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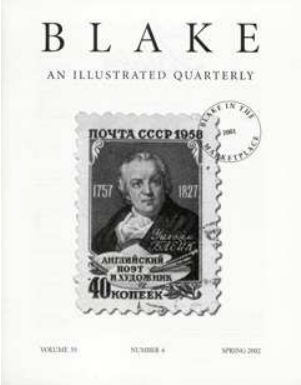

David Bindman and Simon Baker, William Blake 1757-1827, catalogue of the exhibition at the Helsinki Art Museum

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out the richness of the poetry," this section falls short. He does record a host of critical remarks and interpretations of Blake's work, but he provides very little in the way of showing how these readings complement each other in order to bring out the richness of the poetry. The introductory material in these chapters is generally sound and informative, and the notes on particular lines offer various interpretations of the passages, usually without taking sides (although he does occasionally describe a given interpretation as "persuasive"). The introductory remarks on *Jerusalem*, for example, focus on the problems of structure (including a brief paragraph on the two versions of chapter 2) and theme before focusing on more particular concerns such as the furnaces of Los, fibers of materiality, wheel imagery, number symbolism, and Albion's cities and children (including Bath, Jerusalem, and Reuben). The particular notes draw from Wicksteed, Sloss and Wallis, Frye, Ostriker, Raine, Hilton, Stevenson, and lots of others, but Summerfield offers only the briefest of comments on the basis or implications of their critical disagreements.

In his notes on specific lines and passages, Summerfield clearly assumes that his reader is actually reading Blake's poems with Summerfield's *Guide* on the side. He provides minimal context for his notes, sometimes quoting a line, phrase, or word, but more often than not giving only plate and line numbers before listing the various interpretations. This approach makes the book by itself very difficult to read, and the same goes for his discussion of the illuminations. In these remarks Summerfield assumes that his reader is also looking at Erdman's *The Illuminated Blake*. He provides no general description of the illuminations, but instead records opinions on the various aspects of the illumination in question. For example, his remarks on the design of *America* plate 10 begin, "Though the turn of Orc's head and his gesture with his hands are similar to those of Urizen in pl. 8, in most other respects the two designs are antithetical" (453); this is true enough, but neither in the rest of these remarks, nor in the remarks on Urizen in pl. 8, does Summerfield describe the turn of the head or the hand gestures or those "other respects." (For those of us without *The Illuminated Blake* in immediate reach, the design on plate 10 depicts a young, beardless man, presumably Orc, crouching among flames, his head turned to his right, arms outspread, left foot forward.) Unless the reader has memorized Blake's various illuminations, or is also looking at them (along with a text of the poem), Summerfield's remarks on them are not really much help.

Nevertheless, if one does happen to be reading Blake's poetry and following along in *The Illuminated Blake*, Summerfield's *Guide* makes some useful connections, and brings to the reader several critical perspectives to compare to his or her own. Indeed, the *Guide* could be useful as a recommended text for classes devoted to Blake. The biographical sketch, discussions of Blake's "conversion" and system, and the more detailed critical notes on the poems would helpfully supplement the material in Erdman's edition. Part II of Summerfield's book is successful as a quick guide to critical resources for students of Blake (including their teachers and other scholars) who are deep enough into their research to want to gather various perspectives about particular lines of poetry, or particular aspects of the illuminations. I am not sure, however, that his summaries of the books in Part I would do much to encourage readers at any level to read the poems.

David Bindman and Simon Baker. *William Blake 1757-1827*. Catalogue of the exhibition at the Helsinki City Art Museum, 11 April-25 June 2000.

Reviewed by Bo Ossian Lindberg

One hundred and thirty seven works by William Blake from the collection of the British Museum were shown at the Helsinki City Art Museum from 11 April to 25 June 2000. From Helsinki the exhibition went to Prague.

