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R E V I E W

G. Ingh James, ed., *William Blake, Annotations to Richard Watson*

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more aware than most others of why he was doing it" (p. 76). From this insight it is possible to develop a coherent and consistent theory of artistic production, which is at the same time sensitive to nuances of context and faithful to Blake as an individual. Eaves succeeds in his book, while Crehan fails in his.

The reasons for Crehan's failure, suggested from virtually his first paragraph, are clearly evident in his book's tenth and final chapter "Jerusalem and Albion." Here Crehan seeks to show that the aptness of his social and artistic analysis rests on a hitherto undiscussed tradition of working-class English radical protestantism that exhorts its followers to a life of inspired artisanship for the spiritual redemption of the world. To paraphrase Voltaire (in the infernal sense, of course), if radical protestantism had not existed, Blake, Marx (perhaps), and Crehan (certainly) would have found it necessary to invent in order to promulgate a dialectical changing of the -isms. In his *pisgah*-vision, Crehan sees context as Adam saw history in Book XII of *Paradise Lost*: "The context of Blake's utopian vision is a transition from millenarism and communitarianism to the utopian socialist experiments of the St-Simonians and Owenites" (p. 330). Notably absent in Crehan's discussion is any reference to Harold Fisch's *Jerusalem and Albion* (1964), which would have forced Crehan to address spiritual as well as social issues. Nor is there, despite the bandying about of the idea of millenarianism, any reference to Norman Cohn's *The Pursuit of the Millennium* (1957; 1961). Nor is there even a passing reference to the analysis of the same transformation that Crehan argues for that is found in M.H. Abrams' *Natural Supernaturalism* (1971).

And these are hardly the only oversights: if not Eaves, then why not include the work of marxists such as Lucien Lefebvre and Pierre Macherey who have already come to grips with the issue of how to articulate a marxist theory of artistic production? Why not include a broader sampling of those formalist critics sent up from the start, if only to rebut them on matters of substance? In the final analysis, as the appended bibliography shows, Crehan's book is either a thinly researched dissertation, a badly updated one, or some combination of these. It may not be possible to gain access to eighteenth-century rare books at the University of Zambia, where he teaches, but Crehan surely could have taken the trouble to buttress his arguments with more evidence of careful and reputable research. To do so would not have mitigated the sting of the gratuitous nastiness that abounds in the book. My special selection in this regard is taken from Crehan's analysis of Blake's color-printed monotype *Newton*: "the whole body curves in upon itself, hunching itself into an embryo-like ball (the characteristic position of all intellectuals) . . ." (p. 165). Come the revolution, I trust the bureaucracy of

the proletariat will help me and my fellow sufferers to shake off the chains of our scholarship—and scoliosis.

One finally wonders why someone in the academy would do everything in his power to *épater* his version of *les bourgeois*—even to ridicule them—without doing his level best to make sure that in the aftermath he edified them by edifying himself to the greatest possible extent. Crehan's is an angry, inept, and ultimately saddening effort. Marxist approaches to Blake do not have to be so—David Punter's *Blake, Hegel, and Dialectic* (1982) is a case in point. And a marxist approach to Blake's theory and practice of artistic production could be richly edifying. But such an approach has not yet been tried successfully, Crehan's *Blake in Context* notwithstanding.

William Blake. *Annotations to Richard Watson. An Apology for the Bible in a Series of Letters Addressed to Thomas Paine.* 8th ed. 1797. Edited with an Introduction by G. Ingli James. Cardiff: University College Cardiff Press, 1984. Pp. vii + [170].

Reviewed by Nicholas O. Warner

Among the most striking and eloquent of his annotations to other writers are Blake's comments on Bishop Watson's *An Apology for the Bible*, itself a reply to the second part of Tom Paine's *The Age of Reason*. Many Blake scholars have found it useful to cite portions of these vivid, often angry annotations, resounding as they do with the voice of honest indignation, and frequently anticipating issues present in Blake's later prophetic books. These annotations have, of course, been available in the great editions of Keynes, Bentley, and Erdman, but G. Ingli James's new edition of the annotations presents them for the first time in facsimile, and with a typographic transcription that follows the actual disposition of Blake's words.

