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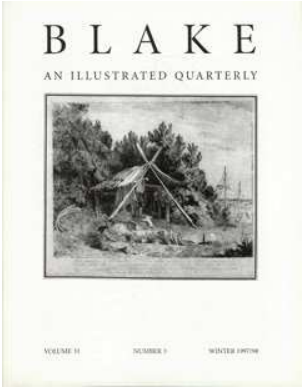

Kathryn S. Freeman, Blake's Nostos: Fragmentation and Nondualism in The Four Zoas

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turned up from a Huntington handlist of Bulmer:
1 Claude Gelée, dit Le Lorrain. LIBER VERITATIS; | OR | A COLLECTION OF PRINTS, | AFTER THE | ORIGINAL DESIGNS | OF | CLAUDE LE LORRAIN; | IN THE | COLLECTION OF HIS GRACE THE DUKE OF DEVONSHIRE |EXECUTED BY | RICHARD EARLOM, | IN THE MANNER AND TASTE OF THE DRAWINGS. | TO WHICH IS ADDED | A DESCRIPTIVE CATALOGUE OF EACH PRINT; | TOGETHER WITH | THE NAMES OF THOSE FOR WHOM, AND THE PLACES FOR WHICH THE ORIGINAL | PICTURES WERE FIRST PAINTED, | (Taken from the Hand-writing of CLAUDE LE LORRAIN on the Back of each Drawing) | AND |OF THE PRESENT POSSESSORS OF MANY OF THE ORIGINAL PICTURES. | - | VOLUME THE FIRST[-SECOND]. | LONDON: | = | PUBLISHED BY MESSRS. BOYDELL AND CO. CHEAPSIDE. |PRINTED BY W. BULMER AND CO. CLEVELAND-ROW. [?1791] Folio, 2 vols. with 200 prints, and a supplementary volume PRINTED BY JAMES MOYES (1819). *N.B.* The title page exists in at least two different forms; one of them specifies "*two hundred* prints" "Published by *the proprietor*, John Boydell, *engraver*, London, *1777*" (ESTC lists copies in the Ashmolean Museum [Oxford], British Library [3], Dalhousie, Gottingen, Newberry Library [2], Michigan, John Rylands Library [University of Manchester], U.S. National Gallery, and Yale—none seen by me), and this can have nothing to do with Bulmer, who was not in business at the time. The second form, as above, is almost certainly in or after 1790 (when Bulmer began paying rates at Cleveland Row [Isaac p. 25]) (4 copies seen in the Huntington <129352; 281823; 295025; Art Gallery fn C1135 G3A3>). This Bulmer titlepage is not listed in ESTC, *NUC*, and elsewhere, but I wonder whether some of the sets located there, uniformly dated "1777" (the date of Boydell's dedication) are not in fact the Bulmer printing.[12]
2 [Incipit:] Cy ensuyt une chanson moult pitoyable des grivouses oppressions qe la povre Commune de Engleterre souffre ... Pp. i-xliiii in Gothic type, with a colophon on p. [xlv]: LONDON; | FROM THE [Gothic:] Shakspeare Press, BY | WILLIAM BULMER AND CO. CLEVELAND-ROW, ST. JAMES'S. | 1818. 4°. The work was compiled by Sir Francis Palgrave; the front paste-down of the Huntington copy is inscribed: "Only 25 copies printed by Sir F. Palgrave, all for presents."

"Elizabeth, Princess", the designer of the prints; Thomas Williamson's *Oriental Field Sports*, oblong folio (1807), 4° (1808), is oddly listed under Edward Orme, who was merely the supervisor of the engravings; and Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (1819) and other works are listed only under the Roxborough Club.

[12] Claude's *Leber Veritatis* Vol. I-II (n.d.) is listed in Isaac's first *Checklist* (1961), the Second 1973, p. 8, #143), and the Third (1986, p. 10, #143), but it dropped out of the 1994 list because, as Professor Isaac tells me, when he checked the British Library copy he found that it did not bear Bulmer's name.

