Jerusalem 14**

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pp. xv-xvii, and Chapters 67, 109, 113-17 especially. The Italian terms *colla*, *gesso grosso*, *gesso sottile*, *tempera* and *calcina*, as Thompson both points out and clarifies, are difficult to translate. Words used by English, American and other translators have subtle differences of meaning. Thompson's merit is that he explains what he means by his terms.

²⁹ Essick, *Printmaker*, p. 122-23.

³⁰ Thompson, *Handbook*, Chapters 16-22, 25, 109, 113-17.

³¹ Lindberg, *Job*, pp. 178-79.

³² Thompson, *Handbook*, Chapter 109.

³³ In Chapter 25, Cennino says, "Then get some fish glue and some leaf glue, which the druggists sell," and in Chapter 16 he directs, "get a leaf of druggists' glue, not fish glue."

³⁴ Aside from the problem about when Blake learned Italian (see Bentley, *Blake Records*, pp. 349-50, 475), another minor problem is connected with this claim. In January of 1838, Linnell wrote to his son-in-law, Samuel Palmer, in Italy, "quoting Cennino Cennini's *Il Libro dell'Arte*, which he had seen at Callcott's" (as cited in Edward Malins, *Samuel Palmer's Italian Honeymoon* [London: Oxford University Press, 1968], p. 88.) Malins had access to the Ivimy MSS, the Linnell family papers. I raise the question of why Linnell would have mentioned Cennino's book to Palmer as though he had seen it for the first time at the Kensington home of his neighbor, Sir Augustus Callcott, if he indeed had the first copy in England and gave it to Blake.

Also contributing to the idea that Blake saw the Tambroni edition are two artifacts mentioned by E.J. Ellis and Geoffrey Keynes, which however cannot be traced. E.J. Ellis, in *The Real Blake*, 1907, p. 420, first mentioned a sentence by Blake in the "Linnell" copy of Cennino, as noted by Geoffrey Keynes in *A Bibliography of William Blake* (New York: Grolier Club of New York, 1921), pp. 53-54. For references to this artifact see David V. Erdman, *The Poetry and Prose of William Blake* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1965), pp. 659, 803, and also see Bentley, *Blake Books*, pp. 684-85. Erdman and Bentley both cast doubt on Ellis's reliability and accuracy. Keynes, in *A Bibliography*, p. 53, also describes as an eyewitness an extract from Cennino's work in Blake's hand in a sketchbook belonging to George Richmond sold at Sotheby's on 28 July 1920. For other references see Bentley, *Blake Books*, pp. 684-85, Butlin, *Drawings*, p. 548, and Essick, review of Butlin, p. 60.

³⁵ Essick, *Printmaker*, p. 123. Cennino's manuscript deals with Trecento practices, not those of the Cinquecento, as one might infer from Essick's use of the word Renaissance.

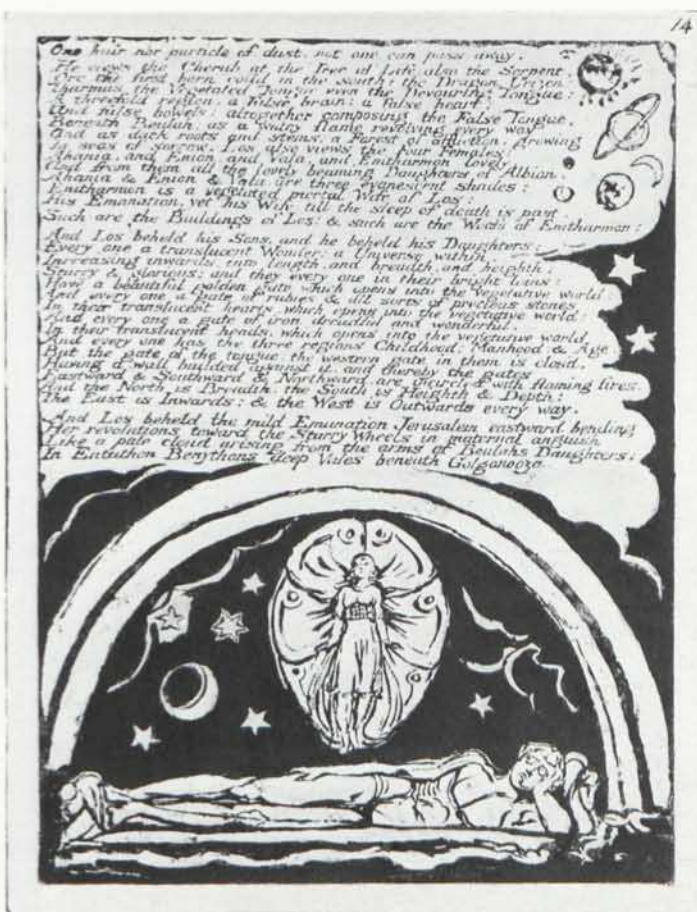
³⁶ Butlin, *Paintings*, p. 549.