James's edition, published in the Regency Reprint series by University College Cardiff Press, begins with a learned, lucid, engagingly written introduction, in which James points out that a facsimile of the annotations "makes visually evident the expressive vigour of Blake's comments." James goes on to give us some background information about Watson and his career as Bishop of Llandaff, and about Blake's intellectual relationship to both Watson and Paine; James also distinguishes carefully not only between Watson's "Whiggish liber-

alism" and the radicalism of Blake and Paine, but also between the views of Blake and Paine themselves. The only drawback to the introduction is its terseness—it takes up a mere seven pages, including footnotes. One would welcome fuller elaboration on a number of James's observations about the historical and religious context of Watson's book and Blake's annotations to it.

The facsimile itself reproduces Watson's book in its entirety, including unannotated pages. Both Watson's text and Blake's comments are clear, though more along the lines of a good photocopy than of a photograph. It is only fair to say, however, that examination of the original in the Huntington Library makes one sympathize with the photographer, for the pages, made of poor quality paper, are dirty and splotted, and Blake's ink has faded considerably. The clarity of some of Blake's pencil annotations, probably faint to begin with, has not been enhanced by the passage of nearly two centuries. It is therefore understandable that the pencil jottings are sometimes harder to read than the writing in ink, but even so, a surprising number of the pencil annotations are quite legible. Still, the slight thickening of lines in the facsimile results in some letters, particularly Blake's "e," being much harder to recognize than they are in the original. Similarly, it is more difficult to make out deleted words in the facsimile, thus calling into question the ability of the photographic reproduction truly to allow, in James's words, "readers to decide for themselves about problematic punctuation marks, capitals, deletions and so on. . . ." In many instances, this might be possible, but for the most problematic words, one must still turn to the original.

James's transcription of the annotations, which follows the facsimile, avoids any "improvement" on Blake's punctuation, and observes the exact arrangement of Blake's own writing on the page. The transcription is extremely helpful whenever Blake's hand, or the effects of time and dirt, pose difficulties. Moreover, like the facsimile, the transcription enables us to see exactly where Blake's comments begin and end, thus avoiding the specious links between annotation and text that can result from placing the annotations directly beneath excerpts from Watson, as is commonly done.

My only complaint about the layout of the transcription is the presence of large white spaces, instead of Watson's printed words, in the central area of the transcription pages, so that the annotations seem to hover about a phantom text. A more convenient arrangement would include relevant pages of Watson's text, thus preventing the constant back-and-forth flipping through pages that readers must engage in so as to connect the transcriptions with specific passages in Watson. It would also help if James marked insertions as well as deletions; on p. 9 of the original, for instance, Blake adds the word "peculiar," with a distinct caret

beneath it, to the space between two other words, yet the transcription includes the word with no indication of its being an insertion.

The main strength of the entire edition lies in the notes accompanying the transcription. James's sixty-seven footnotes constitute a kind of running commentary that clarifies obscure allusions, draws parallels between the annotations and passages elsewhere in Blake, and demonstrates a thorough grasp of Blake criticism, which James skillfully applies to a number of issues raised in Blake's comments. James scrupulously explains his reasoning in those instances where his transcriptions differ from those of Keynes, Bentley or Erdman, and he meticulously refers us to previous scholarship on the annotations. He concisely sets forth his own interpretations, and draws our attention to such noteworthy things as the extent to which Blake, in his eagerness to defend Paine, comes uncharacteristically close to religious orthodoxy in the annotations. No less admirable are the light touches of ironic wit that enliven James's footnotes. The edition's final pages present us with a reproduction of the conclusion to the second part of Paine's *The Age of Reason*.

All in all, the Blake scholar, for whom the facsimile is plainly intended, will find here a helpful tool and an editorial treatment that reflects good judgment and good taste. Introduction, facsimile, transcription and footnotes alike can help us achieve a more accurate, intimate understanding of Blake's mental fight with the Bishop of Llandaff.

Nelson Hilton. *Literal Imagination: Blake's Vision of Words*. Berkeley and Los Angeles, Calif., London: University of California Press, 1983. xviii + 319 pp. \$30.00.

Reviewed by David Wagenknecht

A more accurate subtitle for Nelson Hilton's new book might have been "Blake's Vision IN Words." Blake interpretation in general, it is quite true, has tended to such a preoccupation with the prophetic *mise en scene* that the "minute particulars" of his vision, at least the lexical nuts and bolts, are overlooked. They are "a Void, outside of Existence," but Nelson Hilton in these pages enthusiastically enters in, showing us convincingly that Blake's genius, delicate but determinedly prehensile, could wrap itself around a vocable as easily as it could draw down Prometheus. One horizon of Hilton's approach is some-