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**A Re-View of Some Problems in Understanding
Blake's Night Thoughts**

John E. Grant

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prehensive project which seeks to explain and restore an historical methodology to literary studies" (ix). Much of *The Romantic Ideology*, in fact, reads like an introduction reliant on generalizations that one hopes the author will substantiate and perhaps qualify. I say this not to dismiss the book, only to indicate its limits. I sympathize with McGann's desire to restore historical self-consciousness to Romantic scholarship and, more generally, to academic criticism. *The Romantic Ideology* affirms this goal

but does not, however, achieve it.

¹ All of these critics, like McGann, regard *Natural Supernaturalism* as a canonical text. In "Rationality and Imagination in Cultural History," *Critical Inquiry*, 2 (Spring, 1976), 447-64—a discussion of *Natural Supernaturalism* that McGann should acknowledge—Abrams answers some of these critics and defends his omission of Byron.

DISCUSSION

with intellectual spears & long winged arrows of thought

A Re-View of Some Problems in Understanding Blake's *Night Thoughts*

John E. Grant

I. On the Reproductions in the Clarendon Edition

Like other scholars, the editors of the Clarendon edition of Blake's water colors and engravings for *Night Thoughts* were disappointed with the overall quality of the 800 reproductions in our massive two-volume edition published in 1980. Neither the color nor the black and white reproductions are, on average, commendable, though neither their shortcomings nor those of the lengthy, mostly factual Introduction should be seriously misleading, particularly for readers who are aware that in most art books the reproductions are untrustworthy. Our edition has been fortunate to have received some of the most detailed reviews ever devoted to an edition of Blake's pictures. My aim in this response is not to defend the Clarendon edition where it is indeed deficient but to clarify standards and deviations from them.

I believe the broader descriptive and interpretive issues I shall discuss should be aired now, before our projected commentary is completed. I shall first examine instances—some critiques of the reproductions, others of the editorial matter—in which the edition is not, in fact, deficient in the ways or to the extent alleged. In the second part of this essay, I shall discuss some key pictures in the *Night Thoughts* series that require more thorough exposition than they have received heretofore. The commentary, when it finally appears, will not be

the proper forum for detailed discussion of several points I shall raise. Furthermore, some of the issues I shall address extend beyond the specific problems of the Clarendon edition of *Night Thoughts* to larger questions of how Blake's visual works can be presented and understood. This re-view of the Clarendon edition should make it easier for readers to use the edition in ways that will advance scholarship on Blake's most extensive project of pictorial criticism.

For two reasons I have not attempted to develop a committee defense of the Clarendon edition. First, despite our numbers, the Clarendon editors—E.J. Rose, M.J. Tolley, D.V. Erdman, and I—do not constitute a party. Though my fellow editors are aware of my thinking, they have not endorsed this text as a joint position paper. Second, it is easier from a single point of view to establish the necessary distinctions between the kinds of problems in the edition and specific allegations of inadequacy that have erroneously been made by reviewers. I shall freely acknowledge many shortcomings in the edition which I had much responsibility for designing—some of which seem to have escaped the notice of reviewers.

The Clarendon edition has been reviewed at length by distinguished Blake scholars, and these reviews have greatly expanded the volume of significant commentary on the *Night Thoughts* designs. Detlef Dörrbecker's exceptionally specific negative review in *Blake* (1982) offers a detailed set of assertions as to where the reproductions went wrong and judges that the Introduction suffers as a result of too great a fondness for Blake's work. Dörrbecker's concluding quotation—of some severe thoughts on scholarly procedures I had written years ago in the first volume of this journal—suggests that he intended to stimulate corrective debate about matters of fact and interpretation. Other especially noteworthy critiques include Morton D. Paley's detailed, somewhat less unfavorable review (1982) and W.J.T. Mitchell's decidedly unfavorable review (1982), which addresses some interpretative problems. These may be weighed against such favorable reviews as those by Jean H. Hagstrum (1982) and Karen Mulhallen (1981). In the aggregate, the re-

views which I have duly listed in my Bibliography offer a fair indication of the capacities of the present Blake community to deal with Blake's most extensive project in visionary criticism.

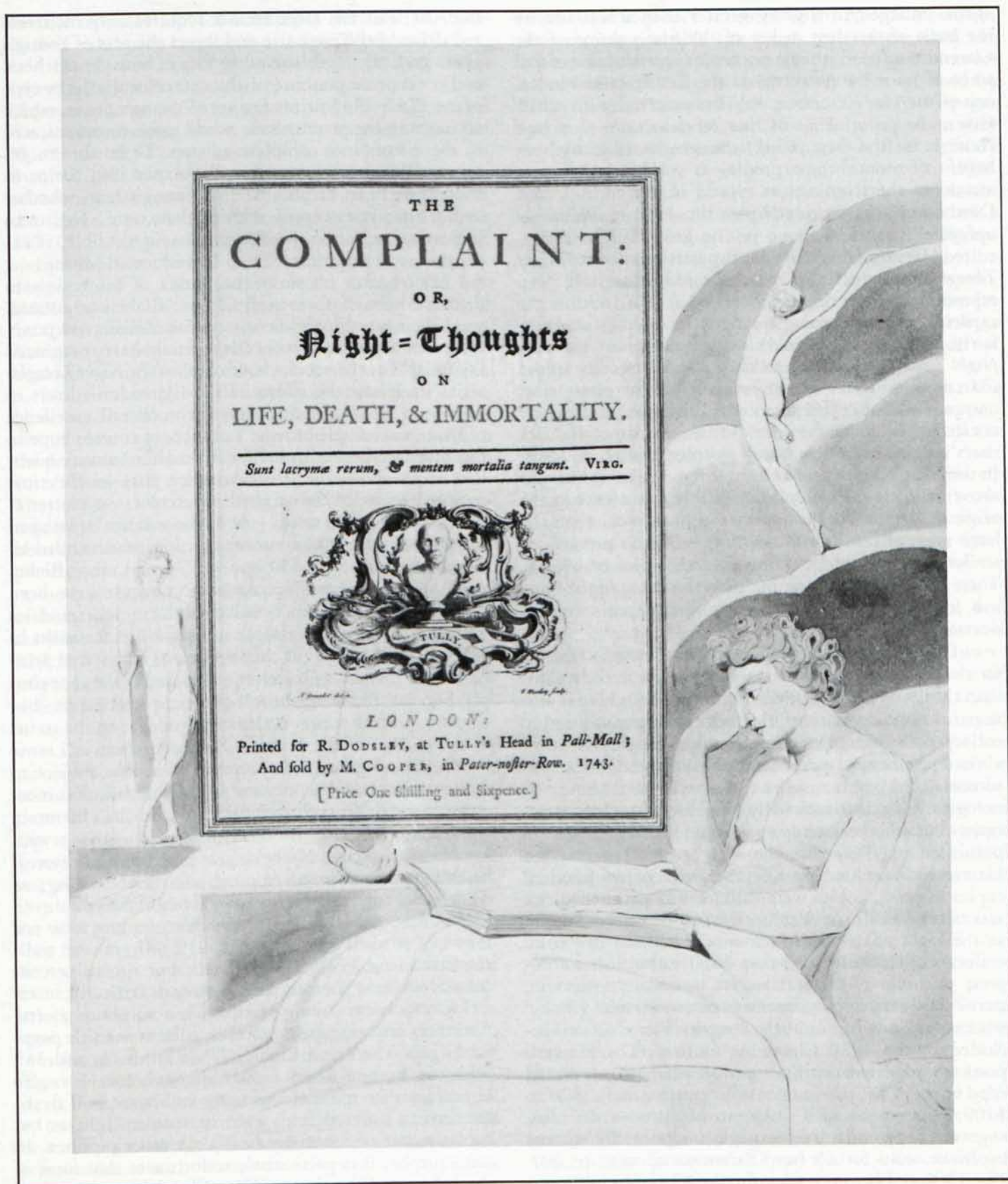
For most purposes all reproductions, especially of water colors—even when they can be given a clean bill of health—are valuable chiefly to jog the memories of those who already know what the actual pictures look like. I have checked all the complaints made by Dörrbecker and Paley against the reproductions in the Clarendon edition. But since it is unlikely that the *Night Thoughts* plates will ever be redone by Clarendon, and since it is certain that exhaustive disputes about many of such data could only concern Blake scholars engaged in a project involving essentially all the pictures, I shall not attempt to chart each of the alleged shortcomings and my evaluations of them. Dörrbecker's diligence in commenting on the quality of sixty-nine reproductions in the *Night Thoughts* edition has not resulted in a large enough percentage of valid objections and corrections to be trustworthy or generally useful. Due to such procedural errors as color-averaging, he is wrong from one-third to two-thirds of the time. Often when the reproduction in question is not satisfactory, the problem lies less with a single color that may be in some degree defective in a number of reproductions than with an inadequate color balance in individual reproductions that are comparable in only the most general way to others that show much the same color. Even if a green, say, that is similar in two original pictures is badly rendered in the reproductions, this error may make much more difference in one case than another because of such factors as the size and position of the color area or the quality of the other colors. Paley, who follows a similar method of reporting individual colors, is not much more successful than Dörrbecker in presenting a reliable analysis of the real problems in the reproductions. The basic question for the reproduction of a Blake picture is whether the viewer can construe enough to recognize what it is supposed to be about. Normally the Clarendon edition provides at least that much. Judged as a reference volume, it is adequate for most purposes. For example, commentary in the 1972 and 1976 theses by Hill and Mulhallen, both of which I have been able to read only recently, would have been more effective if the authors had been able to consult the 1980 Clarendon edition.

In order to evaluate the quality of Dörrbecker's opinions about the adequacy of reproductions, it is necessary to consider the standards he seems to have in mind. Unlike Paley, who declares that he checked the Clarendon reproductions against the originals, Dörrbecker admits that he is judging by other criteria. Naturally, comparing the reproductions with the originals should help in evaluating their quality, but, perhaps surprisingly, such checking may not be either necessary

nor sufficient for a reliable report. Though I have not laid eyes on the actual *Night Thoughts* watercolors since 1978, I am confident that I can judge well enough from slides, photographs, and notes for the project whether the qualities of at least most of the reproductions sufficiently resemble those of the originals to pass muster. There is no point in asking (as we would of the Trianon facsimiles of the Gray designs) whether a well-informed viewer could easily distinguish between the original and the facsimile if these were placed side by side. The basic question is whether the reproduction resembles the original enough to indicate all the details of the picture in monochrome shades or in colors as much like those of the original as possible. And that the qualities be not misrepresented—as when washes are rendered opaque—or that the color balance not be rendered repugnant with ugly hues.

While it is always best to vet reproductions in the presence of the originals, much reporting of such a multifarious set of pictures breaks down either because it is based on a bewildered vision or results from an erroneous translation into words. Clear evidence of this kind of error occurs in the chief specific criticism by Welch and Viscomi (1981)—the latter of whom checked the originals. They discuss the color reproduction of *Night Thoughts* 81 (III, 6), a design made familiar as engraved NT 25E (p. 46): it depicts a beautiful woman among bleak hills pursued by the pall of Death, probably at sundown. Welch and Viscomi prescribed these corrections: "the greens should be bright, the rose wash of the hills should be glowing, the yellow streaks should be bright lime, the body white, and the sky lighter" (p. 539). The first and last two stipulations are roughly correct, but the second and third are simply wrong: there is no "rose wash" on the *bills* though this wash is indeed missing in the reproduction of the sunset sky. And the only real yellow in the picture occurs in the sunset streaks in the sky, where "lime" naturally has no place. Such descriptive errors abound in other reviews that also purport to be specific.

It is easy to set an impossibly high standard of expectation, as Dörrbecker often does in complaining when the pictures are only a little off. At times he is just plain wrong by any standard, as when he laments that "the brilliance and intensity of the varied hues of green . . . are lost almost completely in the color reproduction from *Night Thoughts* 30" (I, 25) (p. 132). In fact, there is no green whatever in Blake's water color and probably never was. In about half the cases Dörrbecker complains about, however, there is indeed something seriously amiss in the reproduction. He rightly objects (p. 137, n. 8) to the monochrome reproduction of *Night Thoughts* 264 (illus. 2), the frontispiece for the second volume in which the designs were originally bound. Both as it appears in its place in the series and



1. *Night Thoughts* 1, Frontispiece, Volume I, by permission of the Trustees of the British Museum.

again, enlarged to slightly greater than actual size on the back of the dust jacket of the first volume of the Clarendon edition, the monochrome reproduction of this scene of Jesus the Awakener at the Resurrection renders one of the two recumbent soldiers practically invisible. Given the prominence of this reproduction—I myself chose it for the dust jacket, though, as usual without benefit of monochrome proofs—it would seem fair to attack its shortcomings as typical of the edition. But Dörrbecker goes on to compare the 1980 reproduction unfavorably with the one in the great 1927 Keynes-edited Harvard University Press portfolio of thirty *Night Thoughts* reproductions, which he judges to have been reproduced “to perfection.” Indeed it was, within the capacity of monochrome reproduction. Oddly and unfairly, however, Dörrbecker neglects to point out that *Night Thoughts* 264 is clearly reproduced in color in the Clarendon edition—as the forty-first color plate (alas, uncaptioned but cross-referenced). Paley, who also rightly criticized the monochrome, did take notice of the fact that “it came out much better in color” (1982, p. 680). In the color reproduction all three figures and the clouds above and below are as plainly visible as they are in the original. It should be understood, however, that the large areas of black or dark gray in Blake’s picture are rendered in the reproduction as dark violet or brown. These non-corresponding hues are the best pidgin English for black achieved in much modern color reproduction.

