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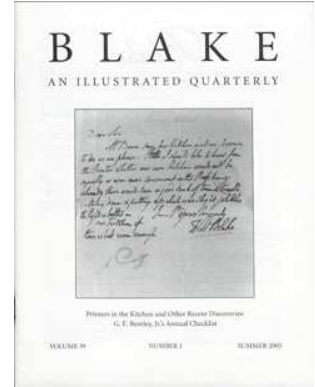
BLAKE

R E V I E W

Joyce H. Townsend, ed., William Blake: The Painter at Work

Alexander Gourlay

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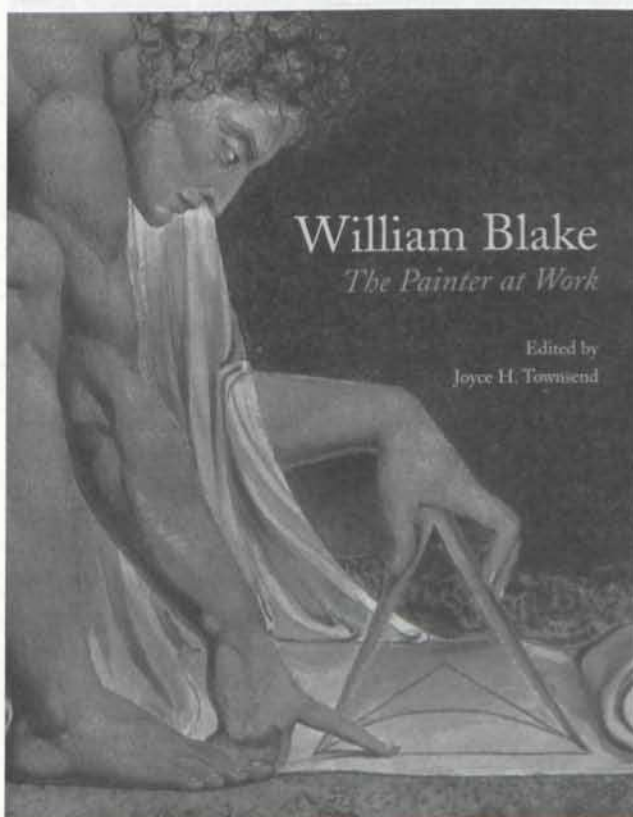
ing. One of the proverbs therein is "The nakedness of woman is the work of God."¹ Strangely, as far as I know, no one has noted the sharp—one might say polemical—relationship of this aphorism to a famous passage in Paul's first Letter to the Corinthians: "Every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head; for that is even all one as if she were shaven. For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn; but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered. For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of god; but the woman is the glory of the man" (11:5-7).² "The woman is the glory of the man." Paul's aphoristic structure is kept by Blake: "The nakedness of woman is the work of God."³ Paul's injunction that women need to keep their hair covered is countered by Blake's overriding praise of the naked woman. While Paul condemns the baring of a woman's head, Blake lauds her presence with no coverings at all. This rejection of Paul is another example of what Bloom calls "Blake's Proverbs exist[ing] to break down orthodox categories of thought and morality."⁴

1. Proverbs 25.

2. King James Version.

3. Verbal and structural (and perhaps satiric) echoes of Paul's passage are already present in Blake three lines earlier, "The pride of the peacock is the glory of God" (22).

4. Harold Bloom, *Blake's Apocalypse* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1963) 85.



R E V I E W

Joyce H. Townsend, ed., and Robin Hamlyn, consultant ed. *William Blake: The Painter at Work*. London: Tate Publishing, 2003; £19.99, paperback. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2004; \$45.00, hardcover. 192 pp. 118 color, 28 b&w illus.

Reviewed by Alexander Gourlay

Joyce H. Townsend's handsome collection of colorfully illustrated studies and reports focuses on Blake's paintings and large color prints¹ as physical objects, with emphasis on identifying his methods and materials, establishing what the pictures originally looked like, and determining how they can now be preserved, restored and displayed. The technical information that dominates the book will be most directly useful to museum professionals, but the writers try to make the discussions accessible to Blakeans at large, whether art historians, literary scholars, artists, or interested amateurs. As one might expect, some of the essays exhibit the perturbations of voice and technical level that occur when multiple authors write collectively for a wide audience, but readers will have little trouble sorting out what is useful to them. All of the authors are affiliated in one way or another with the Tate, so the discussions concentrate on works in the incomparable Blake collection there, works recently exhibited there, and on pictures in or near London. As a result there are few definitive pronouncements here about what Blake always or never did—the contributors didn't examine everything, and it's clear from what they did study that his practices varied. All in all, the technical analyses are much more sophisticated than those that have previously been brought to bear on these questions, the results are more conclusive, the perspectives are refreshing and often startling, the discoveries are numerous, and the consequences are substantial for everyone who studies Blake's art.

