

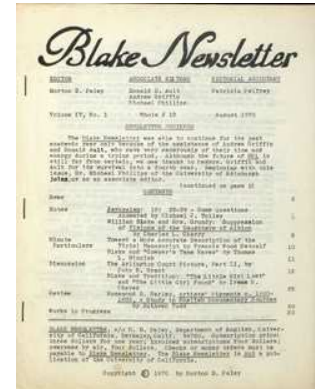
# AN ILLUSTRATED QUARTERLY BLAKE

D I S C U S S I O N

## Discussing the Arlington Court Picture, Part II

John E. Grant

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Task, Book I, line 200. There can be little doubt, however, that Blake engraved this plate." However, in A Bibliography of William Blake (New York, 1921; p. 250) Sir Geoffrey Keynes noted that the signature "Blake d & sc" appears, not at the bottom of the plate as in the other five plates Blake did for Hayley's Cowper, but within the design.

Like Bentley and Nurmi I have examined two copies of the first edition (those of the Oberlin College Library and of Professor A. J. Kuhn) and one (my own) of the second edition. In all three the signature appears, above a garland and directly beneath the initial letters of the lines quoted from The Task. In these copies the inscription is clearly "Blake d e sc" (for "Blake d[elineavit] e[t] sc[ulpsit]") rather than as Keynes reports. Perhaps there were two or more states of the plate, one with the signature, one without. The plate--plate-mark 23 x 17 cm., about two-thirds of the page--was moveable and independent of the type set at the top of the page, the distance between the type and the plate-mark varying from copy to copy. In one copy (Oberlin) the page is numbered ("415" but not "416" on verso) and bears the page head "APPENDIX." The other copies I have seen have neither page head or page number; the only clue to the binder is a flag ("Motto") at II.414. In my copy the plate appears at the end of the first volume--perhaps because "Cowper's Tame Hares" are described at I.89-90, or perhaps simply as an afterthought.

This plate is of some interest because it is the only one of those Blake engraved for Hayley's Cowper which he also designed. But all he has done, perhaps all he was free to do, was work into a rather conventional balance the weather man's dark, stormy side of the house with the woman's bright and pastoral half.

(When I thought that I had discovered an altogether new Blake signature, Mr. J. C. Maxwell of the Balliol College, Oxford, helped correct me. I am grateful to him for this.)

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#### DISCUSSION

"With Intellectual Spears and Long-winged Arrows of Thought"

1. Discussing the Arlington Court Picture
- Part II: Studying Blake's Iconography for Guidance in Interpreting the Picture

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When I began these remarks my intention was chiefly to



report on the discussion of the Arlington Court Picture at the MLA Meeting last year, especially to summarize the new interpretation of the picture presented by Janet Warner, and to add some observations that I had made while thinking about the meaning of the picture. I was particularly anxious not to challenge the Warner-Simmons theory since they had not put their ideas in final shape and I also wanted to avoid arguing for a theory of my own, partly because I did not have one that satisfied me. But after finishing my report, which was published in the previous issue of the Newsletter, it seemed that many questions had been raised that ought to be considered in more detail; these included methodological as well as substantial considerations. As I was writing down these observations, an interpretation of the picture occurred to me which is quite different from any other so far proposed, though certain elements in it are indebted to Digby, Damon, and Warner-Simmons, the most illuminating previous interpreters. On consideration it seemed desirable to publish the rest of my methodological remarks in BNL but to seek publication in another journal for both the Warner-Simmons article and an outline of my interpretation in order that the readers would be able to judge for themselves which seems more satisfactory. Happily Studies in Romanticism has agreed to print both interpretations in a forthcoming issue.

In the first part of this discussion I mentioned Bronzino's Allegory as an example of a major painting in which the artist's intellectual concerns evidently led him to disregard the "usual" canons of compositional symmetry. I proposed, indeed, that critics should entertain the idea that there may be an "art of clutter," which has its own validity, and that ACP is an example of it. Such a theory will hardly seem bold in a time like our own when the Art Scene has found such "Invisible Art" as Conceptual and Street Art to be quite acceptable. But even if Blakists wish to disregard this anachronistic lesson in aesthetic anarchism, they are driven to reconsider the standards of Bronzino's age, implicit and explicit, as manifested in actual pictorial structures. Then it will be recognized that it is precisely such "usual" standards as compositional symmetry which came into question during Bronzino's age in the Mannerist movement. How the example of Bronzino may be germane to our subject becomes clearer when we recall that the school of Blake and Fuseli is not infrequently referred to as "Neo-Mannerist." It is possible that paintings of comparable periods may tend to be mutually illuminating even when there is no question of "influence" involved.