Kathryn S. Freeman, *Blake's Nostos: Fragmentation and Nondualism in* The Four Zoas. SUNY Series in Western Esoteric Traditions. David Applebaum, Editor. New York: State University of New York Press, 1997. Pp. 208. $49.50/16.95.

Reviewed by SHEILA A. SPECTOR

In *Blake's Nostos: Fragmentation and Nondualism in* The Four Zoas, Kathryn S. Freeman explores the possibility of using Eastern nondualism as a useful context in which to place Blake's first epic. Taking a mystical, rather than conventionally literary approach, Freeman suggests that previous studies have all been hampered to varying degrees by their reliance on principles of linear structure, and as a result, all have failed to account for the relationship between the apocalyptic Night the Ninth and the eight nights which precede it. The reasons, she argues, are "that the powerful though tenuously held vision of nonduality in Night the Ninth provides a touchstone for the rest of the poem and that the organized innocence of Night the Ninth is fully cognizant of the fragmented world of the first eight Nights" (21). With the use of subtle and perceptive readings, filtered through a concept she labels "nostos," "the return home of consciousness to its expanded state" (4), Freeman analyzes "the elements of Blake's mythos, including its principles of causality, narrative, figuration and teleology, all having both dual and nondual, or fallen and redeemed, versions" (22).

According to Freeman, Blake's myth has been misunderstood because of our own reliance on Western modes of thought. Given *The Four Zoas*'s resistance to the more conventional interpretation of Blake's contraries as dialectical antitheses, Freeman suggests in her first chapter, "Blake's Mythos: Nondual Vision in a Dualistic World," the possibility that Eastern mysticism might help to elucidate the poem. Asserting that in Blake, "The fallen state, a contraction of undifferentiated, expanded consciousness, is therefore subsumed by the redeemed rather than being antithetical to it" (3), Freeman redefines Blake's doctrine of contraries in terms of the fragmentation and reintegration of consciousness, providing revisionist readings of selected poems from the *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* to support her thesis. Having thus established the plausibility of her approach, she posits the *Bhagavad Gita* as a possible analogue for Blake's treatment of nondual experiences. Regardless of whether or not Blake was directly influenced by the Wilkins translation (or even whatever derivative versions might have been available to him), Freeman believes that they shared similar attitudes towards the problem of consciousness.

In the remainder of her book, Freeman demonstrates the validity of her thesis, constructing a kind of hermeneutical

circle with Night the Ninth as its projected center. Beginning with the purported origin of the poem itself, she starts, in chapter 2, "'Pangs of an Eternal Birth': *The Four Zoas* and the Problem of Origin," with the last words of the manuscript, "End of the Dream," placing *The Four Zoas* in the context of an inverted dream vision, one in which the "dreamer" is undifferentiated consciousness, thus making the dream world, in contradistinction to more conventional renditions of the genre, the phenomenal world of time and space. From this perspective, everything which occurs within the poem represents the now revealed to be "unreal" state in which consciousness is fragmented into competing components whose actions, as governed by the laws of material existence, distort the "reality" delineated by their idealized portrayal in Night the Ninth. When viewed through the lens of Night the Ninth, the salutary effect of activities heretofore (mis)perceived as being deleterious is revealed to be part of a cosmic plan of reintegration.

The next three chapters—"Prophecies, Visions, and Memories: Fictions as Mental Contraction," "Centricity and the Vortex," and "City of Art, Temple of Mystery: The Divided Path to Apocalypse"—are devoted, respectively, to time, space and formal design or function. After describing the conventions of the inverted dream vision, Freeman next explains how the temporal elements generally associated with narrative structure have been altered. Instead of a single voice articulating the action, the competing parts of the fragmented consciousness, i.e., the Zoas, their emanations, spectres, etc., all express their own limited, and hence distorted, impressions of the aspects of the action in which they themselves participate before they all reintegrate in Night the Ninth. Presented more like a drama, the narrative is coordinated by a stage manager rather than articulated by a single unified consciousness. Because no one within the dream world has full knowledge of all events, the speeches reveal more about the individual speakers than about the situation. In the fallen state, prophecy degenerates into anxiety, vision into perception, and memory into mythmaking, as each of the fragmented consciousnesses attempts to organize what they all sincerely, though erroneously, believe (from evidence derived from their demonstrably limited cognitive abilities) to be the state of their existence.