³⁷ Essick, review of Butlin, p. 60.

Iris & Morpheus: Investigating Visual Sources for *Jerusalem* 14

Judith Ott

The design on plate 14 of *Jerusalem* (illus. 1) consists of a winged Jerusalem descending from a rainbow through a starry sky to awaken Albion from his deathlike sleep of mortality beside watery shores where he is attended by



1. William Blake. *Jerusalem*: 14. By permission of the Houghton Library, Harvard University.

two angels.¹ Although this design has been variously identified, the specific iconographic sources have not yet come to light. Attention paid to the particulars of the scene clearly shows that the illumination on plate 14 is, among other things, a parallel visual interpretation of the Greek myth of Iris and Morpheus.²

Iris was the Greek goddess who personified the rainbow on which she descended to earth as a messenger of the gods.³ Juno sent Iris to release the soul of Dido by rousing the sleeping Morpheus, the god of dreams.⁴ The Kingdom of Hypnos was described by Ovid (*Metamorphoses* 11:589-632) as a cave in a hollow mountainside below which ran the River Lethe and next to which Blake shows Albion asleep. Lethe is the River of Forgetfulness, one of the five rivers surrounding Hades—an appropriate resting place for the god of dreams (and for Albion at this stage of *Jerusalem*).⁵ Iris is most often represented with her rainbow, as in this emblem from Boudard's *Iconologie* of 1766 (illus. 2), or descending on bright wings from a rainbow to rouse the sleeping god.⁶ Perhaps the lines around Albion's shoulder in plate 14 are meant to indicate wings at rest.⁷

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NYMPHES DE L'AIR.

Iris.

Les Poètes la font messagere de Junon. On la peint ordinairement volant sur l'arc-en-ciel, & vêtue d'une draperie légère, dont les couleurs sont variées comme celles de cet arc. L'Iconologie la caractérise par un soleil devant lequel tombe une légère pluie.

Virgile dans ses opusc. décrit ainsi l'Iris.

*Nuncia Junonis vario decorata colore,
Æthera nubifera complectitur orbe decoro,
Cum phœbus radios in nubem jecit aquosum.*

NYM.



2. J.B. Boudard, *Iris*, from "Nymphes de L'Air," *Iconologie* (Vienna: 1766; Parma: 1759), Bodleian Library, Oxford.

3. Portion of a funerary inscription, Egyptian papyrus. John G. White Rare Book Collection, the Cleveland Public Library.