Much of *The Painter at Work* is concerned with determining what the latest analytical, microscopic and imaging technologies can tell us about the procedures Blake used to create his watercolors, large color prints, and temperas, but among them the authors also bring to the discussion wide-ranging expertise in material culture, art history, and Blake studies, and in some cases they also have extensive personal experience with Blake works as physical objects: moving them, hanging

1. The large color prints are distinguished here from the color-printed pages in Blake's illuminated books and books of designs, for most of which Blake probably used similar materials but some different procedures. Robert N. Essick and the painter/printmaker Caroline Adams corrected many errors in drafts of this review.

them, storing them, lighting them, protecting them, cleaning and repairing them. Though many are specialists, the authors are not narrow-minded, and they consistently indicate how their information relates to some of the other ways of thinking about Blake's work. Nevertheless, the new analytical and critical veins they have uncovered are hardly exhausted, and scholars still have plenty of room to apply the information recorded here to the longstanding puzzles on which they bear.

One contributor who is especially adept at thinking simultaneously about Blake's pictures as intellectual constructs and as material objects is consultant editor Robin Hamlyn, a senior curator at the Tate. His introductory essay, "William Blake at Work: 'Every thing which is in Harmony,'" reflects not only deep knowledge of Blake's work and its various cultural contexts, but also longstanding familiarity with the pictures as something other than intangible presences on a wall. Although most of the information he assembles comes from earlier scholarship rather than the technical analyses presented here, Hamlyn's demystified perspective illuminates the practical and intellectual consequences of all kinds of pertinent physical realities, not just those of the objects themselves. When, for instance, he takes up the subject of "fresco," a medium that Blake particularly respected but understood rather differently from the rest of the world, Hamlyn deftly connects the fresco-related technical features of Blake's color prints and temperas, Raphael's frescoes in the Vatican Loggia, the frescoes of Rigaud in the Guildhall, the "Venetian Secret" scandal of the mid-nineties, and Blake's idea of "Portable Fresco." And this brings up (here and in a later chapter he cowrote with Townsend and John Anderson) a particularly intangible work, the lost painting of *The Ancient Britons*; Hamlyn not only considers how the huge picture would have hung in Blake's 1809 Exhibition but also how the short, stocky artist must have climbed on the furniture to paint it in the studio in South Molton Street, how little space he would have had for framing it (suggesting that he didn't), and how he carried it to his brother's house on Broad Street where the exhibition was held. This particular "Portable Fresco" must have been not only light enough to move but, as G. E. Bentley and others have noted, capable of being rolled up to carry across town, through narrow doors and passages, and up and down several flights of stairs. *The Painter at Work* also features two other general essays: the first is a mildly confusing multi-author review of "The State of Knowledge on William Blake the Painter," summarizing a largely undifferentiated assortment of first-hand accounts, second-hand accounts, speculations of diverse vintage, and modern research reports. Joyce Townsend concludes the introduction by briskly describing the various analytical techniques used in the reports.

The main body of the book is divided into sections on watercolors (works in relatively thin colors painted on paper without a ground—what Blake usually called drawings), large color prints (works printed in thick colors from a stiff surface onto paper and finished variously), and temperas (works painted in thick and thin colors on a white ground), each of

which is further divided into chapters that address relevant subtopics. Blake himself did not explicitly classify his works this way: he experimented freely with materials and methods, and in practice and in rhetoric he often tried to shift or blur the traditional boundaries between art-making media. As a result, the sections of the book devoted to these topics often overlap, and because the chapters are the work of different authors, some information comes up twice. On the other hand, all the authors deliberately avoid the entire issue of "illuminated book" printing, especially printing pages in color. This decision is understandable, given the paucity of illuminated works at the Tate and the fierce debate about these processes in this journal and elsewhere, but also somewhat arbitrary, since most of Blake's painting media are involved one way or another in the printing and finishing of illuminated books, and many of the elaborate arguments in that controversy bear directly on works covered in this book.