Consistent with the narrative voice, Blake's use of imagery in *The Four Zoas* also follows the pattern of fragmentation and reintegration into a unified whole. Tracing complementary images of the vortex/mandala and chain/Ouroboros, Freeman illustrates, in "Centricity and the Vortex," how, in order to portray the subjectivity of perception, Blake modulates his images to reflect different aspects of the fragmented consciousness. Consequently, as she argues in "City of Art, Temple of Mystery," the two extant Nights the Seventh are more rightly seen as two different perceptions of the same concept. Rather than one replacing the other, or the two combining into a single narrative thread, Night the Seventh [a] and [b], like the fragmented narrative voices and inverted spatial images, are two attempts to solve the same problem:

> In Night the Seventh, the fork in the road to apocalypse, fallenness reaches its most dire state while glimpses of eternity promise wholeness. In terms of the poem's concern with representation and mythos, Night the Seventh is the pivotal moment in which the poem must confront its central paradox, the problem of how to represent the imageless. The two versions present two paths to wholeness. Both contain failed architectures of art, the building of which leads in dramatically diverse though not mutually exclusive ways to apocalypse. (130)

The apocalypse achieved in Night the Ninth is the reintegration of consciousness:

> The apocalypse is therefore not the destruction of the world at the end of time, but the continuous annihilation and inevitable rebuilding of the dualistic world and its infinite variations, and the return to pure consciousness. In the dream that human experience knows as waking life, such a return is available continuously though held in precarious balance. (157)

Freeman's structural analysis of *The Four Zoas* is quite persuasive. Her explications of key passages are both enlightening and provocative; and by positing Night the Ninth as the focal point, she suggests interesting new implications for the cruxes which have historically surrounded Blake's shift from *Vala* to *The Four Zoas,* as well as his decision to leave the manuscript unengraved. Less persuasive, unfortunately, is Freeman's attempt to locate *The Four Zoas* in a new cultural context.

The first problem results from imprecise terminology. Examining, as it does, the "mystical" (30-31) implications of Blake's "nondual" (2) representation of "undifferentiated consciousness" (25), focusing especially on manifestations of "causality, narrative, figuration and teleology" (22) in Blake's "mythos" (5), Freeman's monograph can be somewhat confusing. Because each of these terms signifies a technical concept whose full dimensions are still a matter of critical dispute, she would have done well to provide clear and precise working definitions so that the reader could follow her train of thought. Instead, her explanations tend to be ambiguous or superficial. Most unfortunate is the confusion generated by her central concept, "nostos." As she defines the term,

> Innocence must be distinguished from naïveté for the same reason that the epic *nostos* of Night the Ninth—the return home of consciousness to its expanded state—must be distinguished from the nostalgia of the characters in their fallen state for an irretrievable past. (4)

This sentence is concluded with a footnote reference in which she explains that "Nostalgia, homesickness as a disease, according to the O.E.D., derives from the Greek *nostos,* return home" (177n4).

Though not exactly inaccurate, Freeman's explanations are misleading. Etymologically, the term does derive from the Greek *nostos;* however, its English usage places the word in the context of the Trojan War. According to the *OED,* "*Nost(o)i,*" as introduced into English in 1883, "is the title of a lost poem of the Epic Cycle dealing with the return of the Greek heroes from the Trojan War"; as such, it has been defined as "a homecoming, applied *spec.* to the homeward journeys of Odysseus and the other heroes of Troy. Also, the story of such a homecoming or return, esp. as the conclusion of a literary work." To avoid confusion, Freeman should have explained that she was recontextualizing the term into what is really the unrelated concept of consciousness. Along the same lines, the footnote regarding "nostalgia" causes its own confusion. Despite the compound etymology provided by the *OED* (the Greek *nostos* for "homecoming," plus *algos,* "pain"), Freeman's note gives the impression that there exists an ambiguous, if not erroneous relationship between "nostos" and "nostalgia," one which she is now clarifying. Again, she needed a more complete explanation of why she feels it necessary to differentiate between the two. Most important, Freeman should have avoided the false impression created by the juxtaposition of ideas, that the term derives from some form of Indian mysticism.

