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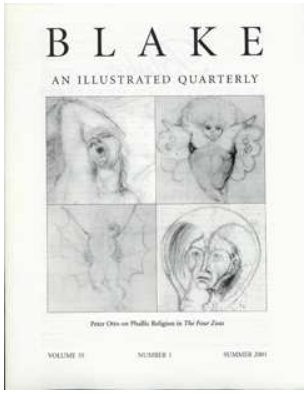
R E V I E W



Steve Clark and David Worrall, eds., Blake in the Nineties

Sheila A. Spector

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ences, it seems clear that Blake was thinking of Cumberland's treatise as he composed *Jerusalem*.

The significance of Blake's verbal echoes and allusions, unfortunately, lies beyond the scope of a short note such as this; however, several conceptual similarities between Cumberland's essay and Blake's poem suggest themselves immediately, and they perhaps merit further consideration. After all, the thematic parallels with the *Thoughts on Outline* extend beyond the final plates of *Jerusalem*. Not only does Cumberland's description of statuary as a linear form offer a new way to read Blake's process of relief etching and his aesthetic sensibilities in the visual images of *Jerusalem*, but there is also a sense in which the base narrative of the poem—Los's journey with "red globe of fire in hand" around the "stonified" body of Albion—can be read as an enactment of Cumberland's process of casting outlines. Above all, there is this central similarity: Blake proposes, like Cumberland, a series of "stupendous originals," each described by and, in a sense, composed of the scattered images, outlines, and projections of its own form. While Cumberland's aesthetic project is to collect these outlines in a single didactic text, Blake's objective, though surely more complex and subtle, may ultimately be much the same.

R E V I E W

Steve Clark and David Worrall, eds. *Blake in the Nineties*. London: Macmillan Press; New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999. xiv + 242 pp. $49.95.

Reviewed by Sheila A. Spector

Generically, the published proceedings of a conference are greater than the sum of the individual papers presented during the course of the two- or three-day period in which scholars meet to exchange their views on a particular topic. *Blake in the Nineties* is the product of a conference organized by Steve Clark and David Worrall at St. Mary's University College, Strawberry Hill, in July 1994, to consider the deliberately ambiguous topic of "Blake in the Nineties." Referring, obviously, to the 1790s, the historical period when, politically, Great Britain formally entered into war with France, and, professionally, Blake confronted the limitations of his business prospects, the conference title also points to the 1990s, the critical period when the British-American academic community began to resist the control ideological criticism had exercised over the direction taken by Blake scholarship during the last quarter of the twentieth century. Implicitly rejecting the restrictions associated with what had degenerated into a fundamentally dualistic mode of thought, the participants—both individually and collectively—exposed the oversimplifications inherent in a binary mode of thought, as they articulated a new kind of pluralistic criticism, one that would liberate Blake from the theoretical sectarianism that had dominated the academy for so long.

The impetus for this new mode of thought, according to Clark and Worrall's introduction, was the publication of the William Blake Trust facsimiles. In contrast to the bibliographical principles governing both Keynes and Erdman, the new Blake editors rejected the assumption of an ur-text, a hypothetical construct of which each of the extant illuminated books, by implication, could only be an incomplete, if not flawed, rendition. Rather, the new editors viewed each version of each text as an articulation of a particular expression, thus transforming the succession of printings into specific stages in the record of Blake's developing attitude towards a given work. As a result of this new bibliographical perspective, scholars began to recognize the deleterious effect the binary mode of thought had exercised over Blake criticism. Like the Sons of Albion who, as we learned in *Jerusalem*, in their strength

> . . . take the Two Contraries which are calld Qualities, with which
> Every Substance is clothed, they name them Good & Evil
> From them they make an Abstract, which is a Negation
> Not only of the Substance from which it is derived
> A murderer of its own Body: but also a murderer
> Of every Divine Member: it is the Reasoning Power
> An Abstract objecting power, that Negatives every thing
> (pl. 10:8-14, E 152-53)

deconstructive criticism had degenerated, according to Clark and Worrall, "into a fastidious bibliographical ultra-empiricism. . . .[that] somewhat unexpectedly, resulted in interpretative curtailment rather than textual licence" (1). Collectively, the eleven essays comprising *Blake in the Nineties* help counter the negations dominating twentieth-century criticism by exposing the theoretical oversimplifications upon which they had been predicated, and then by providing historical justification for the new pluralism.