Dörrbecker cannot resist remarking how much better the 1927 Harvard edition reproduced Blake’s work than the 1980 Clarendon edition, even though he is also at pains to point out that the former was reproduced in collotype, “a printing technique which progress has now almost put beyond price for publishers and their consumers.” The real issue is not what may have been technologically or institutionally possible fifty-three years earlier but whether better work could actually have been published in 1980. For the forty years that Harvard University Press kept the Keynes edition of five-hundred copies in print, copies were sold for \$35 each (the price was never raised). At 1927 prices, in other words, and at the ratio of twenty-five monochromes to five color collotypes, it would have cost \$630 to publish a complete portfolio of *Night Thoughts* watercolors—leaving out of consideration the extensive presentation of graphic works and drawings (and the lengthy Introduction) included in the 1980 Clarendon edition. The Harvard portfolio appeared during a period when an uncolored copy of the 1797 edition could be purchased for \$20 to \$100; also when—as a fluke, to be sure—a defective engraved copy, with sixteen pages undoubtedly colored by Blake, sold for £5 (see Clarendon edition, p. 69). The 1980 publication price for the Clarendon edition, £150 or \$365, does not therefore seem entirely out of

line. At least the large format requires only moderate reduction of the page size and leaves the text of Young’s poem perfectly legible. And an idea of both the aesthetic and conceptual presence of the exceptionally large type of the 1742–1745 printed pages of Young’s poem, which accompany the watercolors, needs to be communicated to the viewer in a complete edition. To be able to get out of Blake’s pictures what Blake put into them, in short, you must be able to read Young’s text, whether or not the verse accords with modern taste. This is an important aspect of the designs that is possible, if expensive, to communicate in a large-format edition.

Dörrbecker chose at the outset of his review to distance himself rhetorically from “Blake enthusiasts” and “their worshipped hero” and his remarks are punctuated throughout by what Blake would have recognized as similar “Grecian mocks,” both against the *Night Thoughts* series itself and the efforts of the Clarendon editors to convey in writing something of the overall excellence of Blake’s accomplishment. I cannot, of course, hope to improve Dörrbecker’s taste for Blake, but I am confident that if the properly attuned reader puts in the time required to study the original watercolors—a matter of months rather than weeks—he or she will not be satisfied with Bindman’s commonsense opinion, commended by Dörrbecker (see pp. 130 and 137, n. 3), that Blake, while on the *Night Thoughts* project, must have been frequently off his form because producing the pictures was such a vast and toilsome undertaking. Remarks in this vein, particularly as they operate as half-stated principles in Reynolds’s *Discourses*, infuriated Blake, not simply because Blake was a self-professed enthusiast, but because, *faute de mieux*, it elevates Prudence to the status of the mother of the Muses. Of course, there is a sense in which any grand artistic project is more subject to failure than a humble one, and large-scale failure is more embarrassing. Yet rightly considered, as I shall maintain elsewhere, Blake has no need to fear comparison with his artistic masters, Michelangelo and Raphael, even if he did not attempt to improve on their drawing, as Andrea del Sarto is said to have thought he could.

A few of Blake’s *Night Thoughts* designs were not seriously worked up, e.g., NT 219 (VI, iv), or well-conceived, e.g., NT 259 (VI, 38), but ninety percent are at least fine pictures and convey a critically interesting response to Young’s frequently amorphous poetry. And there are some great pictures, such as the title pages for Nights Three and Eight, NT 78 (illus. 3) and 345 (illus. 6); both of which I shall discuss below. It is also important that most of the water colors are still fresh, not having suffered from overexposure to light as has been the fate of too many of Blake’s other pictures. In consequence, it is particularly unfortunate that most of the color reproductions in the Clarendon edition are dead, lacking the vibrancy that it is possible to convey

in color reproduction, for example in Butlin's 1978 Tate Gallery exhibition catalogue of *Night Thoughts* 78.

Dörrbecker interestingly attributes the lack of vitality in the Clarendon color reproductions to the choice of cream-colored paper for printing. Quite possibly this was a contributing factor, but it is apparent that the Yale University Press choice of a much whiter paper for Butlin's 1981 catalogue was not sufficient to have resulted in satisfactory color reproductions. The worst of the Clarendon color reproductions, say *Night Thoughts* 117 (IV, 8), despite its wretched pinks, is no worse than and probably not as bad as the entire run of twenty-six designs (now in the Huntington Art Gallery and forbidden by the terms of the bequest from ever traveling) for *Comus*, *Paradise Lost*, and *On the Morning of Christ's Nativity*, as they are reproduced in color in the Yale catalogue (pls. 616-23; 632-43; 666-71). Essick (1982, p. 24) has also noted the inadequate rendering of the Huntington Milton pictures. The ambient blues that distort these reproductions bear no relation whatever to the present condition of the Huntington pictures, which is, of course, all a modern edition aims to reproduce. They are not, we should understand, attempts at photographic restoration of the blues that have probably been lost through overexposure to light of the original pictures; they are simply accidents of the sort that occur in most art books. One who compares the reproduction of Huntington *Paradise Lost* 5, *Satan Watching the Endearments of Adam and Eve* in Butlin 1981, pl. 636 (cat. 529.5) with its counterpart in Behrendt 1983 (plate 9) might be forgiven for supposing that they represent two different Blake pictures. Could there be two opinions as to which is adequate, which not?

Dörrbecker makes a number of appreciative comments about the utility and design of the Clarendon edition which may, from a user's rather than an editor's point of view, be amplified. The inconvenience of working with this large number of atlas-scale water colors—to say nothing of the widely dispersed books of colored engravings—has retarded the development of scholarship on the series. It is fair to say that the water colors are now more accessible in the Clarendon edition than they have ever been before, especially since 1970, when (for justifiable reasons), the British Museum enclosed each of the 269 sheets—all but three of which bear water colors on both sides—in rigid, heavy envelopes of Perspex, a plastic similar to Lucite. Even if one is permitted into the gallery of the Department of Prints and Drawings to handle the thirty-one heavy storage boxes directly, without dependency on having them delivered by one of the ever-attentive assistants, often what should be a simple matter of checking one design against another becomes a time-consuming research project that has to be carried on in too little space. Understandably, the twenty-odd laminated sheets in each box are some-

times out of sequence or otherwise misplaced. Moreover, research was probably not much easier even when the sixteen-inch designs were in the original pair of enormous leather volumes to which they were attached by being inlaid in nineteen-inch paper. Probably the pages had been incorrectly sequenced for Edwards when they were placed in the original bindings—as they certainly were when Shields described many of them in 1880. But the separation of the mounting leaves when the designs entered the British Museum in 1928 was not a satisfactory solution either, for reasons not wholly apparent until one tries to work with them.

The problem of accessibility, which is closely connected with the problem of comprehension of the intended arrangement, has been partly solved by the large format of the Clarendon edition. On the whole I do not regret the decision to publish such a ponderous book, which one reviewer has weighed as twenty pounds. The 14½-inch Clarendon page is indeed cumbersome, particularly in the second volume, which contains all the color plates and graphic works and thus weighs twice as much as the first volume. One needs an inordinately large work area to have both volumes and Butlin's catalogue and other reference books, together with slides and notes, open and ready to consult at the same time. Some of the editors wished to include the proofs for the engravings at the end of the first volume, both to facilitate comparison and to balance the volumes, and would have preferred to enlarge the pictures to extend to the edge of the paper—as Blake did in the water colors after *Night the First* and intended to do in all the engravings. But since publishers and editorial teams must work together by compromising, with cost and feasibility always at issue, this was not to be. Dörrbecker finds "those beautiful wide margins" (p. 136) one of the features of the Clarendon edition that he can wholeheartedly praise. I consider the margins an aesthetic and scholarly nuisance, a barrier against free access to a major critical and artistic accomplishment. They are useful only for taking notes—for those who can afford to write in such an expensive edition.

Yet even if the Clarendon edition had been altered in every possible way, it could not have provided convenient access to all important aspects of Blake's designs: other study devices are necessary as well. The poor-quality Microform transparencies from the E.P. Group of Companies can be used as reminders of what the color looks like. But slides are too small to be seen clearly when they are displayed on a light tray; the new kinds of magnifying slide viewers, however, can be quite helpful. The scholar also needs to have photographs small enough to arrange and rearrange in order to discover the sequences or "chapters" of from two to a dozen designs that Blake arranged as sub-structures in each of the nine *Nights*. At present I am developing a computer-indexed



2. *Night Thoughts* 264, Frontispiece, Volume II, by permission of the Trustees of the British Museum.

videodisc that will allow immediate access to all the *Night Thoughts* designs, in any order desired. This new technology should help considerably in solving the old problem of access which has certainly limited the effective critical attention devoted to this great series.

II. Interpretation

Let us turn from problems of adequate reproduction and access to Blake's pictures of *Night Thoughts* to the question of interpretation, of understanding what Blake intended to convey about Young and the ways of imagination. I am well aware that some readers will doubt whether such a formulation of the interpretive question has much value or interest. To refer to "intention" may appear to bespeak preoccupation with what is, either in a short run or a long run, indeterminate. Or if perhaps determinate, of little more significance than some alternate scheme that may occur to an active mind that takes a number of Blake's pictures together with some lines from Young as an occasion for reverie or as illustrations of a thesis about Neoclassic or Romantic art. While this is not a comprehensive or fair account of the theoretical alternatives, I believe that some discourse about Blake and Young has been animated by such insouciant premises.

Those committed to ascertaining Blake's intentions must be concerned with matching words and pictures with pictures in order to decide who is who and what Blake made of pictorial resemblances that confirm or contradict what Young seems to have been saying. The best evidence is usually to be found among the *Night Thoughts* pictures considered as a coordinated program of visual commentary rather than somewhere else in the Blakean oeuvre, though we normally expect that implications in accord with "Blake's philosophy" will probably be the ones intended. After long study I have concluded that the 537 water colors for *Night Thoughts* were arranged or organized in a significant sequence of pictorial units or visual chapters within each of the Nine Nights of Young's poem. These usually consist of from two to a dozen pictures expressive of a leading idea or theme, often demarcated quite sharply from the other units that precede or follow them. It would be hard to deny that Blake's next project, the designs for Gray's poems, which are also executed on the same kind of drawing paper surrounding the poetical texts, are organized in this fashion, but of course the units of Gray's poetry are far more concise and determinate than is the case with Young.

Some current theories in art criticism tend to discourage critics from attempting to recognize Blake's visual sequences either in the program for *Night Thoughts* or elsewhere. The tide of taste that is now running

against the great scholar (not of Blake, to be sure), E. H. Gombrich, is not interested in claims for pictorial programs. What such viewers want to know is what the pictures may be taken to imply about Blake the artist or the member of the working class. They prefer to think of the pictures as the expressions of Blake's feelings about "Life, Death, and Immortality" and anything else that might have come into the mind of the artist rather than as an intelligible pictorial commentary. I can have no hope of persuading those who would respond "yes" to the following question: do you deny that Michelangelo's set of pictures in the Sistine ceiling constitute a program? Those who do not deny it may still find it difficult to say exactly why the central sequence concludes with the *Drunkenness of Noah*, but they do not doubt that Michelangelo demanded a viewer who would make the effort to understand the arrangement.

After surveying the literature on Blake's *Night Thoughts* designs we can see that attempts to ascertain the chief patterns in the overall arrangement of the pictures seem questionable for two reasons: first, Young's poem is associative rather than tightly structured; this leads the viewer to expect the "illustrations" to be likewise disorderly. Second, the commonsense assumption that Blake was so out of sympathy with Young and so burdened by the sheer numbers of pictures required to accompany the 526 pages of printed text that he must have struggled adventitiously to come up with some picture to fill the blank surrounding paper for every page. If these attitudes indeed predominated in Blake's mind, one would hardly expect to find in the pictures consistent quality or order. This would lead to the suspicion that Blake was using the project mainly as an excuse for bootlegging in his own supposed "system" rather than wasting his energies on illustrating the unworthy Young. How natural, then, for the critic to deploy an abstract of Blake's monomyth derived from *The Book of Urizen* and *The Four Zoas* in such a way as to indicate that he was again chiefly concerned to tell the same "one story only" in the *Night Thoughts* designs!

Thus, Paley (1969) declared the applicability of a pattern of "creation, fall, redemption, and apocalypse," Frye's summary of "Blake's central myth" (p. 140, referring to *Fearful Symmetry*, p. 124). If you follow Paley's account closely, however, you will find that it is largely his critical rhetoric that fills the vacuum of "creation." And as for the "fall," while there are scenes that recall the Temptation in the Garden of Eden, it is not clear that they are supposed to be an adequate explanation of the causes of the richly imagined desperate state of the world in the designs or in the poem. Even Young's pietistic mind was not satisfied to regard all misery under the aspect of "The Fall." When Blake wished his viewer to think continuously of "The Fall," as in *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, he began by presenting a picture of

the Expulsion on the title page.

Look again at the water color frontispieces for the two volumes of *Night Thoughts*: both *Night Thoughts* 1 (illus. 1) and *Night Thoughts* 264 (illus. 2) are scenes of the Resurrection. This is the context Blake provided for a consideration of his *Night Thoughts* series. You can, of course, argue that, without the Fall, the Resurrection would not have been a possibility or necessity. Similarly, you can maintain that any vision of things presupposes a "Creation." Or that every Christian vision—and therefore Blake's—is premised on the doctrine of "the Fortunate Fall." But such reasonings are those of an Interpreter whose parlor needs sweeping. If you ask the simple radical question, where in his own writings does Blake speak of "The Fallen World," you are bound to answer, "never." This discrepancy at least suggests a disproportion between the concerns of Blake and of his expositor. What concerned Blake was "Fallen Man." And Regeneration.

