

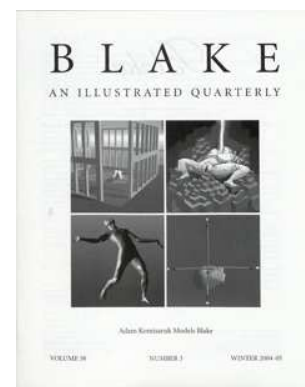
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R E V I E W

Tristanne J. Connolly, *William Blake and the Body*

Thomas Frosch

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102-107



acknowledges the temporal interval across which all representations, whether they be Los', Blake's or mine, fall away from their inspiration, yet it also embraces the restorative possibilities that such an acknowledgment may open up.¹⁷ Indeed, it is my hope that the temporal condition of The Blake Model may allow for its infinite correctibility within the community of Blakeans, into whose hands I commend it.

17. In this respect, the flicker may be thought of in terms of Martin Heidegger's *Augenblick*, the twinkling of an eye, the "moment of vision" in which "nothing can occur; but ... permits us to encounter for the first time what can be 'in a time' as ready-to-hand or present-at hand" (H338); *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper & Row, 1962) 388.

R E V I E W S

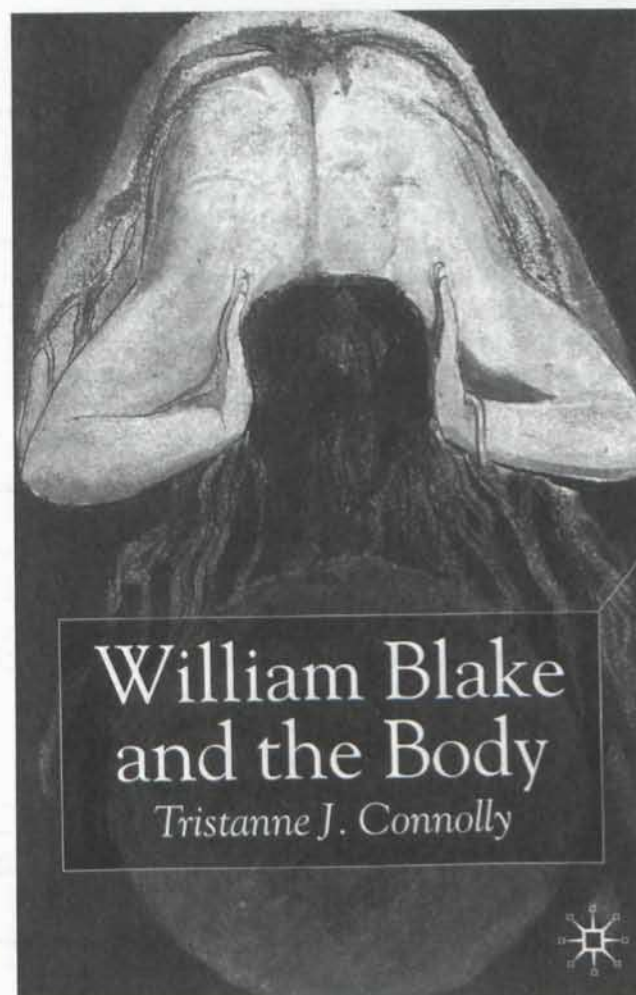
Tristanne J. Connolly. *William Blake and the Body*. Houndmills, Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002. xvii + 249pp. 15 b&w illus. \$75.00/£47.50, hardcover.

Reviewed by Thomas Frosch

In *William Blake and the Body*, Tristanne J. Connolly gives us not the exhilarating Blake nor, although this is her explicit intention, the dangerous Blake, but rather the agonistic Blake, tortuous and tortured in his "troubled obsession" with the body (vii). The agon is in the critic as well, since Connolly both admires Blake and is disappointed by him, specifically in his treatment of gender. She draws on a wide variety of recent critics who have written about the body in Blake and examines many aspects of his portrayal of the body and its changes, but gender is her pervasive and ultimate concern.

The book is attractively organized, studying, in order, Blake's treatment of texts as if they were bodies; his depiction of the body in his visual art; his story of the creation and shaping of the fallen body; his recurrent motif of bodies splitting off from and unifying with other bodies; and finally his presentation of the risen or eternal body.