Fittingly, the paradigm for this new mode of inquiry can be inferred from the triad of essays found in the middle, beginning, and end of the anthology: Angela Esterhammer's "Calling into Existence: *The Book of Urizen*"; Robert N. Essick's "Blake and the Production of Meaning"; and Keri Davies's "Mrs. Bliss: a Blake Collector of 1794." As the sixth of eleven papers, Esterhammer's is a first-rate example of speech-act criticism, intended to analyze the degeneration of language from God's initial use of performatives in the creative process to their distortion by the tyrant who attempts to impose a restrictive political and social order. Using *The Book of Urizen* as her text, Esterhammer explores this dualistic manifestation of performatives: "That this

contextualization of utterance accounts for its ability to call a new world-order into existence, but also ties its creative power inextricably to division, restriction, and imposition, is the dilemma Blake dramatizes in *The Book of Urizen*" (115).

In the essay, Esterhammer explores the influence of biblical criticism, especially the theoretical lectures of Robert Lowth and the popular interpretations of Thomas Paine, as well as the literary transformations of John Milton, to establish a pattern in which the performatives of God the Creator are seen as being usurped by the legislating, i.e., Urizenic, god, whether in the voice of the "Jahwist" of Genesis 2-3, or the Father of *Paradise Lost*. In both cases, what begins as the pure act of "calling out, or proclaiming, the names of his creations when they appear before him as phenomenal manifestations of his utterance" seems inevitably to degenerate into the "negative connotations of imposition and even violence" (118). In other words, "In Blake's poem, the legislating word has completely usurped the world-creating word" (120); and ultimately, "On some level, then, virtually all the voices in *The Book of Urizen* have the power to call things into existence in the manner of the Elohim—but this is because their utterances also carry the politicized authority of Yahweh" (123).

Esterhammer draws three inferences from her analysis of *The Book of Urizen*: In Blake's narratives, (1) various characters' utterances could have a potentially significant impact upon the narrative voice; (2) Blake's awareness of performatives influenced his own use of language; and (3) that use entails "a mythological slant on what might be called the 1790s version, or perversion of the creative language of the Elohim" (127). While these conclusions are all warranted by the analysis, the theoretical assumptions governing her argument prevent Esterhammer from considering elements beyond the range of her conceptual framework. To cite just the most obvious, the naming of Urizen is at best an ambiguous performative:

> 1. Lo, a shadow of horror is risen
> In Eternity! Unknown, unprolific!
> Self-closd, all-repelling: what Demon
> Hath form'd this abominable void
> This soul-shudd'ring vacuum?—Some said
> "It is Urizen", But unknown, abstracted
> Brooding secret, the dark power hid.
>
> (pl. 3:1-7, E 70)

Esterhammer infers that because Urizen, in contrast to the fallen angels of *Paradise Lost*, retains his original name, "the 'eternal' quality of Urizen's name may be a measure of the successful performative effect of the utterance, 'It is Urizen'" (123). Yet, within its own context, Blake undermines the force of that performative: describing the character as a self-generating demon; using the weak verb "said" to describe the act of naming; and limiting that act to only a portion of the eternals— "Some," not all, much less the One.