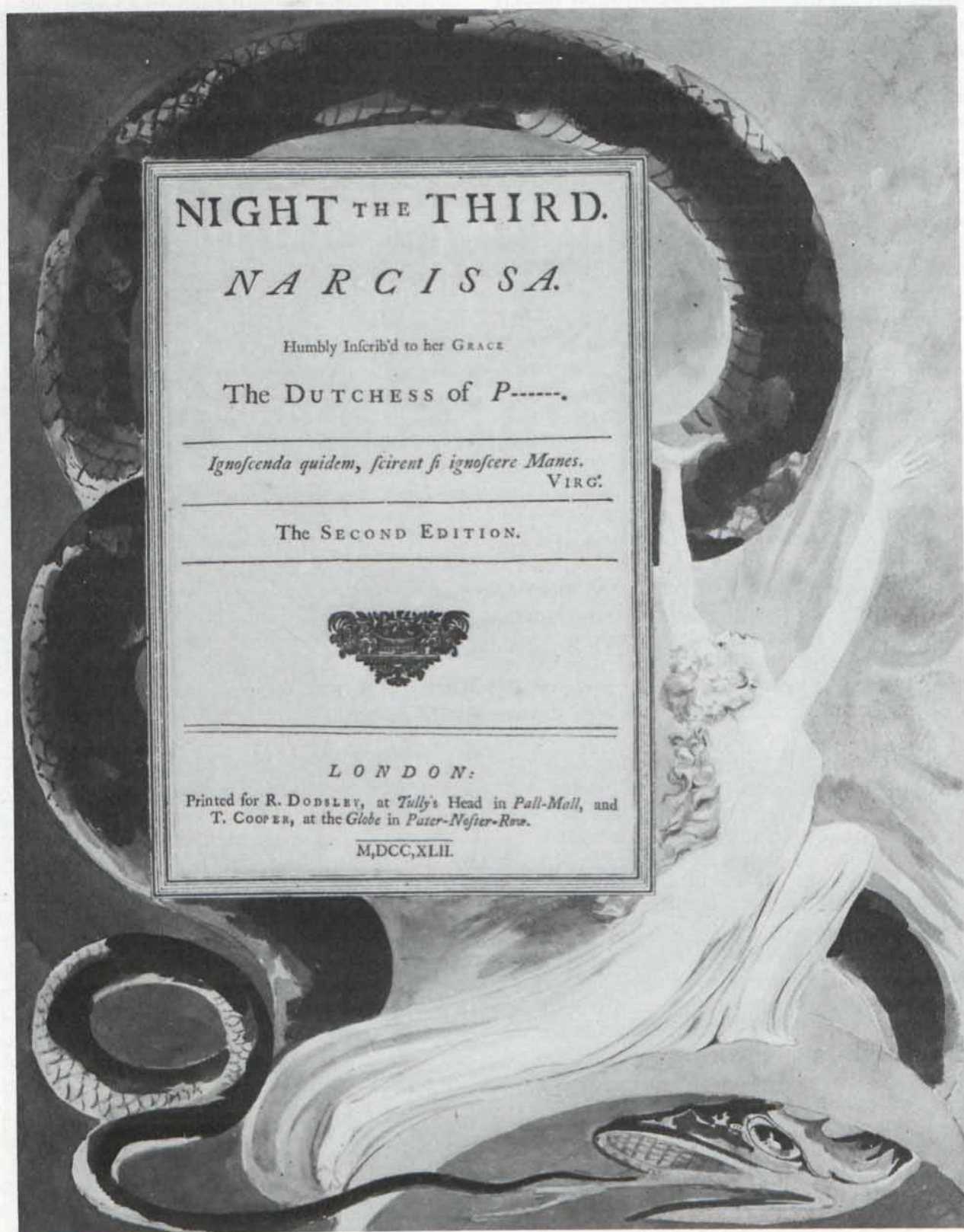
In 1970 I proposed a different view of the designs, maintaining with considerable specificity that the five prefatory pictures and thirty pictures for Night the First are arranged in a distinct sequence of units, veritable chapters. Paley (1982, p. 683) continues to chide me for this undertaking, pointing out that in his 1971 review he had reproved me for affirming that the pictures fall into such units of vision. But he is still unwilling to offer much by way of disproof. Although the theory of pictorial units was not much in evidence in the 1980 Clarendon edition, it remains on the docket for the *Night Thoughts* commentary because nobody has shown that it doesn't work. Of course there is a sense in which it is the obligation of the proponent of a theory to lay out all the evidence, both for it and against it, and I have not yet done so, but this theory cannot be persuasively maintained without a consideration of all 537 designs.

I have thought that an adequate presentation of the theory would necessitate a thorough discussion of issues that shade off from the question of organization: in other words, the as-yet-uncompleted commentary on all the designs. But I now believe that the question can usually be abstracted so that, with the help of charts, a concise overview of the entire series could be presented and still allow room to discuss areas where the theory is strained to accommodate particular designs. Rather than attempt such a chart here, I shall simply mention some considerations bearing on the probability of such an order as I claim to be ascertainable. No doubt any attempt to discern overall patterns of both pervasive and local schemata will encounter problem areas where the connections and distinctions are less evident than in others. But what does the skeptic do in, for example, encountering the sequence of NT 198–207 (V, 43–52), in which Death appears in all but one of the designs NT 199? Declare that the sequence is coincidental? Con-

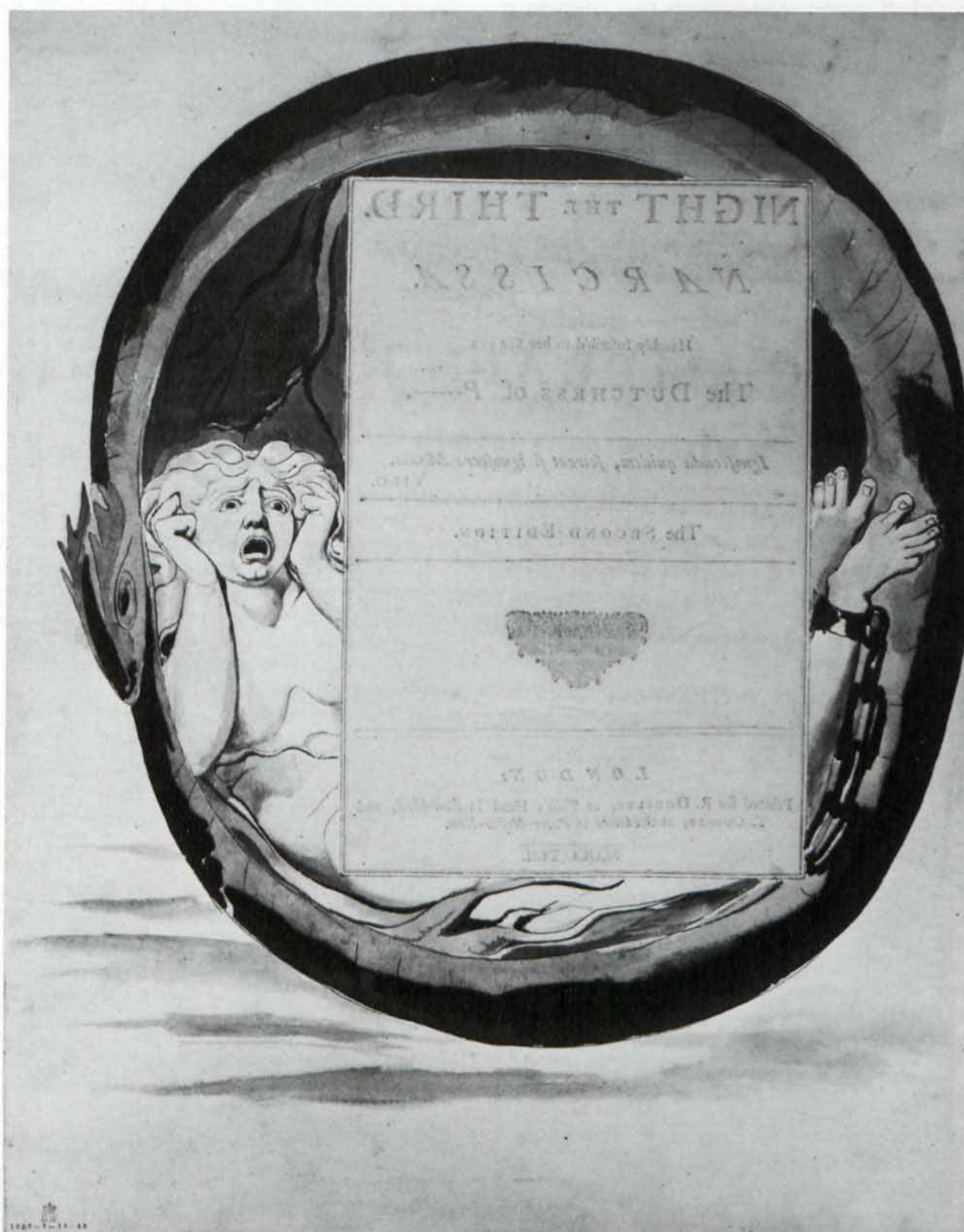
centrate on the single apparent exception? Often what is needful in an attempt to recognize Blake's patterns is to make the proper identifications and discriminations of figures. I shall go into a number of cases below. Here I shall point to a suggestive correlation having to do with the figure of Young's dead wife, "Lucia" (VIII, 1256), who in the poem was alluded to chiefly in the opening lines of Night the Sixth. But the footnote reference to her was cut off in mounting the text on the drawing paper for NT 222 (no doubt in Edwards' shop before Blake received the sheets), and the reader might infer that Young speaks again here of the dead Narcissa, a recurrent concern. Blake shows us the dead wife of NT 221, a prefatory design with a textually blank page for Night the Sixth. When we recognize her there, we can also see that she was the woman depicted in NT 110, the title page in the water color sequence for Night the Fourth. This is a clear case of the general need to look back and forth in the series to recognize the picture story that Blake is weaving around the materials provided by Young's poetry. As with other forms of narrative, such departures from Young's order produce a different story, a critique and a correction. Blake's story is often closer to that of Young than the comments in much literary criticism, ancient and modern, that purports to address a particular writing. But after more than twenty years of study I am not satisfied with any answer I have heard to the question of whether Blake's designs ought to be referred to as "illustrations."

As for the question of whether there are verifiable major divisions within each Night of the series, those who patiently wait to see the evidence, as set forth in the Clarendon commentary, or who are prepared to ascertain it for themselves should note well that Paley does not absolutely pronounce the theory that such an order exists preposterous; he speaks only of "a somewhat arbitrary structuring of the material" and declares "that this system of classification has been partly superimposed on the material." These words indicate that Paley is by now grudgingly persuaded that there is something to the idea. If so, it should be possible to debate several of the truly problematic cases and then, after having tested the evidence, correct our misconceptions and modify our arbitrariness.

In reconsidering the exegetical part of the Introduction, I agree both with favorable reviewers such as Hagstrum and negative reviewers such as Dörrbecker and Mitchell that English was not always kept up. Occasionally a dismally religious tone obtrudes. Such lapses should have been corrected. While these days readers of criticism have become inured to styles that seem to me still more objectionable, condescending, jargonistic, and mechanical, no reader should have to endure inauthentic enthusiastic superstition. But our patches of bad writing seem to have given both Dörrbecker and Mitchell the



3. *Night Thoughts* 78, Title page, *Night the Third: "NARCISSA,"* by permission of the Trustees of the British Museum.



4. *Night Thoughts* 79, *Night the Third*, verso of title page, by permission of the Trustees of the British Museum.

impression that the sample commentary promises a full-length study choked with "neo-Blakean Fables" (Mitchell) or "pseudo-Blakean associations" (Dörrbecker, p. 134).

A crucial problem in understanding Blake's *Night Thoughts* series is to ascertain exactly which figures are supposed to be identical: that is, which represent Young or other characters he mentions—Lorenzo, Philander, Narcissa, Lucia, Florello, in one or another of their aspects—and which characters represent Young's major mythological characters and personifications—Christ, Death, Time, the Devil, Nature, Darkness, Conscience, etc. All these in Blake's representations sometimes change their shapes and presumably their meanings drastically, though by aligning verbal and pictorial clues it is usually possible to determine with certainty who is supposed to be who, and who otherwise, and why. Thus Mulhallen (1981, p. 159) reasonably objected that the Clarendon edition erred (p. 89, n. 40) by lumping together NT 2, 3, 5, 7, and 8 (illus. 10) as representations of "Young." The apparently inspired poet with long wavy hair in NT 5 can hardly be identical with the curly-haired reader of NT 2 and the curly-haired insomniac of NT 8. Yet sometimes "Young" aspired to the bardic competence assuredly (though not unqualifiedly—consider the occluded luminary) depicted in NT 5. And Blake's indubitable representations of "Young" at times degenerate into such a figure as the pale lank-haired lyrist shown serenading the Duchess of Portland, Young's patroness, who (at a fancy-dress ball) affected the guise of Cynthia, the moon-goddess, in *Night Thoughts* 82 (III, 7) (illus. 5). Here Young is revealed in a degraded condition almost as abject as the amatory flautist-laureate in bondage to Venus and Cupid in *Night Thoughts* 162 (V, [7]). Blake's reader must consider all the factors bearing on the establishment of a legal identity in everyday life and then balance them with the transformational possibilities for showing spiritual identity which were available to Blake the artist. In a number of cases the interpreter may be indeed hardpressed to decide whether a particular figure is supposed to be yet another representation of a familiar character—Young again—or simply a representative man or woman in a common human predicament. Several times even the gender is questionable—though one should not promptly infer that in such cases the figure is supposed to represent Blake's mythical androgyne. We must recall Blake's commonsense approach to Fuseli's *Ugolino* in which it had been complained by a reviewer that one of the children looked female: "Whether boy or girl signifies not, (but the critic must be a fool who has not read Dante, and who does not know a boy from a girl)" (E 1982, 768).