The section on "Watercolours" is divided into Peter Bower's essay, "The Vivid Surface," on papers and stiffer paper-related materials (pasteboards, cardboards, millboards, etc.), and a discussion by Townsend and Noa Cahaner McManus of Blake's "Watercolour Methods, and Materials Use in Context." Bower distinguishes lucidly between the various kinds of paper and board that Blake used or is said to have used as support for the finished works or in the process of color printing, and provides information about watermarks and papermakers that will also be very useful for those studying Blake's prints, illuminated books, and other works on paper from the period. McManus and Townsend show how Blake's watercolor technique was related to those of contemporary masters of the emergent medium such as Girtin and Turner, and then how different from theirs his actual practice usually was, even though he used many of the same materials. Most watercolorists drew a subject in graphite, added layers of "neutral tint" (gray or light brown) to establish forms, and then washed over the result in weak colors, often after erasing the graphite completely. By contrast, Blake usually avoided neutral tints, preferring to define form through clearly drawn lines that emerged from clouds of erased pentimenti; over the outlines he added strong colors, and then reinforced the lines with ink.

One generality is especially interesting: the authors note that Blake consistently favored additive procedures in his watercolors, eschewing such widely used techniques as color subtraction with sponge or cloth, scratching out or erasing (and though they don't mention it, I haven't seen evidence that he used the related technique of masking with impervious stencils to create patterns). McManus and Townsend suggest that subtractive techniques "might have seemed to him to be evidence of indecision or second thoughts" (66), and thus inconsistent with Blake's aesthetic doctrines, which usually favor as much directness as possible between inspiration and execution. That principle may be relevant, but my limited experience as a watercolorist tells me that subtractive techniques are more likely to be part of the artist's plan of execution than

afterthoughts. And Blake was not at all averse to subtractive procedures in his other media: some of the temperas use them (see 124-25 in the book under review) and his various printing processes play freely with reversal, subtraction and addition, white-line and black-line, shadow and light, even while they preserve the directness of execution that Blake so prized. What we may be seeing here is not inconsistency but allegiance to what Blake saw as the inherent properties of a given kind of art-making—for him, watercolor as a medium appears to have been “colouring,” an essentially additive (and subordinate) adjunct to drawing, which alone defined form; by contrast, his printmaking was a medium of reversals, reiterations, second and third thoughts, inversions and ironies, additive subtractions and subtractive additions. Conversely, Blake’s watercolors rarely feature even additive forms of serendipitous trickery for achieving naturalistic effects, such as brush slapping or sputtering, in which “natural” random patterns are created mechanically. The watercolor manuals of the day were filled with recipes for such indirection, but Blake’s approach maximized linearity, direct intentionality, and transparency, both literal and figurative. Although a few of his early works employ something like conventional watercolor procedure (neutral tones added to faint preliminary drawing, followed by weak color tinting), almost all his hundreds of later watercolors emphasize expressive line, especially outline, and strong pure color rather than tone.

Of all his techniques, Blake’s watercolor method seems calculated to contrast as much as possible with oil painting, which dominated all other media in the respectable art world, and which Blake detested on several different grounds. Many oil painters, then as now, used transparency and translucency to some degree in their work, but Blake always represented oil paint as essentially opaque, its colors murky, and its techniques disingenuous and indirect. Furthermore, both the vehicle and the pigment of oil colors seemed to him inherently unreliable in the long term. Blake was sure that oils would inevitably turn brown, and he knew that mixing oil colors on the palette, the usual practice when colors are nearly opaque, can bring together incompatible chemical compounds that eventually react with pernicious effect.