I suppose many Blakists have read the interpretation of Bronzino's painting in Panofsky's Studies in Iconology (1962 ed., pp. 86-91) where Bronzino's subject is described as "The Exposure of Luxury." Both because of Panofsky's deserved



eminence and because his interpretation appears to correspond with the inadequate reproduction of the picture, most readers have been satisfied with what Panofsky had to say. But recently a quite different, less moralistic, interpretation has been put forward by Michael Levey in "Sacred and Profane Significance in Two Paintings by Bronzino" in Studies in Renaissance and Baroque Art presented to Anthony Blunt (London and New York, 1967), pp. 30-33. By accurately observing that a figure taken by Panofsky to represent Lady Truth actually depicts a mask of Fraud, Levey arrives at what is unquestionably a more satisfactory interpretation of Bronzino's allegory, properly called Venus Disarming Cupid, than Panofsky had.

For a Blakist Levey's mode of scholarship is no less noteworthy than his conclusions. One must admire the precision, quiet vigor, and range of reference Levey deploys in calling attention to real excellences in the painting as well as in correcting Panofsky's errors. After all, the mask of Fraud cannot seem a very accomplished image of Lady Truth, but it must be a brilliant success as a mask since it has proven to be so plausible. As is often the case, an intellectual breakthrough leads the way to aesthetic validation of the picture and a vindication of the artist. The worst thing about inadequate allegorical theories is that their propounders feel compelled to say, when they encounter some symbolic detail which doesn't fit, that the artist must have nodded while imagining this particular. Scholarship has a special obligation to free itself from such imputations when they are not undoubtedly justified.

It should be clear that I am holding up Levey's piece for praise because it is excellent, not because it is an inimitable accomplishment. Since even Panofsky could err, no superhuman standard of scholarship need be assumed, but Blakists ought to demand a higher norm than has recently been evidenced in a number of publications. I refer particularly to unreliable books such as Miss Raine's huge Blake and Tradition and Beer's Blake's Humanism, as well as to unsound articles such as Mrs. Kostelanetz-Mellor's piece on the color prints in the Festschrift for Damon. To be sure, none of these is totally useless or motivated by an antipathy to Blake such as is evident in Matthew Corrigan's "Metaphor in William Blake: A Negative View," JAAC, XXVIII (1969). But the extreme caution that must be exercised while reading such uneven work can hardly be justified and the fact that these pieces have actually been commended by some reviewers is regrettable.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>In the first part of this discussion I mentioned the general dissatisfaction with Miss Raine's interpretation of ACP expressed by American Blakists at the MLA. In the



Yet another book in this class, the author's second in two years, is John Beer's Blake's Visionary Universe, which contains a lengthy discussion of our subject, ACP; (pp. 286-294). Such productivity leads one nostalgically to recall Max Plowman's wonder at how fast his friend Murry was getting along with Blake, as well as Murry's still impressive book, which was published within a couple of years of his becoming interested in Blake. But, apart from other considerations, Murry was exceedingly gifted and in those days a critic of Blake was less clearly obligated to learn thousands of things about Blake's pictorial art. At least one of the critical inadequacies of Beer's book could not, however, be rectified by mere diligence--its frequent failure to describe a picture accurately. Evidently because he had happened on an engraving by Ghisi that looks a little like U 25 and J 75, Beer declares that the people in Blake's pictures are men, whereas the crucial figures are obviously female in both. Since every previous commentator had got the gender of Blake's figures correct, such mistakes are especially deplorable.

This interpretation of ACP is never deterred by negative evidence. For example, Beer quotes VLJ pp. 85+90 (E552) and then comments: "The scene described is palpably not the one in the present design; but the individual elements correspond so closely as to suggest a community of theme" (p. 291--my ital. in the same clause). As stated, this is not quite self-contradiction though the soft spots and fuzzy connections begin to appear in the words of the second clause I have italicized. And this, alas, is the part of the sentence that purports to justify the allusion in the first place. As the reader studies the succeeding sentences of amplification, he becomes aware that the proliferation of words like "appear" and "perhaps" allow the argument to drift into an equivocal world (which is confused with "vision") in which the wirey bounding line of rectitude becomes invisible. Intellectually the fundamental point is that the quoted passage is "not" relevant, but the subsequent expatiation tends to suggest

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same issue of the Newsletter was a note from Miss Raine declaring that Sir Geoffrey Keynes had "confirmed in writing his agreement with my interpretations" (p. 90). To have persuaded so distinguished a Blakist is greatly to Miss Raine's credit. The same week I saw her note, however, I also read that Frank Sinatra, who had previously supported a succession of liberal Democrats, had become an avid campaigner for Governor Ronald Reagan in California. Hopefully both English and American Blakists will now be prepared to fly to the mountains of Atlantis to resolve their outstanding differences.



there must be some significant connection, though none is ever forthcoming.