More important than this specific act of naming, though, is the broader context of the name itself. Urizen is not a conventional sign whose signification is easily discernible, and consequently, indicative of the phenomenon being signified. Rather, as a neologism whose possible sources and etymologies remain ambiguous, the real force of its utterance lies not with the narrator of a particular literary or artistic context, but with the artist William Blake who called the mytheme into existence in the first place. We should not forget that the biblical act of naming constituted the identification of an essential identity. Also, the name Urizen had already been given a performative utterance in *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, where Oothoon proclaimed: "O Urizen! Creator of men! mistaken Demon of heaven" (pl. 5:3, E 48). Are these two speech-acts to be considered separate events, neither influencing the other? Or are they to be combined into some sort of ur-performative within the larger speech-act constituted by the Blake *oeuvre*? Is Urizen to be identified as the demon who formed the void, the creator of men, or both? Or possibly, are the two equivalent to each other?

This is not to quibble about the identity of Urizen, but to suggest that a binary analysis oversimplifies the complexities of Blake's language. In her last sentence, Esterhammer articulates her own recognition that Blake's language does not conform to either the "Elohist" or the "Jahwist" use of performatives; rather, she notes that "Between the two lies the language of Blake, calling political and poetic consciousness into simultaneous existence" (129). The problem, as she implies, is that Blake's illuminated books do not provide the kind of delimited, protected space amenable to pure speech-act analysis. Rather, the bibliographical complexities of *The Book of Urizen* suggest that the text itself was likely affected by external factors that not only influenced the manifestation of the speech act under consideration, but also intruded on the creative process any number of times between the conception and execution of the various versions.

Even though not directly related either to speech-act theory or to *The Book of Urizen*, the other two essays of this triad complete the implicit subversion of binary criticism, Essick providing the theoretical analysis and Davies the historical justification for a more pluralistic approach to Blake. In "Blake and the Production of Meaning," Essick confronts the question of dualities head on, juxtaposing two then-recent studies—Morris Eaves's *Counter-Arts Conspiracy* and Joseph Viscomi's *Blake and the Idea of the Book*—to explore

> the ways different cultural and institutional contexts create different perspectives on Blake which in turn produce not just different interpretations, but different conceptions of the grounds and constituents of meaning—or at least what constitutes meaning's next-of-kin, significance. (7)

Avoiding the manner of the sons of Albion, Essick does not privilege either Eaves or Viscomi but, rather, contextualizes each to suggest that Eaves and Viscomi, as primarily a literary scholar and an artist respectively, conceptualize differently the problem of Blake's illuminated books. Even more significantly, though, Essick, through his own experience as a collector, demonstrates not only that the verbal/visual components of the art are not mutually exclusive of each other, but that there are other, as yet unexplored aspects of the problem, perspectives that have been obscured by the dualism dominating critical thought. For example, the exigencies of the marketplace add another—though not necessarily the only—new dimension to the production of art, for as Essick notes, "Blake's linearist conceptualization of what constitutes 'true' art is inconsistent with his increasingly tonal methods of execution" (21).

As a collector, Essick cites John Barrell's characterization of the influence of the marketplace on aesthetic values in terms of gender:

> Perhaps the main issue at stake was how to explain the apparent mismatch between the theories of painting most influential on 18th-century connoisseurs and critics, committed to the promotion of a public art of manly virtue and idealised forms, and the predominantly private, informal, even (as the century got older) feminised works which actually got produced. (23)

Providing historical support for the Essick/Barrell thesis, Keri Davies documents that feminized influence through his study of early collector Rebekah Bliss (1749-1819), reconstructing the existence of an overlooked component of Blake's early audience "rather different from the male radical intelligentsia with which he is customarily associated" (212).

A "bibliophile of national importance" (213) who, Davies infers, dealt directly with Blake himself, Bliss had been left an orphan at nineteen and, with no relatives closer than an uncle and cousins, had consequently gained not only control over the family fortune, but the freedom to avoid a forced marriage. Remaining single for her entire life, she did live—possibly in a homosexual relationship—with another woman, Ann Whitaker; and around 1800, they invited a third woman, Harriet Barnes, to live as their companion. In her will, Bliss arranged for her library to remain in Whitaker's possession until her death, so the collection stayed intact until 1826.