Mitchell devotes almost half his review (pp. 201–204) to a critique of the account of *Night Thoughts* 78 (illus. 3), the title page of *Night the Third*, entitled "Narcissa," which depicts, in the words of the "Expla-

nation" in Edwards' 1797 edition: "A female figure, who appears from the crescent beneath her feet to have surmounted the trials of the world, is admitted to an eternity of glory: eternity is represented by its usual emblem—a serpent with its extremities united." Mitchell justifiably deplores some of the pietistic writing in the Clarendon exposition (p. 36) and corrects the mistaken assertion that the eye of the great dragon-python "glances at the reader." But he seems most concerned to show that the commentary "disregard[s] . . . the text which Blake is illustrating." Assuming that even readers of *Modern Philology* may be rusty on Young's story of *Night the Third*, Mitchell points out that in it there is much talk of Phoebe and of the Duchess of Portland (to whom *Night the Third* is dedicated—in the 1742 edition used with Blake's watercolor, but *not* in the 1797 edition with Blake's engravings). And Mitchell explains, as though he had made a discovery, that the figure on the title page contradicts Young since she is not a lunar goddess but "the woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars," beleaguered by a dragon, of Revelation 12:1. Mitchell spins many remarks out of this "witty" mixture, some of which may be preferable to what is said in the Clarendon edition. But on the whole his long discussion is more concerned to chide the Clarendon text for its pietism and errors, such as the unfortunate assertion that the serpent looks at the reader, than to put forward an alternative interpretation of Blake's picture. While the conventions of shorter book reviews permit the reviewer to deplore a proposed interpretation without articulating the preferred alternative, Mitchell spends five pages discussing things said about Blake's picture without indicating what he takes its meaning to be. One may infer indeed, that he does not have a theory.

Most of Mitchell's discussion is taken up with three critical moves. He as much as says that only those who had never read *Night the Third* could suppose that the woman on the title page is Narcissa. But he neglects in the first place to remind the reader that "Narcissa" is the name of the *Night*, printed in large letters as the title, and in the second place to mention that he is the first commentator to question whether the woman depicted has some connection with the woman mentioned in the text—probably, after Lorenzo, the most famous character in the poem, except for the figure of Young himself. In asserting that the woman depicted is Narcissa, the Clarendon editors were not being eccentric but were following the well-established tradition of Essick and La Belle (1975), Bindman (1975), Butlin (1978), Paley (1978), *et al.* Mitchell's second dubious move is to make it appear (p. 202) that he discovered the Revelation connection, or at least that the Clarendon editors had overlooked it. He accomplishes this by cutting a rather lengthy quotation from our text and then bring-

ing the point up as if from his own better-informed perspective. But of course we did mention and discuss the connection in the sentences immediately following the ones he quotes. Mitchell's third dubious move is to pretend ignorance (p. 203) about the ambiguities of the serpent as an ouroboros symbol, though all he had to do was follow our footnote 52 to de Groot's 1969 article (Clarendon Bibliography No. 46) to become enlightened. Once again, this route was well trodden, having been properly followed by Essick and La Belle before us.

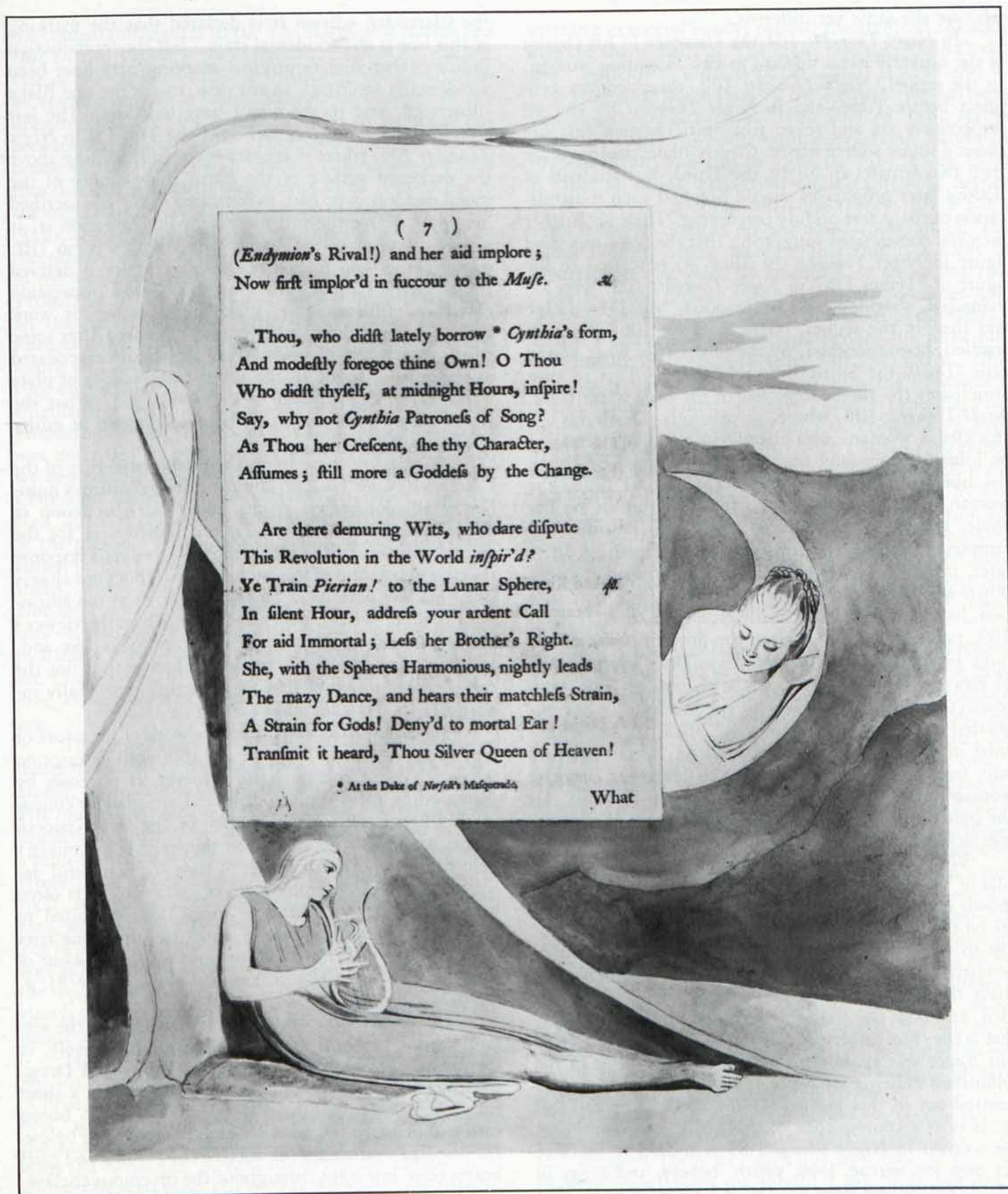
There is no denying one point that Mitchell labors without elucidating: the connection of the lunar symbolism of the title page with the lunar associations of the Duchess of Portland in the text of *Night the Third*. The problem is so complicated, however, that not much of value can be said about the question without an overall consideration of the representation of characters in *Night the Third*. For the Clarendon edition it seemed consistent with our introductory purposes to concentrate (pp. 35-39) on connections among the frontispieces and some title pages and tailpieces within the entire *Night Thoughts* series rather than to get into the intricacies of *Night the Third*, or any other *Night*. Mitchell's impression that he had come up with new ideas might have been allayed if we had not carelessly neglected a footnote referring to an article by one of the editors that was given as a paper in 1972 and finally published in 1977, at about the time our Introduction was being put into shape. The article by E.J. Rose, "*Ut Pictura Poesis* and the Problem of Pictorial Statement in William Blake," was, however, duly listed as item 96, the last entry in our Bibliography, where it was noted that NT 78, 79, and 345 are discussed and that the first two are reproduced. But we neglected to go into Rose's handling of some of the problems subsequently brought up by Mitchell. The further observations I shall present here include a good deal that is not a rehash of already published commentary.

Of the two women mentioned on Young's title page, Narcissa, who was thought to have been modeled on Young's stepdaughter but who seems both in the poem and in Blake's pictures to be more like a wife—an Emanation, perhaps—died pathetically, leaving the poet bereft. The Duchess of Portland, Young's patroness, on the other hand, is glorified as a veritable moon goddess, and her mortality is not considered in the poem. I don't know whether Blake could have construed Young's epigraph for *Night the Third*, attributed to Virgil, "*Ignoscenda quidem, scirent si ignoscere Manes*," or located it in *Georgics* 4:469, where it is a pathetic reflection on the intractability of the Manes—roughly, the souls of the dead as underworld deities—to the folly of Orpheus in losing Eurydice.¹ The woman shown in the title page is in a superlunary position and thus recalls the occa-

sional triumphal position of the woman clothed with the sun of German Renaissance prints. She is on the upper arch of an inverted crescent moon, rather than within the crescent (the latter is traditionally the commoner position), but it evidently is not to be understood as signifying a reservation as to the glory of Mary's position.² With regard to the crucial question of whether the woman in *Night Thoughts* 78 (24E) is conscious of the threat presented by the proximity of the enormous serpent, the water color indicates one thing, the engraving another. Our perfunctory note, Clarendon edition p. 78, gives little guidance in this matter save for the indication that the woman has only five (visible) stars in the water color but seven in the engraving. More indicative of meaning is the fact that in the water color the woman's mouth is wide open, probably distorted with a scream, whereas in the engraving her rapturous face expresses unmitigated joy. Presumably when Blake made the (undated) engraving he knew there was to be no sequel such as is represented by *Night Thoughts* 79 (illus. 4), and thus decided not to qualify the radiant impression, whereas in the water color he prepared the viewer for the peripety overleaf. In looking at *Night Thoughts* 78 alone we may suppose that the radiance of the threatened woman will enable her to evade the tails and loop of the serpent, whereas at least the un-luminous moon will fall into them. The impression created by the engraving, 24E, is, in contrast, entirely optimistic, suggesting that somehow all will be well and that the serpent will not succeed in springing his trap.

In the water color series any optimistic expectations aroused by *Night Thoughts* 78 are dashed when one turns overleaf and finds a pessimistic sequel, *Night Thoughts* 79 (illus. 4): here a long-haired woman, shackled, howls her distress within the belly of an ouroboros, which has swallowed half his length of tail. This distraught, unattractive woman is an antithesis of the glorious woman in NT 78, who had, however, shown at least two signs that she was indeed threatened and might not triumph.

Is she "the same" woman, "Narcissa" (pace Mitchell) who, like Eurydice alluded to in the Virgilian inscription, is a victim of the unforgiving Manes? Or should we think of her as, like Wordsworth's Lucy, all too mortal? Her fate, howling, shackled, being digested by the rooting innards of the malicious serpent, forbids us to suppose that she is undergoing a benign natural death. A moment's thought, however, at least assures us that she can hardly represent the Duchess of Portland—except she be supposed to be Blake's idea of the Duchess, mortal like the rest of us and now in agony because she had been flattered into disregarding it. But Blake would have thought this idea too commonplace to be interesting. One must look ahead to the thirty other designs in *Night the Third* to recognize the point Blake is making in presenting in the prefatory designs two women



who are the same yet different.

In *Night Thoughts* 101 the visionary in his chariot of the universe gazes upward at two ascending women. In the sequel, *Night Thoughts* 102, three women genuflect before Time, and in *Night Thoughts* 85 and 98 respectively six and seven tiny spirit women emanate about a single source figure. Clearly Blake deploys more than two females in *Night the Third*, but students of Blake's later prophecies should not find such multiplication of characters unduly perplexing. There are further pictorial connections suggesting that the open-mouthed figure in *Night Thoughts* 79 (illus. 4) is related to the figure of "Tyrant Life" in *Night Thoughts* 105, who has manacled, shackled, and imprisoned "Mind" in a cage and then in the sequel, *Night Thoughts* 106, is herself startled, open mouthed, by the prospect of what Young calls "Death the Spirit Infinite! Divine!" This in turn anticipates the theme depicted in the final water color, *Night Thoughts* 109, where, surprisingly, Death has unshackled a woman, who already soars, and is about to be joined by a young man now being freed by Death the liberator. Earlier, in *Night Thoughts* 81 (25E) the woman, nude except for the band of a shackle on her ankle, and with long agitated locks, had frantically attempted to escape the sinister cope of Death. A little later, in *Night Thoughts* 94 (27E), one woman is swept down the river of Death while another, her hair in a bun, like the woman who finally escapes in *Night Thoughts* 109, paces upstream, against the flow, in front of the huge brooding figure of Darkness. The "Silver Queen of Heaven," the lunar goddess with braided hair, who with crossed arms slumbers to the serenade of her enervated poet in *Night Thoughts* 82 (illus. 5), has awakened in the sequel, *Night Thoughts* 83, where her hair falls free, but (trapped within the crescent, like the woman in the ouroboros in *Night Thoughts* 79 [illus. 4]) she holds up her hands in consternation, viewing some spectacle not included in this picture.

What distresses her, the reader can see, is the floss of "Woes" that "cluster" as they swim into her ken, shown in the facing page, *Night Thoughts* 84. Her eyes are on the squadron of five Woes, doubtless corresponding to the senses, that are most prominently featured beneath the text panel. The curious reader may, however, study the second cluster, powered by two howling old men, and note the strangely lumpish "snow personage" that is the chief burden of this group. Here adumbrated, this figure was again sketched as a coda design in the unfinished drawing for *Night Thoughts* 538, as I recently pointed out in this journal (Grant 1982, p. 8 and fig. 1). It is as a consequence of this vision of "Woes" that the woman in *Night Thoughts* 85 is moved to sacrifice her own joy, virtue, love, youth, beauty, and song, in a flame emanating from her and in a pictorial order that exactly reverses the verbal order of Young's line 97. In

the Clarendon edition it is declared that the marking of this line is an "accidental stain," but the reproduction indicates that Blake's original marking may have been accidentally smudged. In any case, this is the line Blake illustrated, and in the way I have indicated. The last time the moon appears in *Night the Third* is in *Night Thoughts* 103, where it appears at the full, shining above the darkened surface of the Earth, now empty of the moon goddess, who had, as indicated in *NT* 85, sacrificed her Joys. Above the full moon, meditating upon it, is a dark goddess called "Night" in Young's poem (III, 429). Those who recognize that this figure is derived from Durer's famous print *Melencolia I*—an impression of which, at least later, Blake hung above his work table—will not distrust her or her influence. After some thirty more years of meditation, this figure reappeared as the angelic scribe in the lower right border of plate 17 of Blake's *Illustrations of the Book of Job*. What she wrote there I shall not repeat here lest I again be guilty of offensive pietism.