When Blake says at the outset of *Jerusalem*, "I again display my Giant forms to the Public" (pl. 3), Connolly takes him as referring to his giant illuminated books as well as to the characters in them, and goes on to analyze parallels between his concept of texts and his concept of the body. When he gouges



out words from the third plate of *Jerusalem*, for example, he is making both a laceration and an orifice or entry point for the reader. Reading Blake is like entering the body of a text, filling in blanks or orifices. It is a crossing of bodily boundaries between outside and inside, a transgressive adventure into the dangerous and forbidden, possibly threatening to our own borders or identity but also offering the chance to gain "exclusive understanding" (24) and even promising transformative power, since the body, the text, and any structure or system that the body can symbolize are revealed to be not as unalterable in their condition as they might seem. Connolly refers throughout the book to the anthropologist Mary Douglas's treatment of the body as a model and symbol of any bounded social and cultural system and her concept of border crossings in rituals.

"The characteristics with which Blake invests his textual bodies reflect those of his vision of the eternal body," Connolly writes; when we read his works, "Communication occurs through a kind of unjealous, orgiastic intercourse" (24). Similarly, "Blake invites the reader to have a kind of sexual relationship to his books by entering their bodies" (65).

But what kind? Connolly is excellent on the importance of the motif of entering in Blake: she points to the *Jerusalem* frontispiece depicting Los entering a door and his entrance within the poem into the body of Albion to explore it; she studies Thel's entrance into the house of the matron Clay and her experience there of being overwhelmed through the sensory orifices. But her stress on texts as bodies with orifices that we might enter seems strained. It may be true that we as critics are sometimes pompous high priests entering a text by a secret place, but I don't think that's the way Connolly wants us to think of reading Blake. Her formulation of the eros of reading has two problems. First, it implies "adult," genital eros. Blake's illuminated books intensify and make central the tactile and visual stimulation of reading in general and the sense of books as sexual objects. But reading in its eros activates an archaic part of us that doesn't necessarily think in terms of whole bodies. Second, the physicality of reading needs to be situated within a complex of fantasies of reading that Blake draws on. When he writes of entering the work of art—

If the Spectator could Enter into these Images in his Imagination approaching them on the Fiery Chariot of his Contemplative Thought if he could Enter into Noahs Rainbow or into his bosom or could make a Friend & Companion of one of these Images of wonder which always intreats him to leave mortal things as he must know then would he arise from his Grave then would he meet the Lord in the Air & then he would be happy (*A Vision of the Last Judgment*, E 550)

—he seems suggestive less of any sexuality of which a mortal body is capable than of Wallace Stevens's notion that a long poem "comes to possess the reader and ... naturalizes him in its own imagination and liberates him there" (Stevens 50); or of Billy Collins's wish that his students might "walk inside the poem's room / and feel the walls for a light switch" (Collins 16); or of Melanie Klein's idea that the child fantasizes about entering the body of the mother to uncover her hidden and withheld valuables, like milk; or of D. W. Winnicott's idea that art, religion, and play involve a return to a special "transitional" realm of being, neither inner nor outer. Blake's concepts of bodies and texts need to be considered together with his concept of the imagination.

In her consideration of the body as it appears in Blake's pictures, Connolly emphasizes the impossible, contorted, and painful, even broken-backed postures of many of Blake's figures. In their simultaneous violence and grace, these figures express both the suffering of the mortal body and its connection to the ideal, eternal body. She sees Blake as exaggerating "to the point of physical impossibility" Michelangelo's technique of *contrapposto*, the serpentine twisting of the body in which parts of the body appear in opposition to each other (60-61). In contrast to Hogarth, who, while celebrating a serpentine "line of beauty," warned that such a line could become overly "bulging," Blake wrote that "Every Line is the Line of Beauty" (E 564; Connolly 60; Hogarth 65). The other qual-