After the initial introduction of her governing concept, Freeman does not return to "nostos" until the end of the chapter. In the interim, she sketches out the theoretical basis for her approach to *The Four Zoas,* positing Eastern mysticism as a useful paradigm. Conceding that "there is scant evidence that Blake had direct exposure to such works, it is probable, though as yet unconfirmed, that Blake read Sir Charles Wilkins's translation of the *Bhagavad Gita,* the most influential text of Eastern nondual philosophy" (31), and in a footnote, she cites speculation by Charu Sheel Singh "that it is likely that Blake met both Charles Wilkins and Sir William Jones through his teacher James Basire, official engraver to the Society of Antiquity and to the Royal Society, to which Wilkins and Jones were elected in 1772 and 1778" (181n35). While not discounting the significance of "Western mystical writers, including Plotinus, Boehme, and Spinoza," Freeman considers "Eastern nondualism . . . a more accurate analogue for Blake's mythos both because of its freedom from the Western orientation of space and time in describing the relationship between the dual and nondual and because of its depiction of consciousness as inclusive of the physical world" (32). Then citing Singh's comments on the *Vedas,* as well as the "nondualism of Kashmir Shaivism, an ancient Indian philosophy," for support, she apparently places *The Four Zoas* within the Eastern cultural context:

> The goal is the dynamic balance of the mind's dualistic tendencies to divide body and soul, self and other, and the human and divine with the nondual state that heals these divisions. In epic terms, the achievement of nondual vision at the apocalypse of Night the Ninth is the nostos, the return home of consciousness to wholeness. (33)

In the culmination to her argument for an Eastern paradigm, Freeman repeats her original definition, creating the misleading impression of a relationship between the terminology and the cultural context—one which does not exist, not etymologically, not thematically.

By introducing her neologism, Freeman implies that the Eastern "return home of consciousness to wholeness" is somehow different from the universal mystical experience generally referred to as "the return to the One." Although she asserts "the lack of a paradigm in Western models to describe undifferentiated consciousness as an attainment rather than a regression" (23), Gershom G. Scholem, for one, claims just the opposite:

> To use the neoplatonic formula, the process of creation involves the departure of all from the One and its return to the One, and the crucial turning-point in this cycle takes place within man, at the moment he begins to develop an awareness of his own true essence and yearns to retrace the path from the multiplicity of his nature to the Oneness from which he originated. (152)

To confuse matters further, her reliance on Eastern mysticism is inconsistent and ahistorical. By citing variously the *Vedas* (1400 BC to 800 BC), the *Bhagavad Gita* (c. 200 BC), and the Śaivism in Kashmir (in fact, a movement originating at the end of the ninth century AD), while quoting specifically Abhinavagupta, a teacher of the tenth century AD, Freeman gives the false impressions that Indian mysticism is monolithically nondual, and conversely, that Western is dual. Actually, the entire question is much more complex. As W. T. Stace explains in "Pantheism, Dualism, and Monism," the fourth chapter of his *Mysticism and Philosophy,* in addition to the nondual approaches—those which Freeman instantiates—India has also produced dualistic explanations of the mystical experience; in contrast, Western, especially Christian, mystics have likely been inhibited by their governing religious institutions. According to Stace,

> Although the Christian mystics themselves can generally be quoted—in their most decisive passages—on the side of dualism, it remains a question whether this would have been their view if they were not overborne and subjected to threats by the theologians and the ecclesiastical authorities of the Church. (219)[1]

[1] Some misconceptions need to be clarified. First, Spinoza, though a pantheist, was not a mystic. More important, Tantric Śaivism in Kash-

This explanation could be applied to Blake as well, for even though, as Freeman notes, Andrew Lincoln interprets the revisions of Nights the Seventh [a] and [b] as revealing "A Christian Vision," it can be argued, as she says, "that the revisions do not reveal that Blake ever doubted the nondual relationship between the human and divine that replaces the traditional Christian one" (179n20). The problem is that Freeman does not provide the necessary intellectual contexts for these contentions.