Dörrbecker chose to challenge the reliability of the Clarendon *Night Thoughts* commentary by raising a number of ill-coordinated points about our discussion of *Night Thoughts* 264 (illus. 2), the frontispiece for the second volume. It is evident from Dörrbecker's response that our exposition of this picture (which does not closely illustrate any passage in *Night Thoughts*) was too affirmative in tone. We also depended too much on the viewer's being able to see what Blake's picture looks like and, as I have already agreed, the monochrome (but not the color) reproduction of this great picture is woefully inadequate in the Clarendon edition.

Whether criticism addresses a work of literature or a picture, the role of accurate and thorough description is crucial. Most bad criticism achieves its purposes by disregarding inconvenient details. I am glad to concur in this belief with the authority of the late Kenneth Clark, who was a good art historian even if he couldn't help condescending to Blake: "I have found careful description an enlightening form of criticism. It is often humiliating to discover how much one has failed to observe, or to understand, in a picture, until one tries to describe it in detail. Descriptions can be a labour of love . . ." (Introduction to Vasari, *Lives* . . . [1978], p. xxvii).

The viewer who studies the frontispiece to the second volume of *Night Thoughts*, non-interpretatively, in the British Museum Department of Prints and Drawings, sees: a nude male figure with long hair, a short full beard, open mouth, and upcast eyes, who bursts into a dark place bounded by clouds above and below. He displays wounds on his outstretched hands and casts beams of yellow light throughout the cavernous enclave. On closer inspection, it is apparent that this figure is not simply flying toward the viewer (as are, for example,

the comparable figures in the *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* 14 and *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* 8); the left side of the chest and hip are distinctly visible and can be traced even, as it were, behind the coverlet of the uppermost two recumbent figures who are stretched out beneath the central figure. There is a mark on the left breast of this man whose cruciform position is much like that of the resurrecting Christ as he is depicted in the engraved version of the title page of *Night the Fourth* (31E), though, surprisingly, wounds are not shown on the otherwise practically identical figure as he appears in the water color frontispiece for the first volume, *NT* 1 (illus. 1). In *NT* 264 (illus. 2) the indubitable stigmata on the hands, together with the characteristic facial features and the wound on the chest, identify the central figure as Christ; remarkably, Christ wears a wedding ring on the fourth finger of his left hand. This is distinguishable even in the inadequate monochrome reproduction in the Clarendon edition. Though this ring was described in our (unpublished) descriptive notes, we neglected to mention it in our commentary in the Clarendon edition, out of carelessness rather than design, since it could only strengthen our interpretation of the picture. This omission was duly noted by Mulhallen in 1981. (She also mentions the ring in her 1975 thesis, which has recently become available for study.) Not only does this small but crucial piece of symbolism—a wedding ring on Christ—not appear elsewhere in Blake's work, but it may well be unique in Christian art. Once having observed the ring in this picture, however, the viewer will hardly be mystified as to its meaning.

The uppermost of the two recumbent shrouded males has his curly head cast back, with eyes and mouth closed, so as almost to face the left edge of the picture. His muffled left arm is apparently raised to ward off the illumination, while on his chest appears, perhaps through a semi-transparent shroud, the suggestion of scaly chest armor. The lower figure, with helmeted head to the right, is open mouthed, howling, but has probably closed eyes, as he twists his torso away from the illumination. Yet he is seated in such a way as to show both shrouded legs as they bend across the picture. The dark shapes at the top and bottom of the cavern are curved and resemble clouds, as is often the case in Blake's depictions of underground scenes.

How the first describer of the picture, Frederick Shields, understood this frontispiece is worth recalling: "Christ the Light of the World, the Sun of Righteousness, appears in the centre of the design, seen only to the bust, and environed with thick darkness, which, with His outspread, pierced hands and the radiant glory which emanates from His person, He parts and dispels. Dimly apparent within the darkness visible beneath him, looms the shrouded image of the power of darkness,

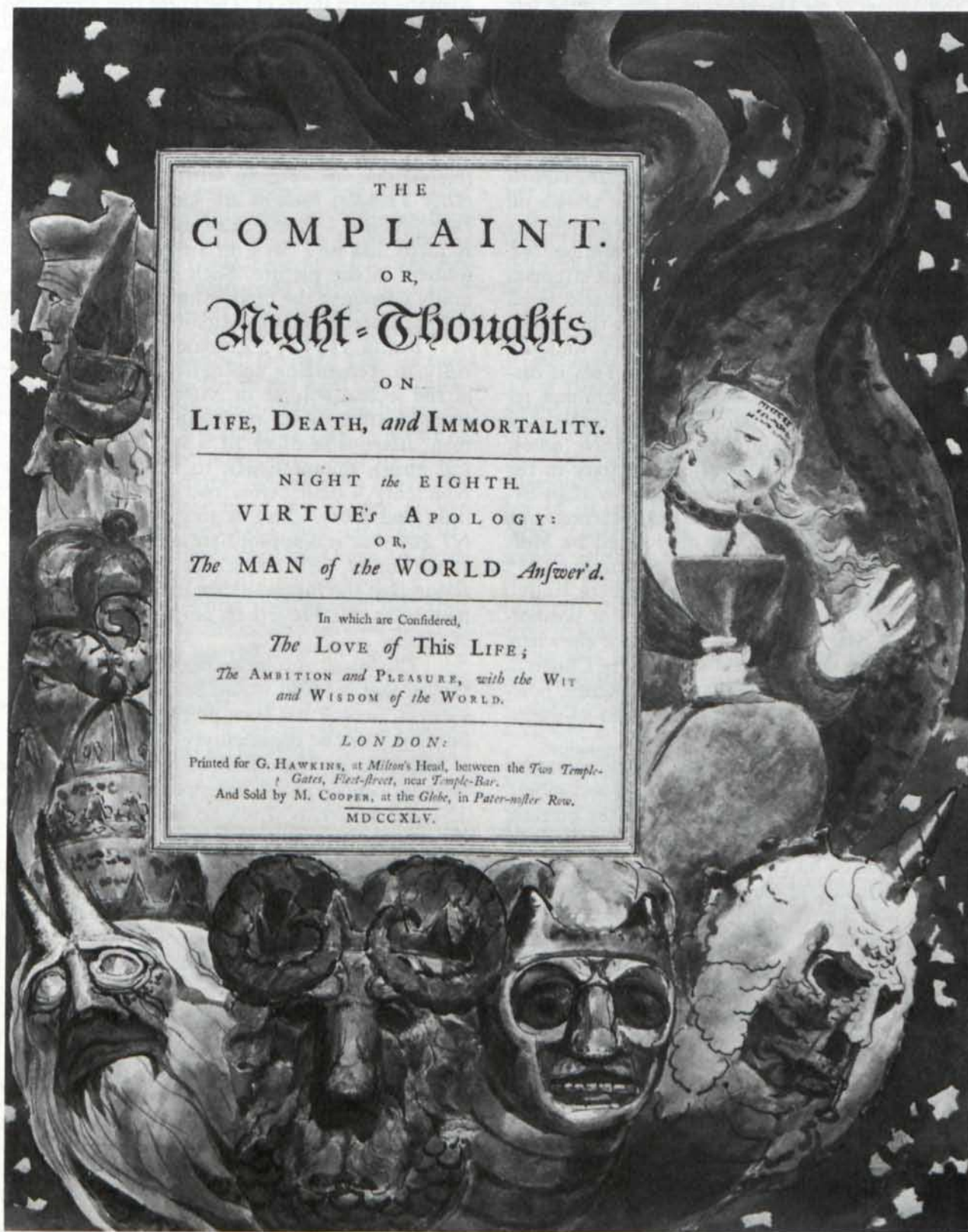
writhing in mortal agony, pierced through and through with the sharp shafts of 'The Light that shineth in Darkness'" (Gilchrist, *William Blake*, 1880, II, 298-99).³

That what Blake shows is the Resurrection has been mentioned more recently by Grant 1970 (p. 316), Hagsstrum 1973 (pp. 148-49, with reservation), Bindman 1975 (p. 180), and Butlin 1981 (I, 216). Paley 1978 (p. 40), following Hagsstrum while expressing deeper reservations, in keeping with his theory that Blake's *Night Thoughts* designs are supposed to be about "the Fallen World," seems unaware that this is a scene of Resurrection and pays no attention at all to the two soldiers in the picture. Such selective procedures naturally guarantee the production of "neo-Blakean fables," such as Dörrbecker and Mitchell deplore—in principle.

Butlin 1981, p. 216 (cat. 330.264) has no difficulty in recognizing the derivation of the frontispiece of the second volume of *Night Thoughts* from the final plate of *All Religions are One* (pl. 10, Principle 7). Erdman, *Illuminated Blake* 1974, p. 26 (with a typographical error), quotes Essick to the effect that the scene represents "Christ before two pagans overcome by His light and glory." This is too general a conception for *NT* 264, but it is appropriate enough for the tiny design at the top of *ARO* 10, where there is no specific indication that the miniscule recumbent figures (whose legs may be tangled together) are the soldiers at the tomb of Christ.

The visual similarity between *ARO* 10 (Clarendon Fig. 8) and *NT* 264 would seem to be obvious for most viewers, once it has been pointed out, but Dörrbecker, holding that the commentary in the Clarendon edition is animated by "pseudo-Blakean associations," uses our asserted connection to exemplify his complaint (see p. 134 and fn. 24, p. 138): he declares that we affirm the connection "probably just because [*ARO* 10] is considered as an early appearance of the motif of outspread arms in Blake's *oeuvre*." No. The figure with outspread arms in the illuminated printing appears within a cave and is undoubtedly exhorting the two recumbent figures. This means that the basic pictorial elements are the same in both pictures—not that the Clarendon interpreters were unduly swayed by the similarity of the single motif of outspread arms. A thorough interpretation should, indeed, go on from the overall resemblance of the two designs to make the necessary discriminations. But the viewer who is unable to recognize the basic similarity of the two designs can never arrive at a valuable comment on either.

On page 134 Dörrbecker quotes five sentences from pages 38-39 that set forth an interpretation of *NT* 264 and deplores them as "such [a] free flow of pseudo-Blakean associations (or should I say 'illuminations?') which if only translated into less ecstatic phrasing, are truisms as relevant for a painting of the resurrection by,



6. *Night Thoughts* 345, Title page, *Night the Eighth*, by permission of the Trustees of the British Museum.

for example, Sebastiano Ricci. . . . A few touches of rhapsody in the style I too regret, though I may have penned them myself. But all the points claimed can be verified in context, except perhaps these sentences, which are too compressed: "The hands [of Jesus] simultaneously display to doubters that Jesus is the human family; as he suffered for all, he can offer the infinite expanse to all, and even prepare to offer the handclasp of Friendship. Blake never quite depicts this moment of fraternity. . . ."

As for "doubters," the reference here is not only to the soldiers who cannot bear this illumination, but to the next design in the series, *Night Thoughts* 265, the title page of Volume Two, in which Jesus displays the wound on his hand and the wound on his breast to a Doubting Thomas. In *Night Thoughts* 264 the explosion of Jesus within the cave might for a Blakean audience suggest "the infinite expanse," even though Blake himself never used exactly that term (consult the *Concordance*). The "handclasp of friendship" is, to be sure, a gesture that Blake's Jesus never quite stoops to, though Jesus comes so close to it in *Night Thoughts* 531 (IX, 113), with Young, in the poet's penultimate appearance, that the reader has justification for reflecting on Blake's final reticence in representation: why *don't* the two there shake hands? Then there is the case of "Sebastiano Ricci," one of the also-rans Dörrebecker introduces in his race to catch up with Blake. I have already declared (without having checked them all!) that no other artist, large or small, represented the adult Jesus as wearing a wedding ring, but I would be happy to retract if some precedent could actually be shown. But it is most unlikely that such a hypothetical precedent, if it could be found, would change what Blake meant the reader to understand when he employed this familiar symbol in an unexpected context. Blake first made reference to the "human families" in *Night the Ninth of Vala* or *The Four Zoas* (E 1982, 404: p. 135, l. 37), complementing references to the "universal" or "divine family" in *Vala* I, all presumably written later than the pictures for *Night Thoughts*. But the wedding ring in the frontispiece to the second volume indicates that Blake had recognized the basis of "the human family" before he saw fit to write about it. No doubt Blake here intended to challenge the view of the future of marriage offered by a simple reading of Matthew 22:30; appearing as he does to those who dwell in realms of Night, Jesus the bridegroom is showing the way, not yet the end.

One of the best pictures Blake ever painted, *Night Thoughts* 345 (illus. 6), the title page of *Night the Eighth*, ought next to be considered, both with regard to the adequacy of the reproductions in the Clarendon edition and for what it shows about Blake's fundamental ideas and symbols while he was engaged in the *Night Thoughts* project. As a vision of the Whore and Beast of

Revelation 17, this picture has never been surpassed—either by Durer's wonderful woodcuts or by Blake's own later awesome water colors of this subject. According to Young's title page, this section of the poem constitutes "Virtue's Apology" and an *Answer* to "*The MAN of the WORLD*," together with a consideration of "*The Love of This Life; The Ambition and Pleasure, with the Wit and Wisdom of the World*."

Young fulfills this announcement in lines 525 ff., where his effusive censures of illicit *Pleasure* and *Ambition* are well enough summarized by the rather tame NT 373. This picture of a fascinated Roman emperor tethered by a chain to a blithe young woman—a prototype of "Mirth" in Blake's first design for *L'Allegro* (Butlin 1981, cat. 543.1, pl. 672)—represents the tenor of disapproval Young was able to articulate, whereas the title page presents a prophetic denunciation in the manner of St. John. Blake's grotesque-sublime title page goes far beyond Young's ethical vision of vanity to achieve a consolidated epiphany of evil. Blake must have expected his viewers to notice that Young's words are unable to identify that pair "that was, and is not, and yet is" (Revelation 17:18). And more recently we search in vain through "Blake's myth," with Paley, to find some connections with the stories of Vala and Orc. But connections close enough to elucidate anything in the picture will not appear: Orc never grew seven heads and ten horns.