Some copper plates and wood blocks excepted, the exhibition consisted entirely of works on paper, engravings, drawings, watercolors, and color prints. It is good that daylight is excluded from the exhibition rooms, situated in the former Tennis Palace in the heart of the city. The building also contains an ethnographical collection, fourteen cinema theatres, cafes, snack bars, shops, etc. For people under the age of 18, access to the museums is free.

In connection with the exhibition a series of lectures was given, beginning with David Bindman's lecture in English on the art of William Blake (12 April). Petri Pietiläinen talked on Blake's visions of femininity (19 April), and the artist Timo Aarniala on Blake as a psychedelic prophet with an influence on present-day popular culture (3 May), both in Finnish. Finally Bo Ossian Lindberg, presented by museum staff as "Finland's only Blake scholar," lectured in Swedish about Blake's *Job* (16 May). The lectures had to be held in the exhibition's exit/entrance room, the microphones did not function properly, and there were several other difficulties which the first lecturer, Bindman, suffered more than the others. In order to overcome this problem, another lecture room will have to be found.

On several occasions the group Oblivia appeared with *Etcetera*, a performance consisting of dance, music, song, sound (but no words), and theatre, directed and manuscripted by Annika Tudeer (choreography) and Katariina Vähäkallio (theatre). William and Robert Blake, the angry Rose, etc., appeared in a humorous and acrobatic journey through the

exhibition rooms and through Blake's life. At other occasions ten *Songs of Innocence* were sung, translated into Finnish by Hector (well-known Finnish singer) and set to music by Toni Edelmann. A couple of times the Finn-Brit Players enacted *Mr. and Mrs. Blake*, reciting some of Blake's poems and showing glimpses of his and his wife's life. A booklet called *Tiikeri (The Tyger)* was distributed free of charge for use at schools. It contains several translations of *The Tyger* into Finnish, and is intended to give a basis for class discussions of problems in translating poetry.

The exhibition was well covered by the media. It was seen by 38,458 visitors, a tremendous success. Many a leading museum in Finland does not have that many visitors in a year. Good marketing and the many activities connected with the exhibition contributed to this success. While an exhibition of paintings by Diego Rivera was shown in the upstairs rooms, it is clear that it was Blake rather than Rivera who attracted the crowds.

Seeing a large collection of Blake originals on view in Finland was a strange experience. Even those in charge of the Helsinki City Art Museum never expected to get a Blake exhibition. When then museum director Tuula Karjalainen and curator Maija Tanninen were in London as guests of the British Council, they admitted that they were dreaming of a Blake exhibition, but realized that they could not have one. Somebody knew that Blake works in the British Museum might be available—many of the illuminated books needed rebinding, and an exhibition of Blakes in Prague was being planned. The British Museum director, Dr. Robert Anderson, agreed that the collection meant for Prague would go to Helsinki first. Antony Griffiths helped with the arrangements. Professor David Bindman and Simon Baker had already started choosing the collection that would be shown at Prague Castle in the autumn of 2000. They had also started writing the 188-page catalogue called, simply, *William Blake 1757-1827*. Both cities happened to be cultural capitals of the year 2000. That Helsinki got the exhibition was a result of lucky timing.

The British Museum possesses works from Blake's youth up to the year of his death, and the well chosen exhibits gave a good survey of his *œuvre*. The BM has only one of the large color prints *(The Lazar House)*, which, of course, was exhibited. It does not own any of Blake's so-called tempera paintings, that is size-color paintings on canvas or wood. Both these omissions, one of them partial, are accounted for in David Bindman's and Simon Baker's excellent catalogue.

Engravings and drawings such as *Joseph of Arimathea, Robin Hood and Clorinda* (engraved after J. Meheux), the advertisement for Moore & Co., the *Head of a Damned Soul* (after Fuseli), the drawing of a naked youth, *The Death of Earl Godwin*, and *Har Blessing Tiriel* represented Blake's early period. They were followed by an extremely full presentation of Blake's illuminated printing. One book was shown in its entirety, the disbound copy A of *The Song of Los*, each plate mounted separately. Copy D of the same book, opened so as to show frontispiece and title page, made it possible to experience variations between the copies. Selections of plates from other illuminated books were shown: *There Is No Natural Religion* (A), *Songs* (B), *Europe* (A, D), *Visions* (O), *America* (H), *Jerusalem* (A). Over thirty color prints from the *Small* and *Large Books of Designs* included images from other illuminated books *(Thel, The Marriage, Urizen)*.