Despite her formidable interpretive abilities, Freeman never really establishes her own critical stance. Although her subject is Blake's "mythos," she neglects to indicate how she approaches the subject, referring sporadically to Jung, Cassirer, Eliade, Frye and Damrosch, though without attempting to distinguish among their varied approaches to myth. So, too, with mysticism. Although she claims to take a mystical approach, Freeman does not place her book within any theoretical context. For Eastern mysticism, she quotes the one passage by Abhinavagupta, as quoted by Paul Eduardo Muller-Ortega in *The Triadic Heart of Śiva: Kaula Tantricism of Abhinavagupta in the Non-Dual Shaivism of Kashmir,* and Singh's essay "*Bhagavadgita,* Typology and William Blake," which she refers to in a footnote. No authority on mysticism appears in the text, notes or bibliography, just Blake scholars—like Damon, Frye and Aubrey—whose books touch on mysticism to a greater or lesser degree.[2] Given her rejection of Western mysticism in favor of Eastern, one would have expected at least a passing reference to Rudolf Otto's classic study, *Mysticism East and West: A Comparative Analysis of The Nature of Mysticism.*

It should also be noted that while Freeman identifies consciousness as the hero of the poem, she is unclear whether she means Albion's, Blake's, the abstract concept, or even the reader's. She never mentions any of the philosophical problems associated with the question of consciousness, or the controversy among philosophers of mysticism over whether or not a pure unmediated consciousness experience—that which she assumes—can actually exist.[3] So, too, with genre. In asserting that *The Four Zoas* is a dream vision, she refers to medieval examples and Blake's *Vision of the Last Judgment,* but in a curious omission, not mystical visions. Even more peculiar, she overlooks Blake's other dream visions, notably Enitharmon's eighteen-hundred-year dream in *Europe,* and the prologue to *Jerusalem:*

> This theme calls me in sleep night after night, & ev'ry morn
> Awakes me at sun-rise, then I see the Saviour over me
> Spreading his beams of love, & dictating the words of this mild song.
>
> (4.3-5, E 146)

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mir was not a purely nondual philosophy, but developed from the confrontation between the nondualistic traditions of Trika and the Krama, and the dualistic Śaiva Siddhanta. According to Alexis Sanderson, "This nondualistic tradition with its relatively sect-neutral metaphysics has generally been called Kashmir Śaivism. This term, however, obscures the fact that in the tenth and eleventh centuries, the period of most of our Śaiva literature, it was the [dualistic] Śaiva Siddhanta that was the dominant Śaiva doctrine" (16).

[2] Freeman concludes the paragraph citing Damon and Frye with a puzzling assertion: "The recent criticism takes a significant step beyond noting local influences, however. E. P. Thompson details Blake's involvement in 'breakaway sects' that believed that 'Christ was in all men' (Aubrey 1987, 7)" (31). Not only does she not explain what she means by "local influences," but she seems to confuse mysticism with sectarianism, not to mention the work of Thompson on Muggletonianism with Aubrey on Behmenism.

Unfortunately, this is not the only instance of weak copy editing. Using an eccentric documentation style, Freeman merges together a full bibliographical reference to the works of Abhinavagupta and a full citation to the Muller-Ortega monograph, which she also lists separately under that author's name. Equally puzzling is her treatment of the already confusing versions of Rudolf Arnheim's *The Power of the Center: A Study of Composition in the Visual Arts,* whose first and revised editions both appeared in 1982, and whose 1988 version is identified as the "new version." In her bibliography, Freeman includes two separate entries for *The Power of the Center,* the first dated 1982, and the second 1988, though misidentified as the revised edition. The entry for George Anthony Rosso's *Blake's Prophetic Workshop: A Study of* The Four Zoas includes the publication date twice; and in her bibliography, Freeman erroneously inserts an umlaut over the *u* in Muller-Ortega, while in a parenthetical reference of p. 33, she omits the hyphen. Also, in the bibliography, she misspells *Śiva* as *Shiva,* and she occasionally omits diacritical marks.