4. Preliminary study for *Jerusalem* 14 (c. 1810), Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

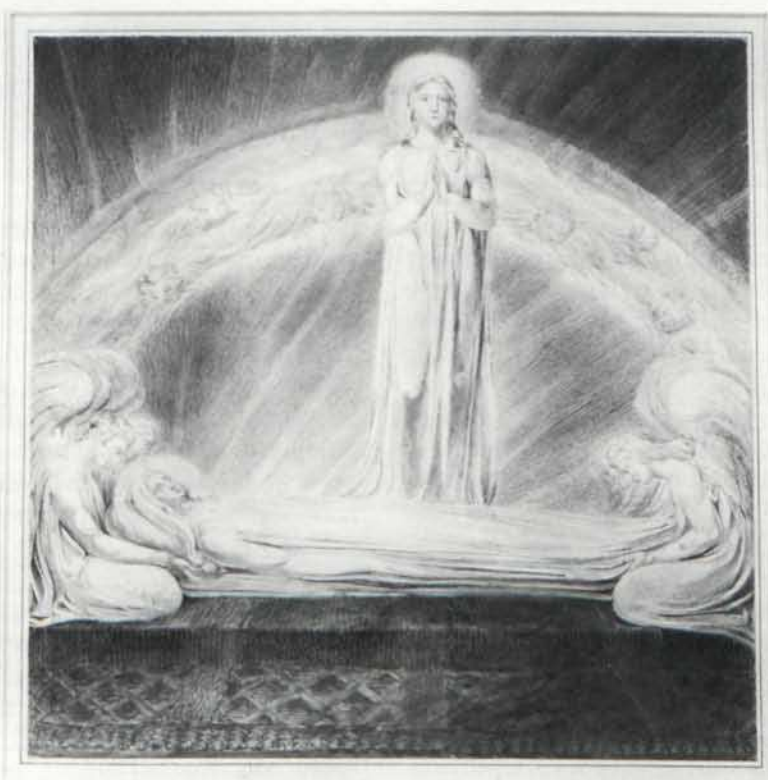
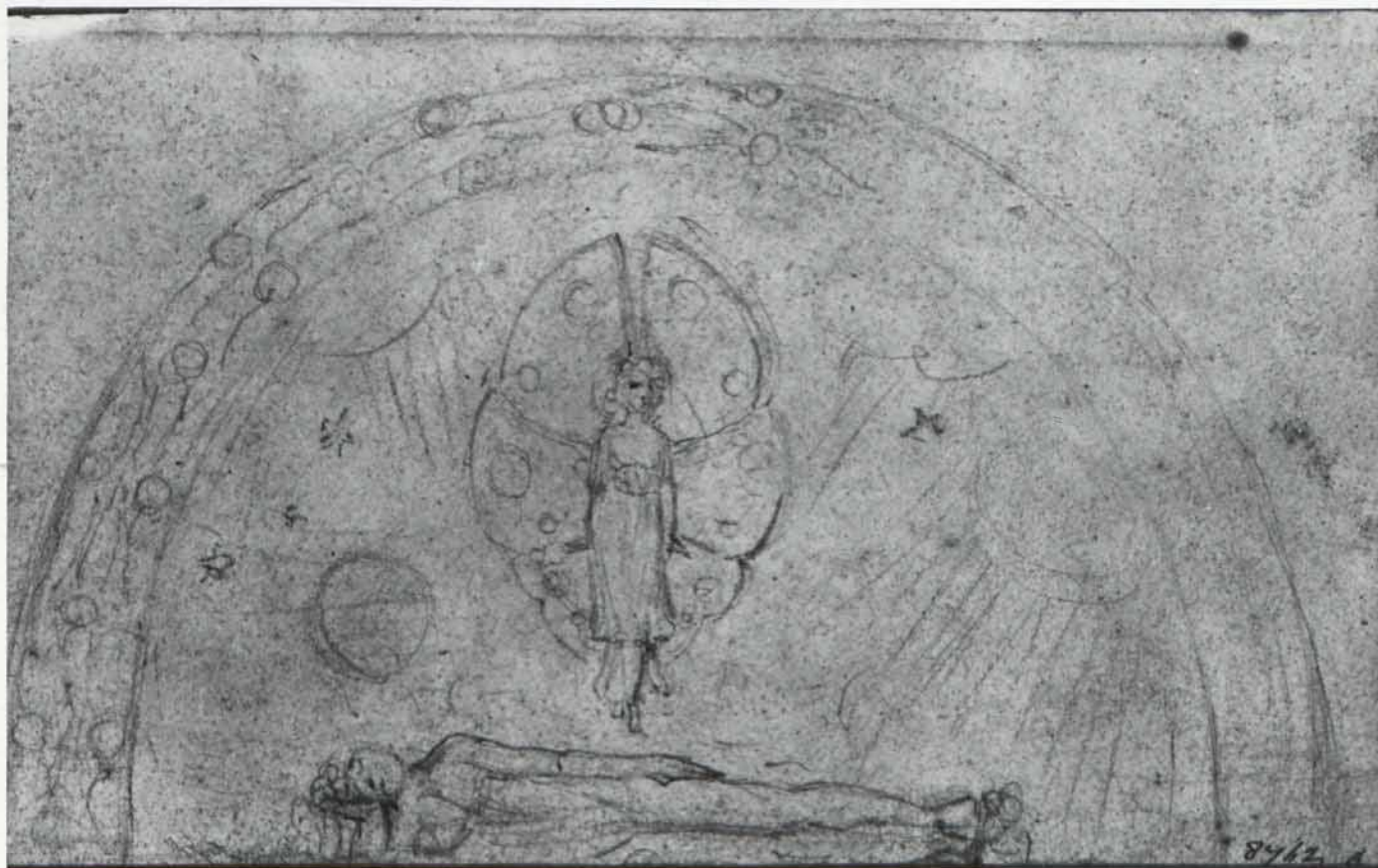
5. William Blake. *The Death of The Virgin*. (1803) Tate Gallery, London.