In the strict privacy of Blake's first precisely dated annotations, those to *Watson's Apology for the Bible* . . . addressed to Thomas Paine, however, we observe Blake the author using the same images as in the picture to express his own almost despairing beliefs: "To defend the Bible in this year 1798 would cost a man his life[.] The Beast & the Whore rule without controls" (E 1982, 611).⁴ The picture tells the same story and analyzes the institutional mechanisms through which tyranny perpetuates its sway. Dörrebecker has nothing good to say about the quality of the reproductions of NT 345 in the Clarendon edition, singling out the following aspects of the color version for reproval: "The bright translucent washes of blue and yellow are strongly affected by the color of the 'ground,' the creamy tinge of the printing paper; they lost much of their brilliance and depth, and in some places in the reproduction are omitted altogether" (Dörrebecker 1982, 132). Of the examples he cites, NT 107, 125, and 156 lack vibrancy, though the reds are not seriously off. This is also the case with the duller reds of NT 345; indeed, Paley declared it to be, overall, "fairly good, although the Whore of Babylon's scarlet cloak has gone too far toward orange." Paley adds, "in contrast, the reproduction in Butlin's *Catalogue*, plate 344, conveys the true color" (1982, p. 680).

In point of fact the fairly prominent *skirt*—the Whore wears no "cloak"—is in the Clarendon edition

indeed, as alleged, rather "too orange." This hue was an attempt to render a violet-rose pink. On the whole, this Clarendon color reproduction is somewhat less successful than the color reproduction of the drawing, plate 35 in Paley's 1978 Phaidon selection. The appreciable difference between these reproductions is, however, less a matter of particular hues, which are usually quite similar, than of the superior distinctness of the Phaidon reproduction. The Clarendon version is too fuzzy and the hues are insufficiently vivid, though in itself the matte finish looks more like water color than the rather glossy finish of the Phaidon. In one aspect the Clarendon is clearly superior: the background sky (apart from the blue or white flakes/stars that punctuate it) is varied grey, whereas the Phaidon renders it a muddy brown—a color Blake almost never uses, but one which shows up regularly in reproductions of his sky-greys.

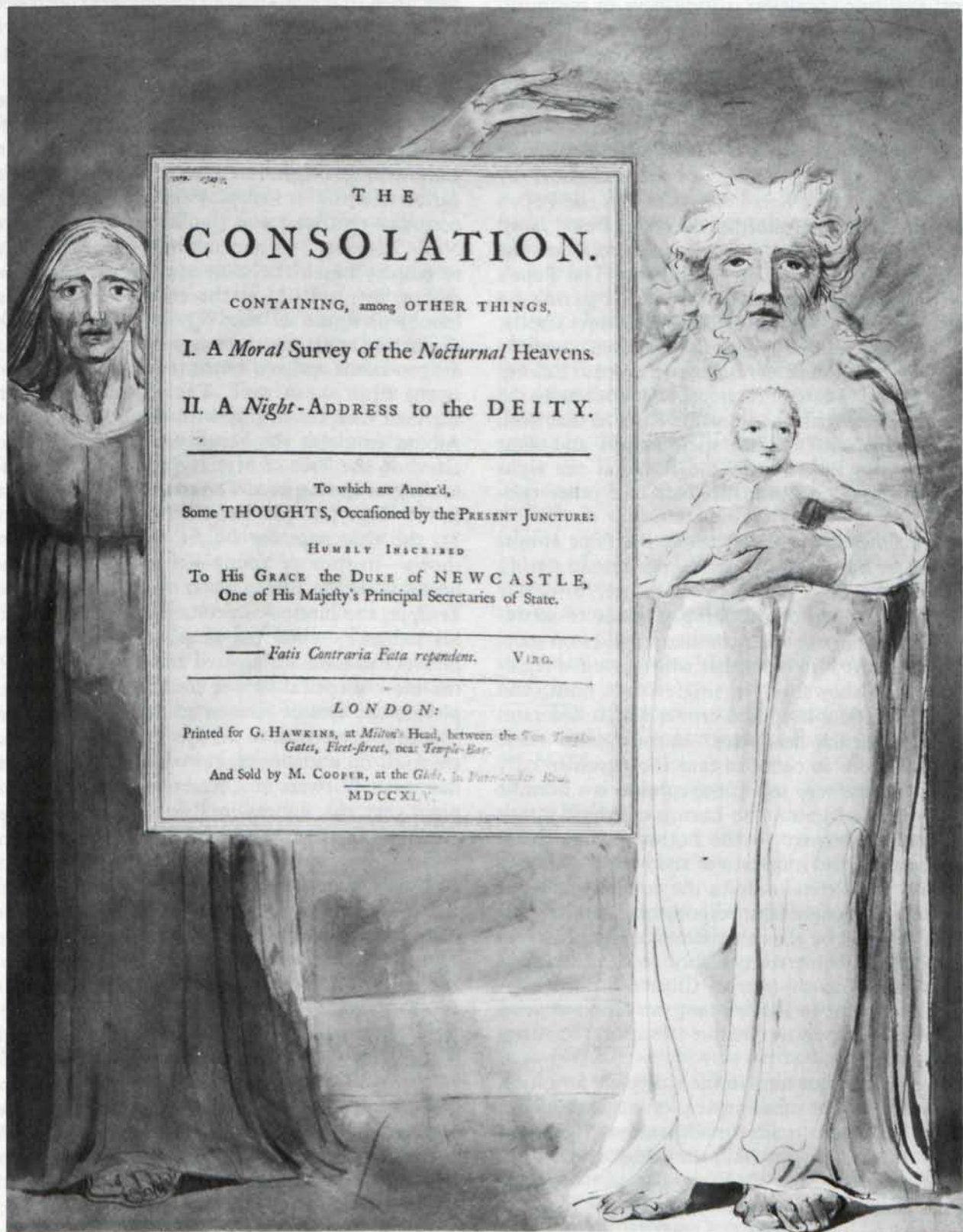
Neither the Clarendon nor the Phaidon edition was able to do anything with the wonderful blue washes (to which Dörrbecker perhaps alluded) on the face, neck, bosom, and hand of the Whore, or the stronger blue highlight on the Judge-head—the rightmost—of the Beast. If you look closely at the superb color collotype reproduction in Keynes's 1927 Harvard selection you will feel that nothing in either the 1978 or 1980 editions of NT 345 was satisfactorily reproduced—when measured against such a high standard. But I am sorry to say that Paley was profoundly mistaken to have held up Butlin's 1981 Yale reproduction, which is a dreadful botch—due, perhaps, to an attempt to bring out Blake's elusive blues. In the Yale reproduction the Whore's blouse, the skin of the serpentine body of the Beast that forms the background for her figure, and the huge lips of the Pope-head at the lower left, all turned out a bloody awful red, while the blue overlaying the grey is a darker cousin to the aforementioned dreadful blues that disfigure the reproductions of the Huntington designs for Milton's poems. On the other hand, the features of the Whore and Beast can at least be distinguished in the Yale color reproductions, whereas the monochrome in the Clarendon edition is atrociously bad, turning everything to mud. Considering that Clarendon had earlier published a quite acceptable monochrome of the picture (Paley and Phillips 1974, pl. 67, p. 269), this botch in the 1980 edition is unaccountable.

As the arrow-headed tail of the serpentine Beast curls above the text panel seeking to enlist a third part of the inchoate, flaky stars of heaven, "Mystery," duly labeled, with long blond agitated hair and heavily rouged cheeks, wearing a reddish-gold spiked crown and large ostentation of other gold and red jewelry on her expanse of flesh, prominently displays her huge chalice that contains the blood of the Saints. Her heavy slanted eyelids, which do not match her pretty, hard face, give her a sly look as she peers, with a set mouth, out of the picture,

apparently seeing something alarming since her left hand is raised, with fingers parted, expressing consternation. There is a horizon line near her raised hand to signify the curve of the globe that is beneath the sway of her machine. We need not wonder long about whom she is married to.

The middle pair of the front four heads of the Beast, the ram-horned King who wears a spiked crown like that of the Whore and the budding-horned and helmeted Warrior, stare at the viewer; the King with small, shaded, and sad indistinct eyes and downturned mouth, the skull-like Warrior with huge red eyes and vast toothy would-be smiling mouth. After commenting on the aforementioned error in the Clarendon edition—describing the direction of the gaze of the serpent in *Night Thoughts* 78 (illus. 3) as being toward the viewer—Mitchell was emboldened to raise a semiotic question as to whether one can ever be certain that a figure who looks out from a picture is supposed to be looking directly at the spectator. While rules for ascertaining the direction of view may be no easier to formulate for pictures than for life, in the actual experience of pictures this is not ordinarily a serious problem. Those viewers who have confronted Memling's *Blessing Christ* in the Norton Simon Museum or the central figure in Michelangelo's *The Crucifixion of St. Peter* in the Pauline Chapel of the Vatican (viewed from the floor, not at picture-level as in photographs) can have no doubt that the figures are looking directly at them. In Blake's own tempera quartet of 1810 (Butlin 1981, cat. 667-70; pl. 890, 891, 962, 892), three of the four central characters likewise look the viewer straight in the eye. A paradoxist might argue that Blake's Warrior in NT 345 has only pseudo or mask eyes, but still one must insist that the eyes are directed toward the viewer. A more convincing case could be made for the theory that it is the King who is truly sightless. According to *this* pictorial analysis, these two figures are the most pressing part of the problem; later, in 1809, when Blake redid the subject (Butlin 1981, cat. 523, pl. 584), none of the heads addresses the viewer; and when Blake redid it yet again as the picture for Dante's *Purgatory* 32 (Butlin 1981, cat. 812:89), it is a different head that stares at the reader with, necessarily, a different implication.

The heads at the ends of the front four look down and up; at the right the bewigged Judge who wears only a single large horn (with its spiral curve that Hogarth would have declared the line of beauty)—and also, note, a dark crown with blunt knobs—this Judge has saber-tooth fangs and stares down ominously with intense small red eyes. Positioned at the right, it appears that the Judge is the chief support of the Whore. It might be argued that the weight of the Whore falls upon this (the wider) side simply to accommodate the text panel, but I believe that Blake seldom allowed



7. *Night Thoughts* 417, Title page, *Night the Ninth*, by permission of the Trustees of the British Museum.

spatial exigencies to dictate insignificant arrangements of figures; as a rule, position is indicative of meaning. Design is no less apparent in the figure at the viewer's left end of the front four, the Bishop. His triple crown—the bottom circlet merely spiked (like those of the Whore and King), the upper two with decorated spikes, surmounted by the cross and ball of sovereignty—marks him as the Pope, who would not abjure secular power. For this reason too he is flanked beside and above by two kings, whose sheep horns contrast with the Pope's two sharp-pronged goat horns: thus the Beast is an amalgamation of sheep and goats designed to retard the radical distinction of the Last Judgment. The Pope's most disturbing characteristic is that he is gazing up with white blind eyes, uncannily lacking distinct pupils, though the position of the pupils has been carefully drawn in. Of all the characters Blake portrayed as lacking in vision, the Pope's case of cataracts is undoubtedly the worst. He is linked with the frontline King in that both betray serpentine scales about their collars and wear beards. He is also linked with the Judge at the right because both have long, whitish hair and other connecting features of similarity and contrast.

The three heads at the left above the Pope almost seem to emanate from him and appear resolute in staring at some invisible prospect (perhaps the future), evidently unalarmed. The crown of this king is made of softly-bent bands that contrast with the sharp spikes on most of the others. Above him is another white-bearded regal-ecclesiastic, who shows only a single cow's horn, and wears a fantastic double-spiked crown which decorates a huge bent triangular headpiece: we must count three horns on this figure in order to find the requisite tally of ten horns. At the very top of the column is a humble priest who wears a biretta, the button of which stands as a kind of counterpart to the horns of the others. Though subject to the influence of the varied authority of the others, this Priest (despite the tension shown in his face) is the component least responsible for the abominations perpetrated by the other facets of the Beast and its rider. He bears some resemblance to the Clerk and Reeve, who bring up the rear of Chaucer's dubiously-led cavalcade, at least in Blake's tempera representation of the *Canterbury Pilgrimage* (Butlin 1981, cat. 653, fig. 587—detail only).

All five major characters in the title page for *Night the Eighth* reappear in subsequent pictures throughout the *Night*: the Whore is first modulated as tyrannical Miss World, *Night Thoughts* 347; the Judge as the three Accusers of the Just Man in *Night Thoughts* 363; the King at first shares his sovereignty with Miss World in *Night Thoughts* 347, then enacts Caesar falling to assassins in *Night Thoughts* 372, and thereafter, in his youthful identity, is enchained by Pleasure, in *Night Thoughts* 373. The Pope becomes more weirdly reptilian to guide

Leviathan on a trivial portentous mission in *Night Thoughts* 349, then in *Night Thoughts* 396 he sits enthroned under a balacherion and offers an arrogant blessing as a humble tonsured priest grovels, about to plant a kiss on his cloven hoof.