ity of Blake's graphic bodies that Connolly calls to our attention is their skinlessness; while this gives them a "vulnerable, painfully raw and exposed," even flayed character (32), it also, in revealing the musculature and the network of vessels and nerves, or "fibres," is another way of transgressing the boundaries of the body, of entering it to see its hidden inner dimension. This way of depicting the body, she writes, is analogous to Blake's technique of relief etching; in both the inner line is made to stand out. Connolly discusses extensively Blake's debt to the art of anatomical illustration, to which he would have been exposed at the Royal Academy of Art; she discusses the work of the anatomists John and William Hunter and the anatomical illustrator William Cowper (not the poet), providing interesting illustrations of the latter's work and of an *écorché*, a model, used by artists, of a skinned body. After reading this discussion, I found myself looking at such pictures as the color print "Nebuchadnezzar" and Los with the Sun (*Jerusalem* 97) with new interest, and I also had a richer sense of "fibres" in Blake's poetic imagery. Of course, Blake also attacks "anatomization," and Cowper's illustrations hardly make us think of the sublime possibilities of the body (one shows a partly dissected baby), but Connolly cites Hogarth to distinguish between entering the body by cutting it apart and entering the body by imagining its inner wholeness.

Where Connolly pushes too hard in this chapter is in her treatment of the link between body and mind provided by the fibers of the nervous system as an illustration of Blake's concept of the ultimate unity of body and soul, and in her discussion of Blakean sympathy as a literalized version of Adam Smith's notion that "by the imagination ... we enter as it were into [another's] body" (67; Smith 9). Blake, as Connolly shows, often does describe emotions in physical terms and does show a mutual influencing of fibers and soul. But her point that the nervous system epitomizes the unity of body and soul reduces the soul to the body as we know it now rather than helping us understand how the body and senses might have new possibilities. And if Blake's graphic figures, with their "bared bodily interiors" (65), invite a physical and emotional intimacy, which might repel some readers and encourage others to sympathy, then why do we generally see muscles and fibers but not inner organs or bones? We might occasionally come across, in a scene of horror, a skeleton or a heart ripped out of a victim, and we might see clouds shaped like intestines, but usually Blake's pictures don't take us deep inside the physical body. It seems more likely that it is the effect of suffering on bodily posture and musculature that encourages sympathy with Blake's figures rather than an effort to take us inside them in some literal and partial way—if sympathy is even primarily what Blake is after in his pictures, rather than a stretching of our conceptions and imaginings by means of visionary spectacle. In addition, are muscles, blood, and nerves the lineaments of the eternal body, while inner organs and bones belong purely to our finite, mortal part? Connolly is not clear on such matters.

Connolly next discusses Blake's portrayal of the process of embodiment, studying the formation of the bodies of Urizen and Reuben. To Urizen's shaping she compares Ovid's stories of bodily metamorphoses, noting that while the metamorphoses of Ovid's subjects, like Daphne or Io, are motivated by a desire to remain separate, Urizen's metamorphosis is the product of a separation from the other eternal; also, while Ovid's subjects metamorphose to animals or plants, Urizen changes horrifyingly into the common human body. She gives us a careful description of the stages of Urizen's embodiment, with its motifs of the narrowing of eternal, expanded and flexible sense organs, of binding and solidification, of stifling entrapment within skull, skeleton, cavern, Mundane Shell, and of body parts "shooting" out from each other. Developing a suggestion of Easson and Easson, she compares this metamorphosis to gestation and brings in theories of fetal development which were current in Blake's time and which Blake perhaps had in mind. What seems most important in her analysis, though, is that no mother plays a role in this gestation and birth, which is the work of Los and his blacksmith's tools and furnaces. Connolly makes the point that Urizen is, in effect, born not from a womb but into one, whether a tight and restricting enclosure or a vast abyss in which he helplessly floats. Connolly returns to her theme of the book as body when she writes that Los binds Urizen like a book and that his embodiment is "an allegory of illuminated printing" (84). The variations in the text of *The First Book of Urizen*, for example, express a struggle against fixed form, parallel to the flux of oral poetry, and, what she might have stressed more, represent an attempt to return through art to the flexibility of the eternal body.