More seriously, the book contains several bibliographical lapses. Most notably, titles and/or authors' names are either incorrect or incomplete. For example, the title of John Howard's book is *Infernal Poetics: Poetic Structures in Blake's Lambeth Prophecies,* not *Infernal Poetic Structure in Blake's Lambeth Prophecies;* the full title of Paul A. Cantor's book is *Creature and Creator: Myth-making and English Romanticism;* of Michael G. Cooke's is *Acts of Inclusion: Studies Bearing on an Elementary Theory of Romanticism. Blake's Sublime Allegory: Essays on* The Four Zoas, Milton, Jerusalem is the full title of the anthology one of whose editors is Stuart Curran; Joseph Anthony Wittreich, Jr. is the full name of the other editor. The English translation of Hans-Georg Gadamer's *Truth and Method* was not published in 1993; rather, the revised translation was published in 1989; and Jean Hagstrum's essay "Babylon Revisited, or the Story of Luvah and Vala," included in the Curran-Wittreich anthology, was published in 1973, not 1983 (as indicated in the parenthetical reference on p. 153).

[3] In his 1978 essay, "Language, Epistemology, and Mysticism," Steven T. Katz asserts:

> *There are NO pure (i.e. unmediated) experiences.* Neither mystical experience nor more ordinary forms of experience give any indication, or any grounds for believing, that they are unmediated. That is to say, *all* experience is processed through, organized by, and makes itself available to us in extremely complex epistemological ways. The notion of unmediated experience seems, if not self-contradictory, at best empty. (26)

Katz's contention was far from universally accepted. Notably, contributors to Robert K. C. Foreman's anthology, *The Problem of Pure Consciousness: Mysticism and Philosophy,* all opposed Katz, especially Stephen Bernhardt, in "Are Pure Consciousness Events Unmediated?", Mark B. Woodhouse, in "On the Possibility of Pure Consciousness," and Foreman himself, in the "Introduction: Mysticism, Constructivism and Forgetting." For his part, Katz remains unpersuaded by their arguments ("Mystical Speech and Mystical Meaning," 5).

—not to mention Blake's own dream visions, like the nocturnal visit by his brother Robert who imparted the secret of the engraving process, or the denizens of Eternity who dictated his "sublime allegory."

Finally, *Blake's Nostos: Fragmentation and Nondualism in* The Four Zoas closes without directly connecting Blake's epic to its purported Eastern context. In her EXCURSUS, "Prophetic Disclosure and Mediated Vision: Blake in the Context of the English Romantic Sublime," Freeman differentiates Blake's attitude towards consciousness from that manifested by romantic poets under the influence of Edmund Burke. For some unexplained reason, she begins with William Collins, and then, following with Wordsworth and Percy Shelley, she explicates selected passages to demonstrate how Blake's attitude towards the sublime differs from theirs. In a footnote, she acknowledges V. A. De Luca's "elaborate study of Blake's sublime in the context of the Burkean sublime. De Luca aptly points to Blake's critique of romantic questers through his depiction of Urizen, though he does not suggest, as this study does, a redeemed representation of quest in the poem" (186n3). Yet, as with the reference to Andrew Lincoln cited earlier, Freeman relegates what should be the core of her argument to a footnote which she then neglects to amplify. Given the Eastern context posited in the first chapter, one would have expected a conclusion elaborating on how an understanding of Hinduism helps illuminate Blake's work, and if not that, at least a cogent explanation of why she thought it important to place Blake in—or more specifically, displace Blake from—the English romantic tradition. Perhaps in her next book Freeman will use her impressive talents for explicating poetry to support a more fully developed cultural context.