Although the various elements in plate 14 (rainbow, butterfly / woman, sleeping figure, water) clearly point to the myth of Iris and Morpheus, this parallel with the Greek theme alone does not account for the entire composition. The visual motif of reclining-male/hovering-female appears in several representations of physical-death/spiritual-rebirth throughout art. Ancient Egyptian funerary inscriptions (illus. 3) depict the Pharaoh in his tomb attended by a hovering, female-headed, Ba bird—the soul separated from the physical body.⁸ The soul as female, hovering over the body as male, is a visual motif used repeatedly by Blake.

With his broad knowledge of art themes, Blake frequently drew from one artistic tradition while illustrating

events from another.⁹ An example of this flexibility is seen in the motif of the swirling arch of angels in the preliminary drawing for plate 14 (illus. 4) which Blake also used in his *The Death of The Virgin* (illus. 5). The two compositions are remarkably similar and enlightening when one considers the changes enacted: the substitution of mythological figures for Christian ones; the turning of the angels away from their charge; and the reversal of female/male positions. If there is a visual connection between plate 14 in *Jerusalem* and Gothic tomb sculpture, the derivation of Blake's composition for *The Death of The Virgin* is too obvious to be overlooked.¹⁰

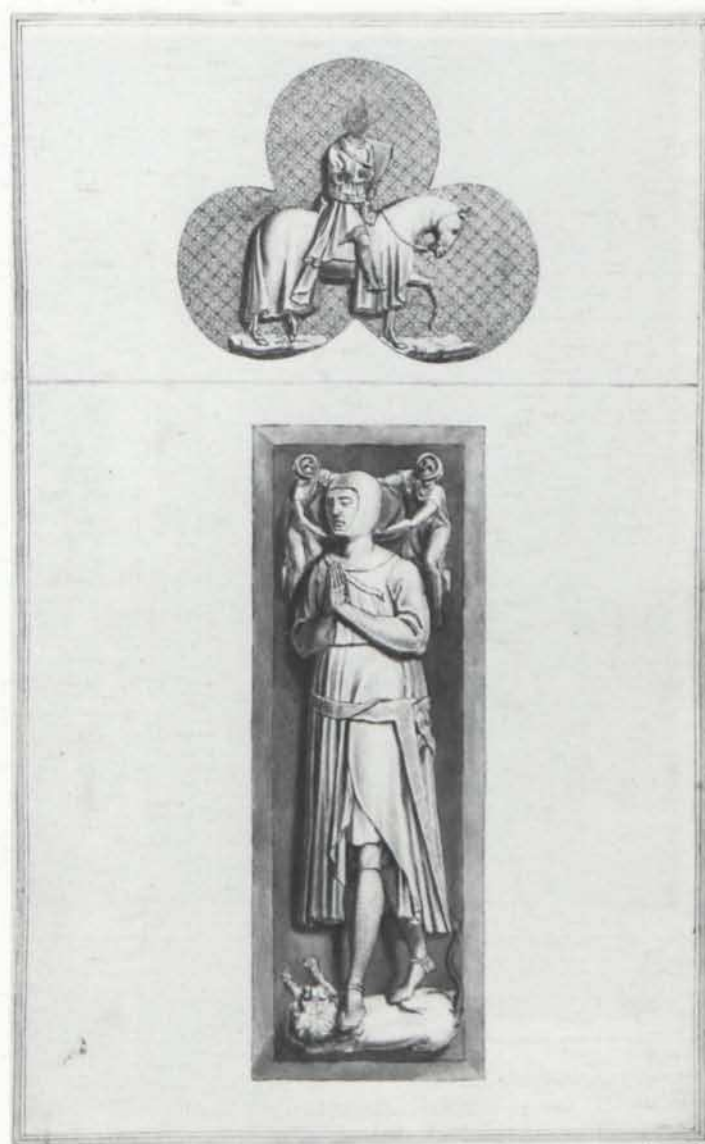
In Gothic tomb sculpture, the Medieval gisant, usually shown reclining on his back, is sometimes de-