The Tate researchers show that Blake’s watercolor techniques seem to have been aimed at promoting both transparency and durability, even if he was not always successful at achieving either of them. The finished work usually reveals the underlying drawing, in general it uses the light reflected off the underlying paper and through pigmented layers rather than off the surface of opaque colors, and he usually finished the work by confirming the initial graphite outlines in ink. Both the graphite drawing and the final confirmation of it were of paramount importance to Blake, and yet his technique was not restricted to the addition of transparent layers: both late and early in his career, Blake’s colors were often strong enough to be virtually opaque, and he sometimes added substances like chalk and (disastrously) white lead that rendered them even more so. To minimize adverse reactions he almost always kept

his watercolor pigments themselves pure, and wisely used diluted ink for his grays rather than the popular compounded “neutral tints” of the day, many of which have faded. Unlike oil painters, Blake usually created mixed colors by applying a second color over the first after it had dried thoroughly, or added colors side by side in small touches with a dry brush (though he sometimes created greens by mixing blue and yellow on the palette or by washing one wet color over another while the first was still wet). One other significant pattern in the analysis of Blake’s watercolor pigments is that in general he seems to have chosen inexpensive pigments and avoided expensive ones. This could be an unsurprising consequence of Blake’s usual poverty, but given his experimental spirit and his willingness to use expensive papers and other deluxe materials, it may be better understood as an attempt to avoid unproven pigments or ones with prices that might encourage adulteration or misrepresentation.

McManus and Townsend also address questions about the current state of Blake’s watercolors, many of which are not in good shape, especially those that have been exposed to light for any period of time. They explain which pigments have probably vanished and which have shifted in color, and show examples of various forms of deterioration and restoration. Thus a picture like *The River of Life* may once have featured a considerably bluer river and green lawns that have subsequently turned mottled gray and yellow, respectively, as fugitive blues vanished from too much exposure.² It is somewhat heartening that most of the widespread deterioration (and damage in “restoration”) occurred in the nineteenth century and has been slowed considerably for those works that are now in good hands. The Tate authors don’t address this issue directly, but if lost or altered colors can be mapped on Blake’s pictures reliably, digital recreations of their original appearance may be possible.

The chapter on the large color prints, also by McManus and Townsend, greatly clarifies Blake’s practice in this medium, in which he executed some of his most striking works. It shares characteristics with watercolor, tempera, and the color printing that Blake did in the illuminated books: like the watercolors and color-printed illuminated pages, Blake’s large color prints were executed on paper without a ground, and like the temperas and most color-printed books, they employ colors made by combining pigments (some of them outside his watercolor palette) with a thick water-based binder, usually a mixture of plant gums and sugar or honey, the Tate authors report.³

2. The authors propose a complex sequence of deterioration, restoration, and more deterioration to account for the current state of the blues in this picture.

3. Those interested in the large color prints should also consult Joseph Viscomi’s reports of his experiments with color printing from flat surfaces in Robert N. Essick and Viscomi, “Blake’s Method of Color Printing: Some Responses and Further Observations,” *Blake/An Illustrated Quarterly* 36.2 (fall 2002): 61-63 and Bo Ossian Lindberg’s observations in his review of Essick’s *Printmaker* in *Blake/An Illustrated Quarterly* 15.3 (winter 1981-82): 140-48.

Their tests show that the gums included gum arabic (from the acacia tree), gum tragacanth (from the shrub *Astragalus gum-mifer* or its close relative *Astragalus verus*), and possibly gum karaya (also called Indian tragacanth, from *Sterculia urens*). Gum arabic, the gum most widely used to bind ordinary watercolors, promotes even dispersion of pigments and is readily soluble and resoluble in water, but gum tragacanth (usually called gum dragon in Blake's day but not to be confused with the reddish tree resin called dragon's blood) is a thickener that dissolves best in warm water and is not easily resoluble once it has dried. The Tate authors list gum karaya as a possible component because gas chromatography cannot distinguish it from gum arabic when gum tragacanth is present, but they note that it wasn't regularly imported in Blake's day. It is a very potent thickener that might conceivably have been sold to Blake as gum tragacanth, but the gum karaya I have used is fairly resoluble in cool water, and would not have been a satisfactory substitute for tragacanth if Blake sought waterfastness as well as thickening.