The same tactics of claiming ACP is significantly illuminated by some literary text are repeated with the example of Rev. 22: 13-17; Beer even declares that "the picture as a whole may be described as Blake's vision of the Book of Revelation as miniaturized within these verses" (p. 294; my ital.). He finds the call in verse 17, "The Spirit and the Bride say 'Come'"--to the thirsty man who would drink, particularly relevant. But whatever the central man and woman in ACP are doing, they are not inviting anyone to drink. Even if the gesture of the man in the finished painting were taken to be an offer (an improbable interpretation), the gesture in the preliminary drawing (which Beer alludes to) could not possibly be construed as an invitation; moreover, since the water he gestures to is undoubtedly salt--hardly the "water of life"--such an invitation could only be malicious. And certainly the lady is indicating nothing attractive--except herself as she appears in the final version--but rather warns of disasters. The connections Beer claims to see between the text and the picture are without exception insubstantial, but he also tells the reader that, after he had become persuaded as to the validity of his theory, he ran across Keynes's article on the picture which informed him that on the verso of the pencil drawing is the inscription, written by another hand, from Rev. 17, "The Spirit and the Bride say 'Come'." This he took to be a corroboration of his interpretation. Alas for scholarship, there is no such inscription and Keynes never reported its existence; what he did say is that the picture is inscribed, not in Blake's hand, "The River of Oblivion," and also (in a sentence of parallel structure) that some unnamed person (actually in the Philadelphia Catalogue, no. 205) had attempted, unpersuasively, to connect the drawing with the Biblical text.

It would hardly be worth dwelling on these blunders if the only moral to be drawn is that "haste makes waste." But it is instructive to recognize the root premise that encourages an informed person to propound an interpretation that has neither surface plausibility nor deep persuasiveness. The key word (which is also repeated on the dust jacket) I have italicized: "Blake's idiosyncratic interpretations" (p. 294). Without denying that Blake was sometimes "idiosyncratic," particularly about small things, we ought to observe how much pseudo-criticism seeks to justify itself by some form of this hypothesis. That is, when what Blake did does not correspond to the theory being presented by the expositor, the contradiction is merely dismissed as an example of Blake's odd way of going at things. This, in essence, is the difference between experiencing art and looking into



occultism, a distinction Blake insisted on in MHH. With art the only possible assumption is that the artist makes sense, even if one happens not to agree with everything the artist has to say. But with occultism, which Beer seems to have read considerably, one encounters material that really is idiosyncratic and, at least intermittently meaningless. It ordinarily has no infinite implications, as art does, and, if one is to read it at all, he must be content to get an obscure sense or a drift. To ask so little of Blake is to get nothing.

To insist that a distinction can, nay must, be made between sound and unsound scholarship is not to demand that all scholars come to the same conclusions or even that they use exactly the same methods. It does, however, presuppose that there is a difference between valid and invalid argumentation, as Blake himself sometimes insisted when he was confronted by the obfuscations of Reynolds. If one is committed to standards of scholarship, he must be unwilling to tolerate shoddy published work. On occasion this may lead him to be as relentless and even impolite as Ralph Nader. Naturally a scholar must be prepared to have his own work judged with comparable rigor. Once readers recognize that unsound books and articles are no more inevitable than unsound automobiles, it is possible to hope, manufacturers and dealers of scholarship may be persuaded to slow down and create more reliable products.

I see no contradiction between striving to improve critical procedures by identifying unsound scholarship and attempting to achieve a more pluralistic conception of the ethical vision implicit in Blake's iconography. As interpreters we should heed Blake's exhortations, early and late, to stop dividing things up into cloven fictions, such as good and evil; we must expect that the Spectator is probably not going to understand ACP as Blake did if he studies the picture attempting to put his finger on a villain. Take the chief women in ACP, for example; some interpreters have contended that the Veiled Lady is pernicious, some that it is the Sea Goddess, and some have felt that the Water Carrier is up to no good. A review of several considerations indicates that these suspicions are unfruitful because they lead to a captiousness not based on things "in" the picture, even by implication. If we reconsider the interpretive perspective offered by the picture of Vala and Jerusalem in J 46 [32], we see how precisely the attributes in this polarized confrontation have been mixed in ACP. Evidently J 47 shows the two women getting entangled again, because they have turned Albion's head, and they do not get satisfactorily sorted out for many more pages of the poem. While the Veiled Lady is in a posture very like that of Jerusalem in J 46, she is wearing