picted lying on his side, as in plate 14. This is the position of *Edmund Earl of Lancaster* (illus. 6) in an engraving from Basire's *Sepulchral Monuments* believed to have been executed by the apprentice Blake. As in this engraving, the deceased is frequently attended by miniscule angels who often support his head and feet (illus. 7), or, occasionally, kneel in perpetual prayer.¹¹ In the *Tomb of Frederigo di Lavellongo* (illus. 8), the reclining knight is visited by a vision of the Blessed Virgin, intercessor for Christian souls, a role not unlike Iris'. Her double halo resembles both the butterfly wings of the Greek messenger and of the Egyptian Ba.¹² Beneath her is the waning moon and a picture of Frederigo himself, upon presentation by his patron saints. The arch above the Virgin's head serves the same compositionally enclosing function as Blake's rainbow.

Finally, the celestial bodies in plate 14 are worth noting.¹³ The placement of the waxing moon is similar in the preliminary drawing, the finished plate design and



the Frederigo tomb painting, but the optimism of Blake's waxing moon is more in keeping with the artist's intent for *Jerusalem*. The sun, sending out such bright rays in the preliminary drawing, is here hidden by clouds (or cave mouth?). This may be further indication of the location of Iris' descent—a land of perpetual twilight beneath the earth. In these surroundings, the rainbow could not be a natural phenomenon but a hopeful attribute of the promised salvation Iris/Jerusalem brings.¹⁴ Surely the rainbow is an omen of Albion's awakening, for, as Wicksteed pointed out, even Albion's eyes seem to watch her descent behind heavy lids.¹⁵

The artistic sources for plate 14 of *Jerusalem* demonstrate the diversity, richness and amazing clarity with which Blake chose his visual parallels.¹⁶ In plate 14, he tied Jerusalem and Albion to compatible and expansive sources: the Egyptian Ba-Soul hovering over the material body; the Blessed Virgin in her role as intercessor for Christian souls; and, most obviously, the rainbow mes-



senger, Iris, in her descent to awaken Albion/Morpheus from his mortal dreams to spiritual life. The rays of the sun may be temporarily dimmed and the angels recoiled in momentary grief, but the design clearly heralds the positive outcome of *Jerusalem*.

¹Some Blake scholars have identified the woman as Jerusalem: David V. Erdman, *The Illuminated Blake* (New York: Anchor Press/Doubleday, 1974), pp. 111, 293; Geoffrey Keynes, ed., *Jerusalem* (London: Trianon Press, 1974), pl. 14; Vivian de Sola Pinto, *William Blake* (New York: Schocken Books, 1965), p. 53; Jean H. Hagstrum, *William Blake, Poet and Painter* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1964), p. 42; and Joseph Wicksteed, *William Blake's Jerusalem* (London: Trianon Press, 1954), pp. 139–40, identifies her as "Jerusalem-Enitharmon/Fairy."