The presence of substantial amounts of gum tragacanth suggests that despite similarities to Blake's watercolor palette, many of the colors used in color printing had a very different consistency from those used in the watercolors. The working characteristics of a paint bound with a mixture of arabic and tragacanth might have been roughly comparable to those of modern acrylics, which can be thick or thin and, though water-based, are waterproof when dry. Gum tragacanth was sometimes called "watercolor megilp" (or "McGuelp"),⁴ reflecting its similarity to the mastic-based megilp used as a thickener in oil painting. (My experiments with various combinations of the thickening gums, however, suggest that unlike acrylics or oil megilp, which tend to retain their shape in impasto, thickened gum gels collapse almost completely to thin layers as the very high water content in them evaporates.) The reticulated patterns that appear in the colored prints indicate that for this purpose Blake's colors were rendered gelatinously thick, largely by the gum tragacanth, with much more substance than his ordinary watercolors, though they could be diluted to the consistency of water.⁵ Unlike Blake's watercolor drawings, which are scrupulously deliberate, the large color prints often rely heavily on (and carefully preserve) the largely serendipitous patterning effects created by the thick colors as they pulled off the printing surface in blobs, sierras, and peaks that subsequently shrank down as they dried but did not lose relief entirely. The Tate authors cite D. G. Rossetti's baffled awe when he examined these patterns in the color print *Newton*:

4. The OED lists the following variants: "Magelp, magelph, magilp, magylp, magylph, megilp, megelp, megylp, megylph, macgelp, macgelp, macgilp, macgilph, macgyph, macgylp, magulp, megulph, mygelp, mygelph, mygilp, mygilph, mygylp, mygulph." Marjorie B. Cohn, in *Wash and Gouache* (Cambridge, MA: Fogg, 1977) 57, spells it "meglip."

5. Some of Blake's watercolors include gum tragacanth as a constituent in the binder, and it is possible that he used very dilute glue in this way as well.

"I can conceive no mechanical process short of photography which is really capable of explaining it" (43). Although most of these impressive reticulations were probably generated by the printing process, we should be alert to the possibility that when finishing the large color prints he created additional patterning effects by means of the kind of paint manipulations (blotting, dabbing) that he rarely used in watercolor. Another significant difference from Blake's watercolors is that although there may have been a preliminary drawing on the flat printing surface, it would not have transferred to the color print: the only visible drawing on a large color print is the final outlining in ink.

Once the printed colors of a large color print had dried thoroughly they would not easily "wash up" as colors bound by gum arabic do, because the tragacanth and/or related gums would inhibit it. The printing colors were often rendered nearly opaque by their thickness, pigment density and/or by the addition of lead white, chalk or other materials. If Blake wished to print a composite color he could not superimpose or delicately juxtapose its constituents as he could with watercolor, but had to mix them before (or after) applying them to the printing surface, though for some color combinations he could print an opaque constituent and wash a second transparent one over it after the first had dried.

The large color prints were painted once onto a stiff flat surface, probably millboard,⁶ and then two or at most three impressions of varying strength were taken from the wet painting onto dampened paper.⁷ Once these impressions dried, the printed colors on them were supplemented with more water-based colors, thick and thin, opaque and transparent, as well as such materials as shell gold, gold leaf, India ink, printer's ink, graphite and charcoal; as in Blake's watercolors and temperas, finishing usually involved fixing outlines in ink with a pen or brush. Each print would be a little different from the others as colors were depleted (and weakened) or dampened (and rendered more transferable) by successive printings, and the finishing/outlining process would further differentiate the resulting prints from each other. Nevertheless, the printed areas themselves are so similar in distribution of color from impression to impression that there could have been no re-painting of the millboard between taking them, which also explains why there are so few impressions of each. By contrast, for the color printing involved in illuminated books, most impressions involved reinking the text and relief elements of the design with printer's ink and probably some replenishment of the surface areas that printed colors. To supplement their

6. *God Judging Adam* was probably printed from copper etched in relief rather than a flat surface. Millboard was a smooth glueless unlaminated paperboard that was finished by milling between heavy rollers, according to Bower (56-57).

7. Viscomi and Essick suggest that Blake may have sealed the surface of the millboard with a layer of glue-based gesso to keep the paint from soaking in. See "Blake's Method" 61. They also suggest that Blake's process may have involved printing from a semidried image, which would be rehydrated by the dampness of the printing paper.

general account of color printing, McManus and Townsend consider two specific large color prints, compare two versions of *Satan Exulting over Eve*, and finally Piers Townshend and Joyce Townsend offer a detailed account of the conservation of the Tate's recently acquired copy of that print.