Freeman is likely correct in inferring that Blake, like those Christian mystics referred to by Stace, sought a vehicle for articulating the kind of nondual, if not outright pantheistic, experience which more conventional Christians, i.e., those who limited themselves to sanctioned forms of the Burkean sublime, would consider dangerous, if not heretical. But in delineating her thesis, she needed to do more than simply suggest an analogue generically justified by Jungian "dreams and visions" (32). She should have placed *Blake's Nostos: Fragmentation and Nondualism in* The Four Zoas within more fully developed theoretical, cultural and historical contexts. Then, her analysis would have been complete.

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South Bank Show Documentary on Blake. Directed by David Thomas. ITV (U.K.), 17 September 1995.

Reviewed by SARAH JOYCE

On 17 September 1995, ITV's South Bank Show screened a one-hour documentary on William Blake. It was directed at newcomers or rather, since no one in the British Isles is exempt from knowledge of at least one Blake lyric, at those who had only encountered his most famous productions. Accordingly, the program included biographical material, broad discussions of Blake's beliefs, and brief consideration of some of his writings, paintings and prints. It could easily have been disappointing for the already initiated scholar, but in fact it was a very appealing program, made with a great enthusiasm for Blake, and an impulse to celebrate as well as to inform.

One manifestation of this enthusiasm was the ebullient claims made for Blake's literary status by Peter Ackroyd, who was an important presence throughout the film. He praised Blake "the greatest religious poet England has ever produced" as well as "the greatest poet of London," finally placing him in the ultimate English canon: "His vision is so prescient, his poetry and painting, so marvelous, that he is of the same stature as Milton, as Chaucer, as Shakespeare." Whilst the scope of the program did not enable it to reward such eulogy with careful analysis, it did succeed in presenting what seemed to me an accurate and moving account of some of the reasons why Blake is so cherished by his twentieth century public.

At the heart of the documentary was the vision of Blake as the lonely, unrecognized genius, dramatically represented by Michael Loughnan, who performed extracts from Elliot Hayes's play, *Innocence and Experience* [see *Blake* 29 (1995/96): 97]. Amidst drying impressions of *Jerusalem* plates, Loughnan's Blake worked alone in his studio, frequently bursting into prophetic monologue although unvisited but for the brief appearance of the Archangel Gabriel. Ackroyd insisted that Blake's isolated labors were not the work of "some solitary visionary in a garret," but of an ordinary Londoner with extraordinary commitment: "earning his living all his life and only able to work on his own time."

Blake's ability to complete works that were doomed to near obscurity in his own lifetime was much admired in the film, and is indeed one of the most fascinating aspects of his achievement. In Ackroyd's estimation, this prodigious triumph over isolation was made possible by the very phenomenon that caused it: the visions. Blake's engrossing private spirit world certainly caused him professional problems, condemning him to poverty and much neglect, but, if Blake is to be believed, it also compelled his creativity utterly, providing him with both the substance of his works and the strength to beat down despair and labor upwards into futurity.

Ackroyd also argued that it was Blake's alienation, intensified after the catastrophe at Felpham, that gave him his insightfulness about the society that had rejected him, and his deep compassion towards the suffering that he saw throughout that society. He considers the inclusiveness of Blake's social vision as one of his truly prescient insights, which would not find a popular echo until our own century. He cited the egalitarian stance of "The Little Black Boy," as well as the following couplet from "Auguries of Innocence" in which Blake insists upon the ethical relevance of animal suffering:

> Each outcry of the hunted Hare
> A fibre from the Brain does tear.

In the same poem, Allen Ginsberg finds a startling precedent for a modern critique of the societies responsible for producing widespread destitution as well as the damage to the ozone layer:

> The Beggar's Rags, fluttering in Air,
> Does to Rags the Heavens tear.

Much of the documentary was filmed in London's streets and open spaces, strongly suggesting that Blake's vision "London, a Human awful wonder of God!" a vision of our London. This sense of continuity was powerfully communicated by the director's combining panoramic photography of London's modem skyline, with Loughnan's delivery of Blake's poetry about the city. The powerfully compassionate poem "London" was spoken over a silent film of familiar London streets with their traffic of cars and ordinary people bearing the "Marks of weakness, marks of