Los's shaping of Reuben and his senses in *Jerusalem* is another instance of the male creation of bodies, and Connolly's attention to Reuben is one of the book's contributions. While the embodiment of Urizen represents the danger of inflexibility and "hyper-formation," that of Reuben, who keeps returning to Los for improvement, represents the "danger of formlessness or malformation" (95). While Urizen is like a fetus in gestation, Reuben, who "slept in Bashan like one dead in the valley," is like a miscarried fetus (*Jerusalem* 30:43). Connolly even suggests that Catherine Blake may have suffered a miscarriage; her evidence—that a Catherine Blake appears for unspecified reasons in the 1796 records of a maternity hospital—is tenuous, as she acknowledges, but she plays with the metaphor of miscarriage interestingly. Those who see Reuben when he crosses the Jordan are horrified and then become what they behold; in him they see their own incompleteness and malformation: "all birth [is] misbirth, a deformation of an ideal, transparent, unrestricted shape" (122). She does, once again, push too hard, as when she suggests that Reuben's four trips across the Jordan may indicate that Catherine suffered several miscarriages. She is also not convincing to me when, elaborating on Damon's speculation that *The Book of Thel* may have been a response to a miscarriage, she

writes that Thel is both "a woman who suffers a miscarriage" and a miscarried child (111; Damon 401). Thel, however, is both repeatedly called a virgin and a maid and depicted as completely mystified and even traumatized by the existence of hymen and foreskin. Still, the parallel between Reuben and Thel in their feelings of failure and their difficulties with the body is useful. Connolly goes on valuably to discuss Reuben's involvement with Tirzah, mother of our mortal part, and the biblical Reuben's desire for his father's concubine, and to build on Paley's characterization of him as "the mother-fixed man" (Paley 270); Los cannot make Reuben leave the womb.

Reuben also makes an appearance right after the famous passage in which Blake contrasts genital sexuality to polymorphous perversity and the false holiness hidden in the center to the Eden "in the Camp: in the Outline" (*Jerusalem* 69:41), and Connolly develops Stevenson's note that the biblical Reuben is associated with a place of worship beyond the central altar (Stevenson 784). So while Reuben reminds us of the restrictions of a reproduction-oriented sexuality and the pain when that reproductive purpose is not fulfilled, he also reminds us of "the freedom of a full-body sexuality which does not place exclusive priority on generation and its organs" (103). Connolly sees a further positive element in Reuben when she parallels his crossing and recrossing the Jordan to Blake's artistic process with its various stages and with his "struggle against finality in his works, which cross back and forth over the river that divides print and manuscript, oral and written, visual and verbal, order and chaos" (120). But it is not entirely persuasive to see the shaping of Reuben, which is only a stage in Los's development, as epitomizing even in part what artistic work should be for Blake. Reuben might instead epitomize some of the frustrating elements of artistic work, a haunting or obsessive dissatisfaction or a resistance to being born. The episode of Reuben also leads her to consider pre-existence in Blake, both of bodies and of artistic concepts: the concept of pre-existence in eternity "works along with Blake's insistence on the continuity of conception and execution to assert that though a child or artwork may fail to be physically embodied, it does definitely exist" (122). Where? How? Urizen and Thel, even if she is an unborn being, do have forms of embodiment in their pre-existence; a fading rainbow or a watery reflection, as Thel takes herself to be, is still something seen in a world that is not beyond sensory perception. Connolly steers us into the welter of Blakean images and ideas of reproduction, sex, artistic production, and eternity but just leaves us in the middle—partly, I think, because she makes the concept of miscarriage do too much work. Even so, this chapter valuably underscores the intricacies and strangeness of the Reuben episode.

In her next two chapters, Connolly focuses on the divisions and comminglings of bodies and the multiplicity of the Blakean person, discussing first children as personified aspects of parents and then spectres and emanations. She considers

the "bizarre variations on birth" in Blake (125); even birth from the womb, as in the case of Orc, can seem like osmosis, since he and his mother are "really aspects of the father" (126). But Connolly particularly stresses the recurrent motif of birth from the male bosom, and if children burst nightmarishly out of the male chest—the sons of Albion emerge from his breast like a cancerous "Polypus" (*Jerusalem* 18:40)—the male bosom is also where divinity resides: Blake's Jesus lives in the breasts of human beings, as they do in his. While Connolly discusses Milton's portrayal of Sin's birth from Satan's head and mentions Hesiod's depiction of the birth of Athene, she does not refer to the portrayal of the Son in God's bosom in Milton and in John, although she will later take up God's begetting of his Son in the theology. And if the male bosom in Blake replaces the womb, I would add that it also, more simply and directly, replaces the female bosom. These Blakean motifs and processes seem like elaborations of childhood fantasies of birth, and for the infant everything comes from the breast, a source of quasi-divine power; in the passages Connolly analyzes we can see breast-envy as well as the womb-envy she emphasizes.