Those who identify her as someone else include S. Foster Damon, *William Blake, His Philosophy and Symbols* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1924), p. 469, as Enitharmon; Edwin John Ellis and William Butler Yeats, *The Work of William Blake: Poetic, Symbolic & Critical* (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1893), vol. I, pp. 313–14, identify her as Leutha, daughter of Beulah "that follows sleepers in their dreams." All further references to these authors are taken from the sources listed above unless otherwise indicated.

The male figure is identified either as Albion (Wicksteed, de Sola Pinto, Erdman) or Los (Hagstrum, Damon, Keynes). Keynes identifies

6. *Edmund Earl of Lancaster, Side View of His Tomb* (c. 1774–1779), Bodleian Library, Oxford.

7. *Edmund Earl of Lancaster, his Effigy seen from above . . .* (c. 1774–1779), Bodleian Library, Oxford.

8. *Tomb of Frederigo di Lavellongo* (St. Antonio, Padua). Alinari Art Resources.

the last four lines on plate 14 as the passage from *Jerusalem* interpreted in Blake's design.

²Martin Butlin, in *The Paintings and Drawings of William Blake* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981) illus. 795, identifies a sketch on a sheet from Hayley's ballads (1802) as "Enitharmon shown as Iris with peacock wings, at the floor of plate 14"; Erdman offers an interpretation that is the most agreeable with the Iris myth, "a vision of the soul as the portion of man that wakes him from sleeping as body" (p. 111); Wicksteed and Ellis and Yeats state that the figure appears as if in a dream; de Sola Pinto calls her "Divine Womanhood" watching over his sleep; Damon interprets the design as inspiration visiting the poet in his sleep, but this is more likely an interpretation for *Jerusalem* 37 and 64.

³Hall, James, *Dictionary of Subjects and Symbols in Art* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), p. 162.

⁴Hall, p. 284. Morpheus was the brother of Thanatos (Death) and son of Hypnos (Sleep) and Nyx (Night). Nyx is usually represented with black wings outspread and holding an infant on each arm, one white (Sleep) and one dark (Death)—a possible thematic source

for *Jerusalem* 4 and 33.

⁵Several scholars have commented on the watery shore in plate 14: Wicksteed calls it "a promontory surrounded by gentle water"; Keynes notes the "water's edge"; and Erdman names it a "foaming ocean."

⁶Hall, p. 284. Blake's engraving of a Cumberland design of Cupid and Psyche (in Irene Chayes, "The Presence of Cupid and Psyche," *Blake's Visionary Forms Dramatic*, ed. Erdman and Grant (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), illus. 14, 118) shows two butterflies resting on a hill that looks like a rainbow. Could this further connect Iris with the butterfly wings that Blake has given her?

⁷Another interpretation could be that Albion is shown as a body, without its soul, carried down to the banks of Lethe by Sleep and Death.

⁸A. S. Roe, "The Thunder of Egypt," *William Blake: Essays for S. Foster Damon*, ed. A.H. Rosenfeld (Providence: Brown University Press, 1969), p. 170. Bryant's *Mythology* (1774) contains a section entitled "Of Egypt and Its Inhabitants . . ." that was probably Blake's early source for Egyptian symbols.

⁹Many scholars have commented upon this quality in Blake's art: W.J.T. Mitchell, *Blake's Composite Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), p. 10, where he asserts the "multiple metaphorical complexities"; Bo Lindberg, *William Blake's Illustrations to the Book of Job* (Abö: Abö Akademi, 1973) p. 114, states that what Blake was really using in his images was a "common language of art"; and Wicksteed pronounces Blake's borrowings a "pictorial language."

¹⁰Erdman, p. 293, describes Albion as "miserable in his tomb" and "as stone cold as an effigy on a gothic tomb" (p. 293). It is well known that Blake sketched tomb monuments in Westminster Abbey as a young apprentice engraver. He was also linked to current funerary symbolism through a close friendship with John Flaxman, who conducted a substantial and successful trade in designs for tomb monuments.

¹¹Seemingly unique to Blake (I have found it nowhere else) are the angels turned away from the deceased. Their unusual position certainly lends gravity to Albion's condition.