The three chapters on tempera are cowritten by Bronwyn Ormsby, Brian Singer, and John Dean; Townsend joins them in the chapter placing these paintings in context. Blake designated many of his works in various media (even the large color prints) as "fresco," a term that in its strictest sense refers to water-based colors applied to fresh damp plaster. Blake didn't work on plaster, wet or dry, but the temperas discussed here were all executed in water-based colors on a gesso-like white ground—a foundational layer that, like plaster, reflects light through the colors above it and provides white areas of the picture—and of his works they are the most similar to what the rest of the world calls fresco.

The Tate researchers establish that Blake's ground consisted mostly of whiting, basically powdered chalk and other white substances such as lead white, bound with transparent animal glue (which was probably made by gently simmering glove clippings, parchment, or rabbit skin), along with a small amount of sugar or honey. This animal glue was water-based like Blake's gum binders (these are also present sometimes in the ground), but it was much more fluid when warm than when cool, at least when undiluted (gum tragacanth requires heat to dissolve, but unless it is very thick it remains workable when cool). When animal glue cools, it quickly sets into a rubbery clear gelatin, and unlike the thickening gums it retains much of its substance when it hardens—it is also resoluble for some time after setting/drying, though less so than gum arabic.

To create a tempera, Blake applied the glue/whiting mixture in layers to a support—paper, canvas, wood, copper, tinned steel or iron,⁸ etc.—let that cool and harden, then executed the preliminary underdrawing in ink or paint on the resulting white surface as if it were paper, protected that layer with a layer of unpigmented glue, then painted on it using everything from gelatinously thick colors to thin washes, adding other materials similar to those used in finishing the color prints. The authors note that Blake probably laid the work flat for most stages in the process, thereby preventing runs and promoting the even dispersion of the pigments.

Those studying Blake's temperas have often noted that the paint has multiple layers, and almost all reports assert that he used animal glue to paint his pictures, usually with the assumption that it served as a binder, as in distemper painting. One very important revelation in the Tate studies of Blake's temperas is that he alternated layers of pigment (bound mostly with mixed gums arabic/karaya and tragacanth) with layers of the clear unpigmented animal glue, and usually ended with ink outlining and a final layer of glue, followed by a coat or two of clear varnish that would seal the glue from humidity.

8. Used only in the Tate's *Agony in the Garden*.

The Tate authors do not try to sort out which properties Blake sought from the individual constituents of his paints, but I suspect that he used the gums and glue for different purposes. Although there is a long tradition of using glue as a binding medium, especially in medieval icon painting, glue-bound colors may have been less satisfactory or less familiar to Blake than the gum-bound colors he used in his watercolors. My informal experiments with gums suggest that for his temperas Blake might have relied on the gum arabic to provide good brushing characteristics and pigment dispersion, and on the tragacanth to inhibit washing up, to reduce runniness, and to segregate different pigments, thus inhibiting adverse reactions. As noted above, even very thick tragacanth/arabic mixtures collapse to a fraction of their hydrated size when the water in them evaporates,⁹ whereas glue layers remain relatively deep and clear as they set and dry, so the latter would have been the main source of depth in Blake's finished pictures.¹⁰ I have not experimented with cherry gum, which is found in a few pictures, but the Tate authors suggest that it also may have contributed to the enamel-like effects that Blake apparently sought.

The researchers report that in addition to the gum mixtures, animal glue is also found in the layers of pigment, so Blake may have mixed warm (or diluted) glue and wet gums with the pigments as he worked or added color while the glue layers were still wet. It is also possible that dilute glue washes seeped into cracked layers of gum. Future experiments with the properties of glues and gums may answer questions about the temperas and large color prints that were not susceptible to the analyses reported here, especially questions about which properties of each of these materials Blake sought in their various applications.¹¹

A chapter on the present appearance of the temperas notes that many of them have darkened, some in his lifetime, and others since then. Blake apparently sought transparency and depth in both his temperas and large color prints, but these qualities have not consistently survived. Careless "restora-

9. The thickening effect of the tragacanth may have been most important to the color printing process, since the physical properties of the wet colors would matter a great deal there. When whiting or similar substances were included, as in many of Blake's temperas and prints, these would limit collapse.