Once Blakean children are born, they are tortured, and Connolly treats the physical torments and sacrifices inflicted on them mostly by female characters. She brings in Girard, Aztec sacrifice, and *Oedipus Tyrannus* but, most valuably, sees Blakean torture as a parody of sex, not only in its violent penetration but also in its violent mimicking of the comminglings of eternity: the Daughters of Albion, for example, clothe themselves in the skin of their victims. The Blakean sacrifice, she suggests, is both a failed attempt to divide something from the self and a failed attempt to unify something with the self. In her portrayal of the violence and sacrifice that goes into the shaping of the human body, it is surprising, however, that she doesn't discuss castration, even though she writes about the Oedipal entanglements of parents and children.

Connolly sets Blake's myth of the multiplicity and identity of the body against seeming suggestions of divine multiplicity in the Bible: the name Elohim, the portrayal of Wisdom in the Apocrypha, the ambiguous relationship of God and Satan, and the New Testament Trinity. "Blake transfers God's multiplicity to the human psyche," she writes (165). But in particular contrast to the Trinity, in which the "male co-option of birth" involves "disembodiment" (187), Blake's multiple persons, such as the spectres and emanations, are really separate bodies. With a similar shift to the literal and a similarly heightened emphasis on the physical, the female is produced not by the extraction and shaping of a rib but by direct emergence, bursting like a globe of blood out of a male body or breaking fully formed out of a male chest. Connolly points out that the ideal body, as well as the fallen one, is multiple, for the end of *Jerusalem* shows a cycle of unity and diversity in the life of the risen man. But in the fallen world the parts get out of control, taking on an autonomous life and acting in opposition to the being from whom they have split off. These are issues of work

and love. The spectre is "the working agent of the human" (167), and Los must subdue his spectre, his personal spoiler and devil, in order to get his work done. Connolly does not develop to any great extent what rebellious, inner elements may be suggested by the spectre, but spends more time on the emanation. Emanations—personifications of spiritual qualities like Wisdom but also material beings associated with blood, light, and color—are supposedly male and female, but it is as females that they figure most prominently, and the subduing of the emanation is difficult to separate from male subordination of the female. When the sexes disappear at the end of *Jerusalem*, it is really the female that disappears, absorbed into the male and into the status of artwork created by the male: "Personifying the artwork as an emanation, and considering the female as a psychic aspect of the male, endows both with independent life and yet allows for both to remain under the control of their maker" (191). So Blake both co-opts birth for the male and devalues physical birth in favor of mental creation, to which he attributes physicality. Connolly brings in Webster and Clark on Blake's exploration of "escape routes from maternal debt" (188), and she also suggests the association of the emanation, in the case of Enitharmon, with the penis and points to the way in which the birth of the emanation is followed by the birth of sexual desire. I miss further exploration of these important issues: of apparent rage against woman for both her maternal power and her sexual power; of the need for control in Blake, famous as he is for his chafing under control by others; of male fantasies of artistic creativity as a taking over of female powers. And these are male fantasies, not just Blakean ones, as Connolly too briefly acknowledges: Milton, awaiting his amanuensis, complained that he wanted to be "milked" (Hughes 1044); Beethoven said that *Fidelio* had given him the worst birth pangs of any of his children (Weiss 156); the comic writer Peter De Vries once cracked that asking a writer to talk about writing was like asking a cow to talk about milk. These are casual remarks, but out of such material Blake made a central and epic story.