Regarding the Blake collection in particular, Davies cites Bliss's ownership of a proof copy of *For Children: The Gates of Paradise* as evidence that she dealt directly with Blake himself, speculating that since the two traveled in the same dissenting circles, they could have met socially, if not commercially through Joseph Johnson. But regardless of whether or not they knew each other personally, her presence indicates the existence "of a rather different kind of dissenting community from that customarily associated with Blake." And, Davies concludes, "Taken together, these new pieces of evidence should compel a revision of the traditional assumption that Blake lacked any significant contemporary audience" (226).

Complementing Essick's and Davies's analyses of economic factors, the next two pairs reconsider the political and religious institutions of the 1790s. The second entry in the anthology, Joseph Viscomi's textual analysis, "In the Caves of Heaven and Hell: Swedenborg and Printmaking in Blake's *Marriage*," gains historical depth when read in conjunction with the ninth, Marsha Keith Schuchard's historical discussion of "Blake and the Grand Masters (1791-4): Architects of Repression or Revolution?" As his third of three articles dealing with *The Marriage*'s evolution, Viscomi's contribution builds on his earlier studies, which argued that *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* had undergone distinct printmaking sessions, and that plates 21-24 comprise a discrete unit. Now, in this essay, Viscomi claims that by dissecting the printing process, he has been able to trace the evolution of Blake's attitude towards Swedenborg. Focusing on cave imagery—the open cave symbolizing the enlightened mind, and the closed cave the closed mind—Viscomi demonstrates how "Reading *Marriage*'s textual units in the order in which they were executed reveals thematic and visual connections not readily apparent in the book's finished order" (57), specifically, Blake's progressive dissociation from Swedenborg.

Viscomi's textual interpretation is supported by Schuchard's historical analysis of the complex relationship between Freemasonry and the radical movement in England, France and Scandinavia. In "Blake and the Grand Masters (1791-4)," Schuchard explores the political ramifications of the two competing branches of Freemasonry: the "Ancients," from the earlier Stuart traditions of Scottish, Irish, French and Swedish Masonry, which included an interest in Cabalistic and Hermetic studies; and the "Moderns," the later schism, derived from the Swedish-Jacobite plots of 1715-17, and dedicated to Newtonian science and Hanoverian loyalty. It was through this later form that Swedenborgianism was introduced into the circles of Blake and his friends. But as the "Moderns" became more involved with international intrigue—by members like the British Prince of Wales, the French Duke of Orleans and the Swedish Duke of Soudermania—artists like Blake grew disillusioned with the purity of Swedenborg's visions. Yet, fearing political repercussions, Blake disguised his true intent with a number of camouflaging devices, like the use of intricate systems of occult symbolism, as documented by Schuchard, and the reorganization of plates, as delineated by Viscomi.

Expanding the perspective beyond economic and political considerations, the next pair focuses on the theological implications of Blake's art. In the third essay of the anthology, "Spectral Imposition and Visionary Imposition: Printing and Repetition in Blake," Edward Larrissy connects

Blake's theory of printing with the idea of redemption. Associating the word imposition, along with its underlying concepts of repetition and plurality, with both Blake's printing process and the concept of prophecy, Larrissy infers that "For Blake, printing as repetition is explicitly linked to questions about influence, originality and the redemption of time" (68), Blake's various kinds of repetitions being linked specifically with "the traditions of a fraternal and communitarian Protestantism" (76). For Michael Ferber, in "Blake and the Two Swords," Blake's Protestantism in the later books is most apparent in his war imagery, through "the distinction between spiritual and corporeal war, and . . . the tendency of his age to suppress the one and glorify the other" (156). In this context, the "ultimate spiritual weapon, I think, and the most difficult to wield effectively, is to hold up to our imaginations the vision of a transformed world. . . . One feature of his utopia is the return or restoration of all things, the *apocatastasis* of the Book of Acts (3:21)" (168).