Other exhibits were the large engravings of *Job* and *Ezekiel*, engravings and watercolors for Young, the Butts portrait miniatures, the broadsheet *Little Tom the Sailor*, watercolors of 1803-11 (such as *Jacob's Ladder*, an unused design for Blair, *Queen Katharine's Dream, Hamlet and the Ghost of His Father, The Judgment of Paris* and a couple more), the Chaucer engraving, eight of the Thornton wood engravings, all 22 engravings for the *Book of Job*, one engraving and four glorious watercolors for Dante, and, finally, Cumberland's card of 1827. Exhibits of a mid-nineteenth century electrotype of the lost copper for *The Ecchoing Green*, the copper for *Job* pl. 15, a woodblock for Thornton's *Virgil* and the uncut woodblock with a drawing of *Isaiah Foretelling the Crucifixion* added to the attraction. Works not by William Blake were Schiavonetti's engraving after Phillips's portrait of William Blake, and Robert Blake's drawing *The Approach of Doom*. In some cases an intaglio engraving and a color print from the same plate were shown side by side *(Glad Day, The Accusers)*.

As the above list should make clear, the exhibition was well chosen, both from the pedagogical and the aesthetic point of view. It was great seeing it and fun showing it to students and to the general public. The Finnish public seemed to appreciate it. They walked slowly through the exhibition, examining each small design at close quarters for a long time. The exhibition was particularly informative on Blake's illuminated printing. The only omission I noted was the intaglio-printed illuminated books, a bit surprising since the BM owns the only known copy of the intaglio-printed *Book of Los*. *The Gates of Paradise* could have made up for the omission, but only one plate of *Gates* was shown ("Fear and Hope are—Vision"), mounted together with *The Accusers* from *The Large Book of Designs*. The exhibition could not include the only known fragment of an original illuminated plate, because it is in the Rosenwald collection, National Gallery of Art, Washington. The inclusion of an electrotype of one of the coppers for the *Songs*, made before the originals were lost, made an interesting substitute.

Seeing many illuminated prints and color prints exhibited together makes the beholder realize what had earlier remained only half-known to him. A characteristic of Blake's relief-etching and color-printing methods is that they do not allow a complete control of the result. There is always room for accidents of etching, inking, and printing.

Since plates were etched within walls of wax, each relief-etched plate became surrounded by an irregular frame. Blake masked it out in early prints, but later he retained it, and in colored copies he often developed it, wholly or in part, into wooded landscapes, serpents, flames, clouds, or tendrils (copy E of *Jerusalem*). He put the paints onto the color-printing plates as a thick paste, to make them "blur well." Then he developed the chaotic, indistinct marks into "blazing and changing wonder" (D. G. Rossetti in Gilchrist, *Life of William Blake*, 1863, 1:374) and confirmed the outlines of man and beast with a pen. Blake describes his method in a famous passage, often quoted and often misunderstood:

> The great and golden rule of art, as well as of life, is this: That the more distinct, sharp, and wirey the bounding line, the more perfect the work of art; and the less keen and sharp, the greater is the evidence of weak imitation, plagiarism, and bungling .... Leave out this line, and you leave out life itself; all is chaos again, and the line of the almighty must be drawn out upon it before *man or beast* can exist. (emphasis mine, *Descriptive Catalogue* XV, E 550)

We do not always understand Blake's dialectics of chaos and cosmos, and read passages such as this as a classicist denouncement of everything indistinct and indefinite. Actually, Blake *used* chaos in the creative process, and he wanted chaos to show in the finished work. He let accidents of inking and printing (both relief and color) create a chaos of blots and blurs. Upon this image Blake drew out the contours of man and beast—figures are regularly more sharply defined than the rest. Chaos was left as contrast in the backgrounds, and, often, as chaotic marks on Urizenic codes of law and fallen, darkened suns. Blake used accident in a way similar to his contemporary Alexander Cozens (*A New Method of Assisting Invention in Drawing Original Compositions of Landscape,* 1786), although his purpose was quite different. He did not use the blot method primarily in order to assist imagination, but rather for iconographical reasons.