In her concluding chapter, Connolly discusses the risen body, emphasizing its physicality and its continuity with, as well as its changes from, the mortal body. She compares Blake's risen body with descriptions of angelic or resurrected bodies in Swedenborg, St. Paul, Locke, and Berkeley, pointing out that in Blake the senses are "not overridden but transformed" (196). She goes through various Blakean metaphors for the transformation of the body, such as removing or exchanging garments, cleansing or opening the entryways of perception, and immersing the finite world in corrosives. In addition, she discusses the specific characteristics of the eternal body, such as its flexible senses; its responsiveness to will; its openness and transparency; its commingling with other bodies, particularly through entering their bosoms; and its capacity to change, even to the extent of its leaving paradise in a creative cycle. And referring to the conversations in paradise with their "Visionary forms dramatic" (*Jerusalem* 98:28),

she relates the risen body to the ideal art work, which also is both improved over and continuous with fallen art—at least continuous with fallen art at its best as Blake conceived it. Although the risen body may seem androgynous or genderless, Connolly maintains that it is ultimately male, and she sees the Edenic conversation as a homoerotic intellectual union between males. In the final awakening of Albion, she pays particular attention to the shooting of fiery arrows by Albion and his Zoas; this is an Eden dominated by phalluses and phallic activity, homosexual and masturbatory in connotation. Connolly writes that Blake borrowed his flaming arrows from the vision of St. Teresa but erased femininity from that vision. So Blake celebrates polymorphous perversity and non-reproductive sexuality in general, even making a place for lesbian sexuality, as in the episode in which Jerusalem reposes in the arms of Vala; but, against Hobson, who argues that Blake praises all forms of sexuality, Connolly writes that male/male relationships dominate his final vision and that women are closed out of an ideal in which he “tries to unify sexual and intellectual pursuits” (217). Connolly makes her case well, although I miss a bit more sense of the conflict in Blake on gender. “Let man wear the fell of the lion, woman the fleece of the sheep,” he wrote (*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, pl. 8); but he also wrote, “A Poet a Painter a Musician an Architect: the Man / Or Woman who is not one of these is not a Christian” (*The Laocoön*, E 270).

The expanded sensory orifices of the risen body, Connolly writes, may “sound like the parts of a monster, a grotesque giant, more than an ideal human. How can this be the human form divine if it no longer looks like a human?” (196). She is pursuing her argument that the ideal body is really more closely related to the fallen body than it might seem, but she never clearly and directly answers the question she raises. What does the risen body look like? In one sense, it doesn't look like anything we can visualize; we can't see it in the limited terms of natural sight. In another sense, however, Blake does give us an idea of its appearance in his poetic and visual renderings of the fourfold chariot of Ezekiel, and Connolly might have paid more attention to that vision. She does dip into one such description but in a misleading way. She says that in eternity “even Chaos has eyes: ‘And the dim Chaos brightend beneath, above, around! Eyed as the Peacock’” (204). Chaos, like the rest of the newly humanized universe, may now have eyes, but the two previous lines also need to be quoted: “And every Man stood Fourfold. each Four Faces had. One to the West / One toward the East One to the South One to the North. the Horses Fourfold” (*Jerusalem* 98:12-13). It is the new body too that has many eyes, just as the Ancient Poets in *The Marriage* had more numerous senses than we do today. In Blake's watercolor of Ezekiel's vision, the whirlwind that surrounds the fourfold figures and is part of their total being is eyed like the peacock. As for the embraces of paradise, Blake has no pictures that I know of that show people entering each other's bosoms; but he does show us in plates 96 and 99

of *Jerusalem* embraces that accompany textual descriptions of entering Albion's bosom. These hugs may have sexual connotations, but Erdman points out that Albion in plate 99 is holding his body sideways and also that the picture suggests a return of a prodigal child (Erdman 378). Especially in plate 99, where the gender of the embraced figure is not clear and the figure could even be an adult-sized pregenital child, we could have a heterosexual embrace, a homosexual embrace, a non-sexual embrace of father and child, or a return of a fatherly God to humanity; many fantasies seem to be at work in Blake's image, and so do multiple figurative meanings, including quite common ones: Albion is taking Jerusalem into his heart; the physical embrace is accompanied by the profoundest feelings of love. I miss in Connolly a setting of the physical in Blake within a full range of possible literal and figurative meanings. Blake's own poetic myth seems to me to provide guidance here: he obviously attacked the isolation of reason from the other faculties, but it was not his goal to isolate the body either; he wanted to transform the body by bringing it back together with the other faculties.