In Buddhist iconography, Albion's pose is called the "lion-posture," a pose assumed by Buddha when he was about to pass from the world of rebirths or into the state of Parinirvana.

Although this symbolic posture contains none of the other elements of Blake's design, its similarity to the actual pose of Albion is intriguing. Joseph Campbell, *The Mythic Image* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), p. 355.

Keynes and Wicksteed refer to the angels as "guarding" the figure. Ellis and Yeats state that the human form "lying upon its side . . . is then in . . . [a] region of instinctive or vegetative feeling."

¹²The arch in the Frederigo tomb is an Islamic/Gothic one and contains grape leaves symbolizing Christ's role as the Vine of the Church. It could just as well be a rounded arch and contain cherubs, as in *The Death of The Virgin*. Erdman and Hagstrum both note the "mandorla" wings of Jerusalem.

¹³Erdman identifies the planets on the upper right of plate 14 as Saturn, Venus, Mercury, Earth and the Moon. He presents an interesting theory: the six stars surrounding Jerusalem identify her as the true sun or seventh star. Several scholars have commented upon the portion of the sky within the arch of the rainbow: Erdman "Universe within" Albion (p. 293); Damon the State of Beulah; and Ellis and Yeats, Mundane Shell.

¹⁴The rainbow in emblem literature (i.e., Emblem XXXII, Wither's *A Collection of Emblemes, Ancient & Moderne*, 1635) follows the Old Testament precedent as a good omen, covenant or reward for suffering. John Gage in "Blake's Newton," "Warburg & Courtald Institute Journal," 34 (November 1971), 376, argues that the rainbow in Blake's work represents materialism (coming from water, not light) because it used the Newtonian order of colors, thus representing a negative or pessimistic element. This does not seem an accurate reading for *Jerusalem*.

¹⁵Wicksteed, p. 140. "The eyes seem to be watching the Vision as though to show it as a dream . . ." This detail in plate 14 varies among the copies of *Jerusalem*.

¹⁶As Mitchell says (p. 6) "the essential point is to note the wealth of implication which Blake can deposit in a design that has no 'illustrative' function . . . an independent symbolic statement."

The 1821 Edwards Catalogue

G. E. Bentley, Jr.

One of the most important early printed references to William Blake appeared in the 1821 shop catalogue of Thomas Edwards of Halifax. However, the catalogue is very uncommon and has rarely been seen in this century. It was first—and last—reported in print in an article by T. W. Hanson on the Edwards family in 1912–1913¹; there-after Mr. Hanson forgot where he had seen it, and numbers of scholars searched vainly for it in scores of libraries on four or more continents, particularly since about 1960. Now a copy of the catalogue has been found in the collection of a member of the family, and a few more details can now be provided about it.

Thomas Edwards was a member of a family important for selling antiquarian books, for publishing new books, particularly illustrated ones, and for inventing new and beautiful methods of binding, particularly in painted transparent vellum or Etruscan calf with illuminated fore-edges. The firm was apparently founded by William Edwards in Halifax in the first half of the eighteenth century, and four of his sons carried on the business, Thomas in Halifax until about 1826, and James, John, and Richard with two shops in London from 1785 to 1799. Richard Edwards commissioned William Blake's 537 watercolors for Young's *Night Thoughts* and published the first forty-three engravings of them in the autumn of 1797, before he abruptly left the publishing business midway through 1798. The *Night Thoughts* designs evidently stayed in his possession even when he went briefly to Minorca in 1799 as a servant of the crown, for they bear an inscription on the titlepage of High Elms where he lived for a time on his return to England about 1803. However, the drawings had passed to his brother Thomas in Halifax by 1821, for they were offered in his shop catalogue for that year,² with a description in terms which are not repeated elsewhere:

3 Young's *Night Thoughts*, the Author's original Copy, illustrated with drawings, very spirited designs by Mr. Blake, many of them in the style of Michael Angelo, they occupied nearly two years of the time of this singular and eminent Artist, which renders this Work unique, as well as highly valuable, in 2 vols. Atlas Folio, each leaf surmounted with a border and sumptuously bound in red morocco, gilt leaves, 300 l.