The Helsinki catalogue has a preface by Tuula Karjalainen and an introduction by David Bindman. This is followed by detailed entries by Bindman and Simon Baker on each of the exhibits. There is also a chronological table of Blake and his times. Fifty-seven of the exhibits are reproduced in color illustrations of good quality. Unfortunately the title page of copy E of *Jerusalem* is illustrated without any statement that this copy is neither included in the exhibition nor possessed by the British Museum. Instead, there were fifteen plates from the monochrome copy A on show, including the title page. The catalogue does mention the fully colored copy at the Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, but without a reference to the illustration, which, like all illustrations in the catalogue, lacks a caption.

The text has been translated into Finnish and Swedish, the two official languages of Finland. I am happy that the museum does not adopt the growing practice of leaving out the minority language Swedish. As of this writing, the English text has not been printed, but I have seen the manuscript.

The points on which I disagree with the catalogue text are few. Bindman and Baker date the large engraving of *Job* (cat. no. 14) after 1803 and add that it was possibly engraved as early as the 1780s. I think that the second state, bearing the date 1793, was printed, after reworking, in the 1820s, certainly after 1810, because it is printed on India paper, introduced about that time. The date 1793 is a survivor from the first state, of which a single, damaged print exists, lacking the lower part with imprint and date. Geoffrey Keynes's suggestion that it was possibly done in the 1780s is almost certainly mistaken.

I would also suggest an alternative interpretation of the old man below the title of *The Song of Los.* I do not think he is either Urizen or Noah and he is not "fading"; he is emerging out of his grave and opens his blue eye to the morning light, in illustration of the resurrection scene at the end of the song: "Forth from the dead dust rattling bones to bones / Join...."

I also have some doubts about the contrast that the catalogue authors see between the sun in the frontispiece of *The Song of Los* and that in the endpiece. If Blake had any such contrast in mind, why did he cover both disks with darkness, in the former image black spots on the disk, in the latter black clouds in front of it, and that in all known copies? I do not have an alternative explanation, but believe that the good sun is not completely good.

None of the twelve large color prints bears any date other than 1795, although some are undated. Yet some watermarks date the production of the paper 1804. Eight of the color prints are mentioned in debtor-and-creditor accounts between Thomas Butts and Blake on 5 July and 7 September 1805, which is the first record of any of them. They are further mentioned as "12 Large Prints" in a letter by Blake to Dawson Turner 1818. The prints are so similar in conception and style that if only one of them can be shown to date from about 1805, all must be of that date. Why Blake wrote 1795 on works produced one decade later must remain a matter of speculation. But in their entry on no. 68 the catalogue authors give the date "ca. 1795," without any discussion. I think that about 1805 should be accepted as the most likely date for these prints. The problematic dating should at least be acknowledged.

A Dream of Tiralatha is called "the erotic or impotent dream ... contrasted with the free and uninhibited figures to the left." The illustration was originally meant for *America,* and part of the suppressed text is known. I believe that the image illustrates the lines: "As when a dream of Tiralatha flies the midnight hour: / In vain the dreamer grasps the joyful images, they fly / Seen in obscured traces ... So / The British Colonies beneath the woful Princes fade." Obviously

the crouching woman is Tiralatha and the figures on the left are her dream, moving out of the image. Possibly influenced by the catalogue text, the Swedish translator calls the color print *En dröm om Tiralatha* (*A Dream about Tiralatha*), while it is correctly rendered in Finnish *Tiralathan uni.* See Detlef Dörrbecker, ed., *The Illuminated Books of William Blake: Volume 4. The Continental Prophecies* 136-38.