These new perspectives on Blake's cultural context gain philosophical support through Stephen C. Behrendt's phenomenological analysis of the composite art, and Steve Clark's recontextualization of Locke. In "'Something in My Eye': Irritants in Blake's Illuminated Texts," Behrendt argues that Blake's illuminated poems comprise a "'third text,' a meta-text" (81), that requires its audience to become "both participant and co-creator" (85): "Blake's campaign against worldly materialism . . . was intended not to reconcile us to the natural world, or it to us, but rather to draw us away from it and towards the imaginative and spiritual world of Eternity . . . Blake directed his art towards engendering in his audience the sort of accession to vision that had been Elisha's part" (93). So, too, with Locke. In "'Labouring at the Resolute Anvil': Blake's Response to Locke," Clark argues that "If we read the *Essay* in the context of its implicit theological imperatives, rather than as a prefiguration of a secular and materialist culture, it becomes possible to see his work not as antithetical to Blake's, but as within a common tradition of radical Protestantism" (134). The assumption that Blake and Locke represented antithetical views derived from Frye's assertion that Locke's influence on Blake was "clearly a negative one" (14). However, as Clark notes, "condemnation need not necessarily entail denigration: it can instead serve as an implicit tribute to intellectual stature" (133). Rather, as Clark demonstrates, Blake transformed, and in the process assimilated, the Lockean vocabulary to the point that, as Clark concludes, "Blake's mythology is most compelling where it incorporates its apparent adversary most directly" (149).

Finally, the last essays return to the problem of language, Nelson Hilton's "What has *Songs* to do with Hymns?" focusing on the sacred language of hymns, and David Worrall's "Blake and the 1790s Plebeian Radical Culture" on the secular language of radical literature. Although Hilton readily differentiates "To Tirzah" from those lyrics that are associated with conventional hymns, he argues that the final Song functions like a hybrid in which the secularized language is used to reflect back on the religious genre. Thus, "To Tirzah" functions like a meta-hymn, "a hymn on hymn-singing to point up the innocent and experienced Psalms of Blake's 'Bible of Hell' and found most frequently, like many a doxology, towards the conclusion of the *Songs*" (101). As such, he concludes, "To Tirzah" serves "as at once the *terminus ad quem* of the collection and the jumping off point for the longer poems" (110).

Blake's incorporation of secular language into what was usually considered a sacred form can be attributed at least in part, according to Worrall, to "the existence of a plebeian radical culture whose rhetorics are assimilated in Blake's works" (194). In his survey of the radical literature of the time, Worrall finds echoes in Blake of sources as varied as the anonymous A. Z., author of a list of grievances against Home Secretary Henry Dundas, the anti-Swedenborgian W. Brian, linen-draper Thomas Bentley, and Richard "Citizen" Lee, not to mention the numerous anonymous authors of songs, broadsides, pamphlets, and protest letters. Although in many cases it is impossible to demonstrate a direct link between Blake and specific examples of the radical literature, both still share a common rhetorical base, including the vocabulary and idioms "of an emergent, assertive, innovative and long-lasting artisan public sphere" (208-9).

Individually, each of the eleven essays establishes a new perspective on a traditional topic, ranging from bibliography to literary criticism through cultural analyses. More important, though, as a collection, the anthology projects an expanded mode of critical thought. Having liberated themselves from the mind-forged manacles of twentieth-century dualism, the textual scholars represented by the first part of the collection have returned not to the book, but to Blake's many books, in order to reconsider the complexity of the creative process as Blake attempted to mediate between his artistic imperatives and the demands of everyday life. In the second half, the new historians provide cultural justification for the textual studies, each essay introducing new perspectives on topics that had erroneously been considered fully explored. By foregrounding materials that had heretofore been marginalized by the "sons of Albion" in their attempt to reduce the world to a moralistic duality, *Blake in the Nineties* creates its own system, pointing out new directions to be taken by Blake scholars in the twenty-first century.