I also miss, in this study that clearly points out the prevalence of pain, torture, and violence in Blake's visual and poetic imagery, a more developed discussion of aggression and anger in Blake. Are sadomasochistic impulses among the ones released in his work? And aren't Albion's arrows weapons of aggression aimed at the Druid Spectre, however that aggression may be fused with eros in the “Wars of Love” (*Jerusalem* 98:6; 97:14)? The transformation or sublimation of aggression into Mental Fight is a Blakean theme, and there is a lot to sublimate. The resistance to being passive, “feminine,” enslaved to another man's system or to a maternal origin, is strong in Blake, even as he shows a male co-opting of birth and bosom. Perhaps the subduing of the female may be motivated by the wish to subdue inner elements felt to be feminine. Perhaps the embrace of the father at the end of *Jerusalem* expresses a longing for the father that, throughout Blake's work, has been attended by fears of feminization.

The book is rich in contexts but one that is conspicuously absent is that of Romantic poetry. A stress on the senses and their transformation is a notable theme in Wordsworth, with his idea of the despotism of the eye; in Keats, with his supernatural figures metamorphosing into human bodies; and in Shelley, with his risen bodies and Ezekiel-like visions of a new physical being in *Prometheus Unbound*.

William Blake and the Body is valuable for its determined attention to physicality in a poet once, now long ago, interpreted chiefly, often purely, in spiritual and intellectual terms; for its assembling of good points by many previous writers on Blake and the body; for its interesting discussions of such topics as anatomical art, Reuben, fibers, Blakean bosoms; for its presentation of the pains and stifling restrictions of embodiment; and for its contribution to the gender discussion. But I found the book more notable for its highlighting of issues, questions, and complexities than for persuasive or vivid formulations.

While reading the book, I kept thinking of two passages in *The Marriage*. One is "How do you know but ev'ry Bird that cuts the airy way, / Is an immense world of delight, clos'd by your senses five?" (pl. 7). How do we know, for example, that the immense world of delight that artistic imaginings can give us now is not a prototype of what we might experience directly with improved senses? The other is the ambiguously worded description of the last chamber of the printing house of Hell, in which the finished works of art "were reciev'd by Men who occupied the sixth chamber, and took the forms of books & were arranged in libraries" (pl. 15). The Men receive the books, but they also take the forms of books. Humans are like texts here not in that both have orifices and interiors but in that ideally our lives are shaped by our own imaginations and creative efforts, as texts are. Giving us larger and more numerous senses, epitomizing a creativity that we do not yet have in our individual and communal lives, art for Blake both anticipates and brings about the eternal body, and "the artist is an inhabitant of that happy country," Eden (*A Descriptive Catalogue*, E 533).

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Alexander S. Gourlay, ed. *Prophetic Character: Essays on William Blake in Honor of John E. Grant*. Locust Hill Literary Studies, No. 33. West Cornwall, CT: Locust Hill Press, 2002. xxiii + 396pp. 67 illus. \$60.00, hardcover.

Reviewed by Joseph Wittreich

Since 1960, William Blake has undergone rehabilitation and, tardily, canonization, only to be exiled yet again to the wilderness. Meanwhile, Blake criticism, which initially seemed at a crossroads, has moved into crisis. Yet with each shift, and at every juncture, John E. Grant has been both a striking and a salutary presence—often as corrector but, more important, as collaborator who, with David V. Erdman, produced *Blake's Visionary Forms Dramatic* (1970) and, with Mary Lynn Johnson, coedited *Blake's Poetry and Designs: A Norton Critical Edition* (1979). A year later, the Clarendon Press issued its monumental *William Blake's Designs for Edward Young's "Night Thoughts"* (1980) under the editorship of Erdman and Grant, here joined by Edward J. Rose and Michael J. Tolley. Grant's first two articles (not on Blake) were co-authored, as if in anticipation of the important essays on Blake that he wrote jointly with Robert E. Brown, Mary Lynn Johnson, and Alexander S. Gourlay, the editor of the festschrift here under review. An earlier volume, with essays by various hands, *Critical Paths: Blake and the Argument of Method* (1987), was dedicated to Grant. Gourlay's book, poignantly introduced, expertly edited, and amazingly particularized, is presented as a tribute to—and token of—Grant's achievement.

As Mary Lynn Johnson concludes her magisterial survey of modern Blake criticism, she observes that "[i]f a major shift is occurring in Blake studies, as it seems to be, it does not pivot on any one new work, and no new paradigm is in