Other spiritual presences, greater and lesser, continue to operate throughout *Night the Eighth*, for good and ill, as they must do in order to bring on the Last Judgment in *Night the Ninth*. But a crucial "consolidation of error" (to employ one of Frye's useful terms) occurs as the Beast and the Whore are first revealed in *Night Thoughts* 345 and ramified thereafter. Blake was to employ much the same strategy in *Jerusalem*, introducing in plate 75, at the end of Chapter Three, the (doubled) figure of the Whore as Tirzah and Rahab disporting with the mostly-serpentine Beast of seven dragon-heads and ten horns: they represent the Whore in the Beast, as it were. The redemption described in the final Chapter begins with the frontispiece in which Albion emulates the beneficent posture of Christ crucified on the Tree of Mystery and gives himself for the healing of the nations. The counterpart to this sequence in the *Night Thoughts* series is *Night Thoughts* 417 (illus. 7), the title page for *Night the Ninth*, where Blake shows—in spite of Young—that the real "Consolation" began with the Presentation of the Christ child in the Temple: the blessed Simeon, holding the Child, shares his radiance, while the prophetic Anna celebrates the presence so long anticipated and now at hand. Probably the most skeptical viewer could appreciate that in this picture the eyes of Simeon are upcast as he delivers his blessing, in contrast to the eyes of Anna and Jesus, which are fixed on the viewer, on whoever happens to return that gaze. Viewers of a Keatsian disposition will complain that the figures in this picture have a palpable design on them, or respond that only "Blake enthusiasts" could be impressed by what they see: the torsos of Anna and Simeon are not long enough for any viewers of taste and judgment to be taken in by what is, after all, not a very well-drawn picture. So say the connoisseurs in all ages.

III. Some Engraved Copies, with Particulars of Three Engraved Designs

A point made several times in connection with the new Census of colored engraved copies of *Night Thoughts* in the Clarendon edition is that few copies were probably colored by Blake. The presence of discolored pigments in some details in most White Death, Type I, copies of 6E, 18E, and 20E points to their common origin in Richard Edwards' workshop, since many of these copies (though not the pages in question) bear various inscriptions. Moreover, the more one sees of the copies I-2

through I-14, the more certain one becomes that none of them are by Blake. Copy I-1, in contrast, a Mellon copy now at the Yale Center for British Art, bears an owner's inscription declaring that Blake had colored it for him. The washes are different enough from those in the other White Death copies to set it apart and assure that it was not a model copy used as the standard for the other copies. On the other hand, the quality of the washes suggests that this may have been a unique copy colored by Blake. When I last studied this copy in 1981, however, I became increasingly skeptical about Blake's responsibility for its coloring.

The case for Blake's having colored seventeen plates, some very carefully, others merely touched with color, in the battered but quite wonderful White Death Copy I-15 is, on the other hand, very strong. Bentley (1977, pp. 956-57) and Butlin apparently agree with me that these are Blake's own washes. The best of these pages are considerably better than their counterparts in Copy I-1 and thus tend to discredit them, though since we know nothing about the time or circumstances of either copy, and since we are aware of the variety of effects Blake was capable of achieving in various copies of the illuminated books, all such deductions must be extremely tentative.

Lange (1981-82) has reported the rediscovery of a White Death copy mentioned in a note on page 92 of the Introduction of the Clarendon edition but not included in the new Census because it had been out of sight since 1926. He points out that the combination of characteristics in this copy necessitates listing it as Copy I-12A, rather than as I-16, and he correctly complains that this awkwardness of designation results from our unfortunate attempt to employ small variations as a principle of organization for the new Census. Since Copy I-12A, though extremely well preserved, is simply one of the many copies commercially colored for Edwards, like Copies I-2 to I-14, however, no great issue is at stake in this particular case.

More important is Lange's soon-to-be amplified demonstration that the three pages in which the coloring went bad are the result of unintended oxidation of the pigments, rather than the employment of odd colors for symbolic purposes either by Blake or colorists in Edwards' shop. In the Clarendon edition this phenomenon is referred to as "Grotesque Coloring," an unhappy phrase chosen to keep open the possibility that the blotched paint on Disease in 6E (p. 10) is deliberate rather than coincidental. I myself had come to the same conclusion that these colors are accidental before seeing Lange's compelling evidence that the colors were never intended to look as they do now in unrestored copies. (Copy I-12A, now on loan to the Morgan Library, has been beautifully restored.) Whether our attempt to hedge on the possibility of purposiveness be attributed to care-

lessness, timidity, or ignorance, would that we had laid the ghost of purposive "Grotesque Colouring" before publication of the Clarendon edition!

Some of the other things the Clarendon Introduction attempts to do fail quite badly. Apparently no reviewer checked out our tedious attempt (pp. 17-35) to enumerate the alterations of the various states of the engravings. Mitchell (1982) in an unscholarly way, indeed, tried to poke fun at this whole enumerative undertaking. Yet the information had to be presented because Blake the engraver thought that minute alterations often needed to be made. Such matters are wearisome to report in words, but they are as much the concern of true scholarship as the reporting of manuscript variants in writing. Insofar as Mitchell wished merely to object that such unengaging data are made unduly prominent in the large type of the Introduction, he had a point. But his dyspathies with exact reporting go deeper than that. Unfortunately, the whole job will have to be done over again, in the *Night Thoughts* commentary volume, because the 1980 edition contains too many inaccuracies. The errors of fact in these matters, as well as the neglect to include a chart of *Night Thoughts*-Notebook correlations that had already been included in the Erdman-Moore edition of Blake's *Notebook* (see Grant 1982, 7 and *Notebook*, pp. 51-52), the absence of captions for the final engraved designs, and the absence of an overall system of plate numbers for all the pictures, can indeed be attributed to the "sheer carelessness" that Dörrbecker finds in other features of the book.

The descriptions of the first, second, and fifth of the (uncolored) engravings for Edwards' 1797 edition of *Night Thoughts*, for example, contain many lapses or lacunae; in consequence, the viewer is not assisted to grasp Blake's purposes in introducing significant variations in the designs as he prepared them to be issued as engravings. Here are sample corrections that do not involve rewriting the entries for two of the pictures in the Table of Engraved Designs: *Night Thoughts* 6 (I.[1]); 1E (title page), Clarendon pp. 17-18, and *Night Thoughts* 20 (I. 15); 5E (p. 8), Clarendon p. 19. Concerning *Night Thoughts* 6 (illus. 8), we remarked: "the watercolor is a full-page picture, painted edge-to-edge, thus differentiating it from most other pictures in *Night the First* (e.g. NT 20) which were deliberately not carried to the edge of the paper." This indicates that NT 6 is a late addition to the pictures, since only a few after *Night the First* were painted in the deliberately reduced format. (Our comment, Clarendon edition, p. 88, n. 34, on this stylistic aspect does not really face the issue.) The text panel for NT 6 was surrounded by seven framing lines of varying thickness such as were employed for subsequent title pages. The running text panels have only a single framing line. My inference is that these lines were added in Edwards' shop after the text pages



8. *Night Thoughts* 1E, Private Proofs, page 4, First State (NT 6).

were mounted in windows in the drawing paper but before Blake began to work on them. The engraving of 1E lacks the decisive ruled edges that appear first in 3E (NT 14). In what we refer to as the first state, "Private Proofs, p. 4," we declare that the "mother's foot will be indicated later." It is not in fact shown in any state. We neglect to mention that two prime indications of this priority of the first state are, first, that the mother has a pointed nose and receding chin, as in the water color but not the published engraving. And second, that the ground is indicated only by sketchy contour lines, not hatching, as in later states. Also the hands of the receiving angels above the text panel are outstretched rather than bent down as in *both* the water color *and* the later engraved states. The eyes of the aspiring girl who stands in Death's hand are more distinct than in either the water color or the later states. And the semi-draped female spirit above her, who is being received by the angels, is as distinct as any other figure in the first state, whereas in the water color (which includes noteworthy pentimenti indicating that the figure was shortened), the flying figure becomes a transparent spirit, an idea retained in subsequent states. One might infer that Blake already intended to add the shading to indicate that the flying female is a spirit but that he was, as artist, preoccupied in the (surviving) first state with defining other details before finishing the picture for the public.

It is always a nice question as to which stage in the evolution of a work of art the critic is justified in premising the full potentiality of implication that a finished work affirms. The fact that the mouth of Death is clearly (but not prominently) indicated in the first state but *not* in the water color or in later states of the plate is not a difference that can be attributed to accident. Yet one should hesitate to attribute a symbolic import to this deliberate alteration—to declare, for example, that the diminution of pictorial attention to the mouth "means" that Blake was intent on avoiding any implication, at this stage of his narrative, of "Death the Devourer."

On the other hand, a major pictorial element in all stages of the developing picture, such as the long hair agitated by the wind blowing it to the right exhibited both by the woman standing in Death's hand and the flying female spirit, demands recognition and interpretation because it is presented in unmistakable contrast with the unwhipped hair of the other figures, most notably with that of the deliberately bound hair of the woman with the distaff and the slack hair and beard of the giant form of Death as he first appears in the *Night Thoughts* series. Later, of course, as in *Night Thoughts* 20 (5E), Death's hair too is whipped by the wind—and his eyes are opened—as he frantically strikes at the sun: Young's "insensate archer" (who also stimulated Byron in *Childe Harold* I, st. 91) there shows an aspect the

viewer could not have told at the outset. The details of *Night Thoughts* 6 (1E), more accurately reported, would veto our *Nota Bene* that "the watercolor is closer to proof state two than state one." But they increase the likelihood that the First engraved State preceded the water color.

The water color for *Night Thoughts* 20 (illus. 9), on the other hand, surely preceded the engraving, 5E, (the order one would, of course, have expected) because it is not an edge-to-edge picture: the feathers on Death's Dart fade out sketchily in the upper corner where there was plenty of space to have indicated them. Both at the left and at the bottom much pictorial space is deliberately unoccupied, in contrast to the essentially full-plate style of engraving. As we indicate, the image was reversed in engraving, to produce a recto design. This reversal makes for awkwardness in reporting the right and left sides for corresponding details. In the water color the crown for the king beneath the outstretched leg of Death has four spikes while the crown for the king beneath the vertical leg (as we neglected to specify) shows six spikes. In the engraving both crowns show five spikes. The head of the king beneath the vertical leg is little changed in the first state of the engraving except that his hair is indicated and a collar and medallion are added at the throat. The change in the other head is more remarkable, and problematic. In the first state of the engraving the features of this king, a youngish man with a moustache, are shown in profile; his hair appears on both sides of his head, which seems at first simply to have been cut off by the bottom edge of the plate. But the king's crown appears in the corner as though it had fallen off; within and above it is a piled-up mound, which more closely resembles hair than engraved lines that delineate the curve of the earth and contours of the ground. This mound is off-center in relation to the crown but is painted (normally *not* by Blake) reddish-purple in Type I colored copies, as though it were a regal cloth lining for the crown. In Type II colored copies (also probably not by Blake), it is painted brown, like hair. These details of coloring at least tell us what the colorists took the mound to be. Another detail of the engraving we neglected to specify is that in the engraving a tail of Death's robe crosses the throat of this king, suggesting that he is being strangled by the robe as well as by the foot of insolent Death, who, having trodden two kings whose torsos are twisted together in a single shroud, now has his dart poised to strike the very sun.

More thorough reporting of the details of the engraving might have allayed Dörrebecker's judgment (p. 138, n. 21) that our description and suggested interpretation of water color *Night Thoughts* 20 are "fantastic." Dörrebecker wishes to maintain that the king's head beneath Death's outstretched foot in the water color version

is invisible for no other reason than that it was twisted so that all that can be seen is the bottom of a chin; and that the providing of a face in the engraved version was simply a matter of facilitating recognition. We had stated flatly that this king was decapitated in the water color and had remarked earlier (p. 13) that this representation was politically "provocative," obviously because it would recall the fate of the King of France. Once the reader has discerned that Dörrbecker's citation of a painting ascribed to the Pollaiuolo is a red herring, having nothing to do with the question of whether decapitation is indicated in either Blake's water color or his engraving, it is evident that his counter-evidence has no force. Conceivably what the viewer is supposed to see in the water color is indeed the underside of the chin rather than a head cut off above the neck. But the crown is not on the king's head in either version: *some* king has been uncrowned. And this king is twisted into the same shroud as another dead king, one still wearing his crown. Let us forego the possibility (I believe it to be a certain implication in both cases) of decollation. Let us suppose instead that in 1797 Blake had been called into court because of his dubious political associations. Question: "Mr. Blake, which two degraded kings are we supposed to think of when we look at this picture of yours?" Answer: "The kings of Asia, Your Honour. The kings of Japan and China."

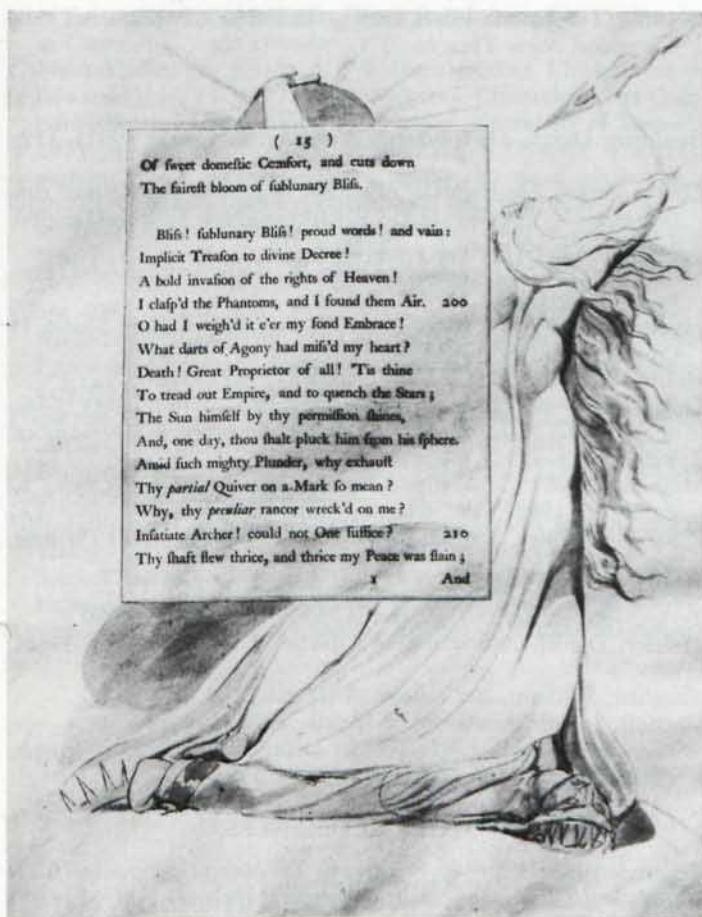
The description on page 18 of the Clarendon edition of the water color for *Night Thoughts* 8 (I.[3]) (illus. 8) is too perfunctory and does not provide a clear enough basis for explaining the slightly varied picture that becomes engraving 2E (p. 1). In the foreground a young man, muffled in a robe except for his head and the toes of his sandalled right foot, rests on his right side and leans on his right elbow with his body stretched out in front of a sleeping dog and a flock of sheep. Near his head a vine with thirteen leaves stretches up the left side of the text panel, while in the starry night sky the angel-winged figure of Sleep hovers in the air and touches the flock with a wand. Above the text panel, against the background of a break in the clouds, a small male figure with a visible but indistinct face sleeps on his left side underneath a coverlet. The dog has long curly hair, and the heads of a horned ram and two ewes are distinguishable in the flock. The text confirms that the figure in the foreground is Young the insomniac, who has a tense sleepless look about his eyes as he stares into space, not meeting the look of the viewer. The coverlet on his right arm is curiously draped, suggesting that he holds a long thin object that hangs down to a point just above the ground: this object seems to me to have the shape of a (foreshortened) book.