10. Blake's final coats of varnish may also have contributed to the depth of his temperas and color prints, and may have had another beneficial effect. The Tate analyses indicate that many of the large color prints and temperas contain lead white, but the pictures do not consistently show the characteristic blackening that occurs when lead carbonate is exposed to sulfur dioxide and hydrogen sulfide in the air. On deteriorating lead white in the illuminated books, see Michael Phillips, *William Blake: The Creation of the Songs* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2000) 106-07. I don't think Blake varnished illuminated book pages, so it might have been varnishes (and/or substantial amounts of tragacanth) that protected the lead white in the large color prints and temperas.

11. It is puzzling that he used some materials that had the very properties he condemned in oil paint, for his gum binders collapse, and he used lead white, which he knew could turn black (E 530-31).

tion" may be partly to blame, but the mixing of carbohydrates (gums, sugars) and proteins (glue) in the temperas may have led to a phenomenon called the "Maillard reaction"¹² that turned many of the tempera colors brownish and rendered formerly transparent layers translucent or opaque. Other darkening may have other causes: the picture of *Satan Calling Up His Legions* at the Victoria and Albert contains only plant gums but is now so dark that it is virtually impossible to see anything in it; the egregious obscurity of this picture and some others in the 1809 Exhibition may have been part of a deliberate deadpan joke about darkness visible, dark masters, and chiaroscuro.¹³ The Tate authors suggest Blake's habit of returning to his work again and again may also have led to darkening in the temperas, as layer upon layer of color, gums, glue, and urban dirt obscured and finally buried the underlying white of the ground and reflections from the gold and silver that he embedded in the glue.

The book ends with an illuminating chapter by Townsend, Hamlyn, and John Anderson on the history of presenting Blake's paintings and prints, including practices and economic considerations circa 1800 relevant to mounting, framing, collecting, storing, and hanging pictures like Blake's in various contexts (in exhibitions, galleries, private homes), as well as their more recent presentation in museums. One might expect this chapter to be of most interest to those who will hang future exhibitions, but the discussion casts light upon all sorts of questions, especially about Blake's audiences and patrons and what he made of them and they of him. In one case, the authors show that the framing history of several works suggests that influential inscriptions long associated with Blake are more likely from the mid-nineteenth century.

I am only beginning to digest the information presented in this book, and to reread earlier studies in its light, but it has already done more to clarify Blake's painting and color-printing practices for me than anything I have read in the last twenty years. I believe that even Blake enthusiasts who usually avoid technical questions will find many of the discussions here to be "sweet science," and recommend it to them as wholeheartedly as I do to those who are already interested in this kind of material fact. Blake's discussions of art veer unpredictably between the technical, the theoretical, and the spiritual, and we should all prepare ourselves to rethink all aspects of Blake's aesthetics in light of the technical discoveries in this book. I look forward to the many uses that students of Blake will find for the information here, particularly reports from artists who have used it as the basis for a new round of experiments with Blake's color-printing and tempera techniques.

12. This is the same complex reaction that browns food when it is cooked.

13. Similarly, *The Goats, an Experiment Picture*, in which "picturesque scenery" has been "laboured to a superabundant blackness," may have been calculated to frustrate goatish connoisseurs hoping to get a glimpse of the dark "savage girls" as hungry goats stripped them of their vine-leaf garments.

Cold Colloquy

So we red-eyed it from Vancouver to TO
where it was cold as February, you know—
and lined up for BLAKE—in letters six-feet high—
that morning some twenty years gone by
outside and inside the AGO.
This 'optic heart' remembers
the burnished and intricately lined copperplate glow
of his *Canterbury Pilgrims*—what happened
if the burin slipped?

That evening as Frye held forth
on Blake's Bible Illustrations (sans slides, of course)
one found them gently arising
in one's still sleepless mind to his discourse.
Afterwards chatting with him and a few others
over coffee and cookies (it being the U of T)—
our wives discussing the Group of Seven—he
confiding that 'Urizen is necessary,' me
mentioning that I knew a poet whose zip-
code began with LOS: he
registering that with an *augenblick*.

Next morning outside the hotel at dawn I catch
a cab and am joined by a sudden highjacking stranger—
for the short ride to the Gallery (no danger):
guy sitting beside me says, 'I'm Bill Mitchell.'
I almost reply I'm Haile Selassie
but manage, 'I've read your book,'
whereupon we both lapse into jet-lagged silence.
Then he reels off,

'If Blake wrote this when he sat down to shite
What could he not do if he sat down to write?'
'Yeah,' I mutter, feeling a bit warmer as we arrive.

Warren Stevenson