The catalogue mentions as one of the advantages of Blake's illuminated printing that it made a copper press superfluous. This is doubtful, since we know that Blake owned a wooden copper press at his death, although we cannot be sure how early he possessed it. Judging from the deep impressions that the illuminated plates have left in the paper, we know that most of them were printed in a copper press, from the 1790s on.

The translations into Finnish (by Tomi Snellman) and Swedish (by Camilla Ahlström-Taavitsainen), though for the most part well done, contain a number of mistakes, for which I feel in part responsible. According to an agreement between the museum and myself, the translators were to consult me if difficulties arose. Apparently they never realized when they ran into difficulties, and never contacted me. And I, unsuspecting, did not have the sense to contact them.

There is a point of general interest here for anyone involved in translation, as the following examples will show. The Finnish translation calls exhibit number 131 *Kuparipiirros,* meaning engraving on copper, which implies a print. Actually, the item is the *copper* for plate 15 of *Job.* The Swedish translation is correct here: *Kopparplåt.* The English text calls the exhibit a *copper plate.* Of course, *plate* is ambiguous in English, meaning a metal plate but also an impression of such a plate. The translator has missed the force of the word *copper.*

Further, David Bindman and Simon Baker mention white-line work, describing it as etching or engraving a plate—or part of a plate—in intaglio, and printing it from the surface of the parts in relief, like a woodcut. The translations, however, make no sense, as shown by catalogue numbers 36 (*The Ancient of Days*), 97 (pl. 33 of *Jerusalem*), and 108 (*The Man Sweeping the Interpreter's Parlour*). There is no attempt to translate the word *white-line,* and as a consequence the passages appear pointless.

Technical terms, even the simplest, are consistently mistranslated. Or is the word *copy* (noun) really so simple? Blake's illuminated books exist in one or several *copies.* The Finnish translator uses the word *nide* (*binding*), which is wrong. Even copy A of *The Song of Los* is called a *nide,* although in the exhibition each plate was hung in a separate mount. *Kappale* is the best translation, even *eksemplaari* would be correct, though awkward. The Swedish translator has chosen *kopia*—indeed the same word as the English *copy,* but, unfortunately, *kopia* means *copy* only in the sense of *imitation.* If you mean several copies of similar things, the only good translation into Swedish is *exemplar.* Sometimes *utgåva* is used by the Swedish translator, incorrectly, since it means *edition. Plates,* meaning *prints,* should in Swedish be *blad,* not *planscher.* The Swedish translator confuses terms like *frontispiece* and *title page.* The translations of poetry, Blake's and Young's, are not good. They are "free," and as a consequence the poet of *Night Thoughts* appears, in Swedish only, "fettered" instead of "self-fettered." Snellman has been able sometimes to quote existing translations, such as Risto Ahti's of Young's *Night Thoughts* or Aale Tynni's of *The Tyger.*

The translators are neither poets nor experts on the graphic arts. But even so, many mistakes could have been avoided had the translators had a chance to see the exhibits, at least in reproduction. Everyone involved in translation should observe the following rules:

1. A translator should avoid translating descriptions of images or other objects which he has not seen.
2. The translator should make a careful examination of the objects of the description under translation.
3. The translator should render the text as literally as possible, especially in poetry.
4. The translator should avoid handling texts on subjects of which he lacks experience.
5. If a translator has to deal with such texts, a consultant expert should be appointed—and used.
6. The consultant should contact the translator unbidden.

Although I have spoken Finnish since I was a child, I am not qualified to criticize translations into Finnish; I belong to the minority of Swedish-speaking Finns. Therefore I have consulted two native Finnish-speaking colleagues, Kari Kotkavaara and Heidi Pfäffli, both working at my department.

Finally, a suggestion to the authorities of the British Museum: why not show the exhibition also in London?