The water color, which was contracted on three sides, has been expanded in the engraving by adding grass to the left edge of the plate and in the foreground,

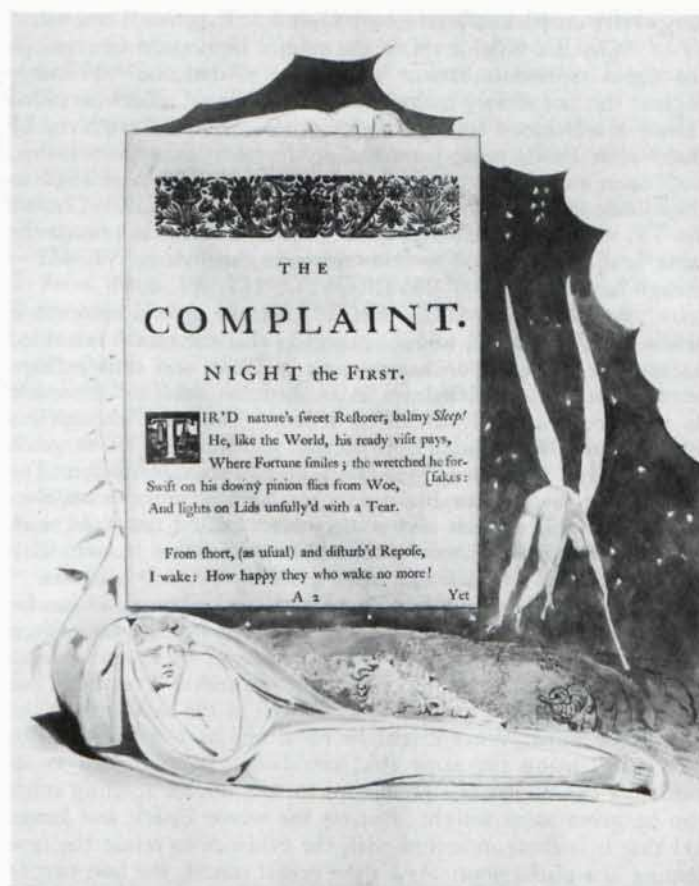
as well as by straightening the sky enclave above the text. In the engraved version it becomes virtually a full-plate design. Young's face becomes less tense, and his eyes are more heavily lidded. The coverlet over the hidden object has deeper folds, but the covered object still suggests a book. The dog is now shorter haired and the quality of his coat becomes hardly distinguishable from that of the sheep. Above the dog the back and ears of another sheep have been added in what had been an indistinct area, while the rumps of three more sheep and the left horn of the ram have been added. The staff of Sleep is slimmer, the coverlet on the sleeping man above the text panel is symmetrically twisted (in a possibly sinister manner), while the thirty-six stars are in almost exactly the same positions they were in in the water color. The stars appear to be arranged in particular constellations (which I have not been able to identify); the arrangement may add some further overtone of significance.

It is unlikely, however, that the stars are as important as the suggestion of a muffled book hidden beneath the coverlet of Young the insomniac. Appearing as it does at the end of the varied book-scroll sequence of NT 2, 5, 6 (illus. 8), and especially facing design 7, and linking with the books shown in NT 14 (3E), NT 18 (4E), and NT 34 (9E), the hidden book in NT 8 represents an important stage in the relation of the author with his text. Several possibilities suggest themselves, once the viewer concedes the likelihood that if the object is a book it must be Young's own poem, *The Complaint and the Consolation or Night Thoughts on Life, Death, and Immortality*, which the author is at pains to conceal.

If we take as a starting point Blake's later motto, "No Secrecy in Art" (E 1982, 275) and infer that the vine with thirteen leaves that grows up next to Young, together with his concealed book, indicate the results of bad influences on his spirit, we will not place too much trust in Young's book. Yet Blake's vast project of illustrating the *Night Thoughts* must have proceeded on the faith that the poem constitutes a base worth building on: most details in most pictures are in accord with the spirit and letter of Young's poem. But Blake must also have believed that he was authorized by the spirit from prophecy to add much from his own visionary perspective in order to free the visionary elements of Young's poem from their all-too-often timorous author and place the whole work in the light of prophecy. In suggesting at the outset of the poem that there is something resembling a book beneath a cloak of respectability in *Night Thoughts* 8, Blake had begun the task of rectification. The rest of the pictures are designed to bring Young's latent imaginings and evasions out into the open.



9. *Night Thoughts* 20, *Night the First*, page 15 (Cf. 5E), by permission of the Trustees of the British Museum.



10. *Night Thoughts* 8, *Night the First*, page [3] (Cf. 2E), by permission of the Trustees of the British Museum.

¹ He might have got the drift simply by consulting Lemprière's *Classical Dictionary* on "Manes," which he would earlier have had occasion to do while engraving Fuseli's fantasy on *Aeneid* 6:896. See Essick 1983, no. xxx, pp. 175-76 and pl. 76.

² Note that in Blake's two splendid water colors entitled *The Great Red Dragon and the Woman Clothed in the Sun* (Butlin 1981, cat. 519, 520; pls. 580, 581), the woman is within the crescent, not on top of it.

Outside *Night the Third* in the *Night Thoughts* series the figure who most closely resembles the apocalyptic woman of *Night Thoughts* 78 (illus. 3) appears as the sky goddess in *Night Thoughts* 446 (IX, 28), identified as "Night" in Young's poem. This cosmic woman is crowned with stars, and her body and sky-filling robes are punctuated with stars; those on her hand and foot are displayed as though they were stigmata. In order to handle the interpretive linkage to the woman in *Night Thoughts* 78, however, one must first establish her relationship to the poem in *Night Thoughts* 447 and then treat both as episodes of the recurrent poet-muse theme in the entire series. In other words, the connection between NT 78 and NT 446 is not close enough to be interpretively decisive.

The intended significance of Blake's apocalyptic woman's gesture of raised arms and hands outspread may be more specific than ardent supplication or generalized prayer. One can hardly be indifferent to Benjamin West's treatment of practically the same subject, probably also done in 1797 as part of his scheme to decorate

Fonthill Abbey: *The Woman Clothed with the Sun*, as West represented her, stands, levitated by angels and her own wings, above the dry crescent moon as well as above the threatening, staring sea serpent who vomits water. She looks rapturously upward with upraised arms and outspread hands toward her infant boy, who is being carried up into heaven by one angel and convoyed by another (see Nancy L. Pressly, *Revealed Religion: Benjamin West's Commissions for Windsor Castle and Fonthill Abbey* [San Antonio: San Antonio Museum of Art, 1983], fig. 33 [cat. 37, p. 69], or John Dillenberger, *Benjamin West: The Context of His Life's Work*, with Particular Attention to Paintings with Religious Subject Matter [San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 1977], pl. 76). Prompted by West's illustration of Rev. 12:1-5, 13-17, one might infer that Blake's woman in *Night Thoughts* 78 (24E) is likewise supposed to be understood as having just passed her own infant son up to angels that are visible to her, but not to the viewer. Yet this gesture has no point of correspondence with Young's poem, and Blake's other aspiring women in the front designs for each *Night* or in *Night the Third* do not disburden themselves of a child. See NT 6 (I, [1]:1E) (illus. 8), NT 37 (II, tp verso), and III, p. 6: NT 81; 25E, III, p. 10: NT 85, III, p. 12: NT 87; 26E, III, p. 34: NT 109. The aspiring women in *Night the Fourth* all gesture differently, but they too appeal for themselves rather than for another. It seems, therefore, that the West picture, despite its suggestive similarities to *Night Thoughts* 78, does not provide any useful interpretive

perspective on Blake's picture.

³ Why did Shields think the soldier he noticed (the one at the right) represents Satan, "the power of darkness"? Probably because the face closely resembles that of "Satan," otherwise called "Head of a Damned Soul in Dante's Inferno," a head engraved by Blake after Fuseli some years earlier. It too is seen from below, with open mouth and blank eyes, at practically the same angle as the soldier in NT 264. Essick 1983, no. xxxii, pp. 170-72, and fig. 73, now dates the states as c. 1789 and notes that much the same head appears in five other pictures, including NT 432—though he overlooks NT 264 (illus. 2).

⁴ Bentley 1978, 1404, declares that the second sentence is deleted. Erdman 1982, 884-85, declares that the cancel is a ruled double line in pencil uncharacteristic of Blake and thus perhaps attributable to Samuel Palmer. Alas, Erdman does not comment on the terminal word, which he renders "controls," though his 1965 edition, like those of both Keynes and Bentley (1978), reads it as singular. Erdman (1983) offers no further clarification. The concordance reveals that Blake does not use the plural noun elsewhere, and also that he always elsewhere spelled the word with two *l*s. The OED shows that the plural noun was in use, with specific political reference, in Blake's time.

I am grateful to Robert N. Essick and Thomas Lange for having restudied Blake's inscription, which is in the Huntington Library. With the aid of a special microscope, they were able to discern these facts: there is a smudge at the end of "controls," but the letter "s" appears to have been written in the same ink as the rest of the word. What might be construed as a stroke through this letter, using the same ink, could also be construed as an indistinct cancel. Blake's preference for the double spelling must also be given some weight. But on the whole Essick and Lange feel that it is more in accord with the evidence to retain the new reading of a plural noun. As for the pencil cancel, the first part of the aphorism is crossed with three horizontal but *unruled* lines, the second part with two lines, also *unruled*; only "controls" lacks any pencil lines. It should be understood that a number of the subsequent annotations are also in pencil, though most are written in the same ink as is used on the title page aphorism. Samuel Palmer signed the book in ink, not pencil. There is no sign elsewhere that he altered Blake's annotations. Therefore, there is no reason to assign the rather faint pencil cancels on the second aphorism to anyone other than Blake.

My conclusion from this review of the evidence is as follows: in 1798 Blake saw overwhelming evidence that "The Beast & the Whore rule without Controls." Subsequently, perhaps as late as the Peace of Amiens, 1802-03, Blake took another look at Watson, with pencil in hand. In addition to adding certain comments, he (faintly) canceled at least most of the second aphorism. Ordinarily, Blake might have conceded, the Beast and the Whore rule with (some) controls; in the best of times the rule of the Beast and the Whore is so veiled that it need not be affirmed. In evaluating the alterations, there is no obligation to think that the cancellation by Blake represents a retraction. Much as in the case of "Opposition is true Friendship," *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, pl. 20, which was painted out in colored copies (E 1982, 42 and 802 n), we need not suppose that Blake actually changed his mind about the principle involved. Every honest man as prophet is bound to see the marks of the Beast and the Whore much of the time in the activities and relationships prevailing in an imperium.

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Reply to John Grant

W.J.T. Mitchell

Several reviewers of the *Clarendon Night Thoughts* found the reproductions inadequate, the scholarship uneven, and the interpretive commentary tendentious and unconvincing. John Grant's lengthy reply to these reviews concedes that there is considerable merit to all these complaints, and yet manages also to convey the impression that an injustice has been done. Sometimes the injustice comes about because of things the editors inadvertently left out of their book: my review, for instance, might not have objected to the neglect of crucial details in the commentary if the editors "had not carelessly neglected a footnote referring to an article by one of the editors" on the problem in question. At other times Grant's complaint is that the reviewers are hostile to Blake, or that they have inadequate theories (despite the accuracy of their specific objections), or (in my case) that they fail to do the editors' job for them, and write a satisfactory commentary rather than objecting to inadequacies in the one provided by the Clarendon edition. In all cases the strategy is one of apparent concession, followed by an attack on the motives or the intellectual and scholarly competence of the reviewers. It is not, on

the whole, pleasant reading.

Let me take up first the issue of hostility to Blake. Grant delivers the opinion that ninety percent of the *Night Thoughts* illustrations are "fine pictures," and suggests that anyone (like David Bindman) who disagrees with this judgment is engaged in the sort of "Grecian mocks" that Blake despised. Despite Grant's opening promise to "clarify standards and deviations from them," his assertion invokes no discernible standard but his own authority as one who has been deeply involved in the study of the *Night Thoughts* designs for many years. The question of the relative quality of these designs both within Blake's oeuvre, and in the context of late eighteenth century book illustration, is an interesting one, but it is not likely to be settled by accusing anyone who dares to question Blake's accomplishment of uttering "Grecian mocks." Until this problem is subjected to more sober discussion, my instinct is to trust the judgment of a well-informed art historian who, like David Bindman, has demonstrated his ability to look at Blake's pictures sympathetically.

Grant's defense of the commentary on the *Night Thoughts* designs opens up the most interesting and potentially fruitful part of this discussion, because this aspect of the project, unlike the reproductions and the scholarly apparatus, has yet to be published and is still subject to correction. My review attempted, no doubt unsuccessfully, to offer some friendly advice about ways