Works Cited

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C O R R I G E N D A

William Blake The Creation of the Songs From Manuscript to Illuminated Printing

Corrigenda and a Note on the Publication of Gilbert Imlay's *A Topographical Description of the Western Territory of North America*

By Michael Phillips

In preparing my book on the creation of Blake's *Songs* (London: British Library Publishing, 2000; Princeton: Princeton UP, 2001) for the press every effort was made to provide an accurate text. However, several errors of transcription were not identified before the sheets were printed. I list these below so that the text may be relied upon.

p. 7: First column, "Song 3[d] by an old shepherd," line one:
For: When silver decks Sylvio's cloaths
Read: When silver snow decks Sylvia's cloaths

p. 12: Second column, "Nurses Song," penultimate sentence:
For: In the first line he altered 'tongues' to 'voices' and in the third stanza, last line, 'meadows' to 'hills.'
Read: In the first line he altered 'tongues' to 'voices' and in the third stanza, last line, 'meadows are' to 'hills are all.'

p. 13: First column, "Nurses Song," third stanza, line three:
For: And the hills are coverd with sheep
Read: And the hills are all coverd with sheep

p. 59: Second column, "NURSES Song," first stanza, line two:
For: And whisperings are in the dale:
Read: And whisprings are in the dale:

p. 65: Second column, "London," fourth stanza, line four:
For: And hangs with plagues the marriage hearse
Read: And smites with plagues the marriage hearse

p. 68: First column, "The Tyger," first sentence:
For: Fully reinstating the ambivalence and terror of the first drafts, Blake relief etched and printed this final version of 'The Tyger,' deleting 'And' in the penultimate stanza, line three, and in the last stanza, line three, replacing 'or' with '&' in order to repeat the first stanza verbatim.
Read: Fully reinstating the ambivalence and terror of the first drafts, Blake relief etched and printed this final version of 'The Tyger,' deleting 'And' in the penultimate stanza, line three, and in the last stanza, line three, replacing '&' with 'or.'

p. 69: Second column, "The Human Abstract," second sentence:
For: Salvaging only the last two lines of the third stanza, and the first two lines of the fourth stanza from 'I heard an Angel singing' on N. 114, Blake formed the first stanza on N. 107, establishing from the outset an explicit contrary relationship to 'The Divine Image' of *Songs of Innocence.*
Read: Salvaging only the last two lines of the third stanza, the first two lines of the fourth stanza, and in the latter replacing 'pity' with 'Mercy' from 'I heard an Angel singing' on N. 114, Blake formed the first stanza on N. 107, establishing from the outset an explicit contrary relationship to 'The Divine Image' of *Songs of Innocence.*

p. 74: Second column, "A little BOY Lost," second quotation, first line:
For: Then led him by the little coat
Read: Then led him by his little coat

p. 75: First column, "A little BOY Lost," third stanza, line three:
For: Then led him by the little coat
Read: Then led him by his little coat

p. 75: Second column, "A little BOY Lost," third stanza, line three:
For: Then led him by the little coat
Read: Then led him by his little coat

p. 84: Second column, "The Fly," first sentence following second quotation:
For: Blake crossed through 'summer play' and following it wrote 'thoughtless hand.'
Read: Blake crossed through 'guilty hand' and following it wrote 'thoughtless hand.'

p. 85: Second column, "THE FLY," second quotation, fourth stanza, line three:
For: But the want
Read: And the want

p. 85: Second column, "THE FLY," following second quotation, first sentence:
For: With the addition of punctuation and three minor changes, in the first stanza, line two, 'summer' to 'summers,' line four 'Hath' to 'Has,' and, in the fourth stanza, line three, 'But' to 'And', the text as composed on the page was relief etched and printed as 'THE FLY' in the first issue of *Songs of Experience.*