a filmy costume with a head-covering that resembles that of Vala in the confrontation. Notice further, however, that whereas Vala holds up her veil to obscure her face from Jerusalem, the Lady in ACP has her veil pushed back so as to reveal her face and chest. For anyone aware of the traditional symbolism of the Veiled Lady Who is Truth (See Colin Still, Shakespeare's Mystery Play, etc.), the difference is profoundly significant: Truth is told when the Lady parts her Veils; indeed, Truth is the face revealed by parted veils. It is possible that the Conjuror may already have turned quite around and seen the Lady's face before he directs his attention back toward both the chaotic sea and the unmobilized Spectator. Such an interpretation would not require the Spectator to reprobate the Sea Goddess, even if the clouds she exudes seem soporific and the horses she drives are, at this point, divisive. Her energy, her connection with the musical group above, and her nudity, as well as some of her resemblances to other figures, to be mentioned later, all indicate that she is a Vala with a place in the Eternal economy.

The third most important woman, the Water Carrier, is probably also blameless, in spite of the scaled bucket of Storge water she carries in her right hand. I think the specially "musculated" look of her dress, which was commented on inconclusively at the MLA, is intended to be a "wet look," indicative of her having been immersed in the river Storge, like the sleeping Nixie, but probably more deeply. It is worth recalling that in Blake's time ladies of fashion were known to have poured water over their Empire-style dresses in order to achieve a more beguiling appearance. But lest we conclude that the Water Carrier must be that doxy Rahab, we should consider that in the Melbourne version of the Creation of Eve Christ himself wears a garment no less clinging and musculated. It is true that the left arm of the Water Carrier, as I mentioned in the first part of this discussion, is rather underdeveloped and perhaps deformed (cf. the right arm of the distorted figure at the left in J 45 [31]), but this gesture almost exactly repeats that of the woman at the right in The Baptism of Christ, the second design for Paradise Regained (Figgis, pl. 24), a presumably impeccable figure, who witnesses with joy this blessed deed that is effected with a vessel of water, while warding off the unregenerate devil who is flying away in frustration. To be sure this witness raises her right arm and she faces the Spectator, whereas the Water Carrier is back to the Spectator, but this difference does not seem decisive in the context of ACP where the women being encountered by the Water Carrier must be more sinister than she is. Nevertheless, life requires that she overcome this



trial, which seems formidable from the perspective of fallen innocence, and also that of Enitharmon and her daughters, the three frenetic weavers, and enter the cave where the furnaces of Los will burn the Storge scales from her bucket and her eyes. I am indebted to Beer (BVU p. 293) for the suggestion that these flames are from Los's forge. When she has risen above this trial she can carry her bucket in the organized procession of Innocence in the topmost bowery cavern above. Possibly the lineage of these buckets could be traced back to the enormous hats worn by a number of figures in Piero della Francesca's great murals at Arezzo as they may have been reported (or copied?) by Fuseli or Flaxman to Blake. In any case, if she succeeded in bringing the Water of Death through a transformation into the Water of Life, fit for Beulah, this nymph should also be able to say "Father & Mother I return from the flames of fire tried & pure & white" (E 730).

When dealing with Blake's iconography one can make quite a consistent and useful distinction between "symbolic similarities" where the figures may be closely connected even though they look quite different, and "visual similarities," in which the figures or objects look much alike whether or not they are supposed to represent the same thing. An example of the former is "Urizen," who may be represented either as the aged whiskery man in M 15 or (if we follow Damon) the beardless cloud-unfolding Apollo of Job 14. But visual similarities tend to be a somewhat more reliable guide to meaning. In the first part of this discussion I mentioned the resemblance between the posture of the Conjuror in Red in ACP and the posture of Philoctetes in Philoctetes and Neopotolemus, though the latter is depicted from the front and is under obvious duress. But in this case there is a visual parallel as well, since the two look much alike. There is no doubt that Philoctetes is defying Neopotolemus, the youthful recruiting officer, and that Blake considered such resistance to be admirable, whereas the Conjuror in Red, as I see him, is probably complicitous with the (un-)Veiled Lady who stands behind him. But the visual parallels indicate to me that the Conjuror in Red is on the side of freedom, like Philoctetes, and I have already suggested reasons for thinking his Lady is on his side. From this perspective one might hazard a guess that the Conjuror in Red in gesturing over the water toward the Pentagon with the intention of raising that home of sneaking villains fifty feet in the air.

One should also observe the symbolic rather than visual connection between the Sun God in ACP and the figure of the patriarch Enoch in Blake's only lithograph (Separate Plates, pl. 26, no. 16) is related to both in spite of his



differences in appearance. Obviously he has a longer beard, is presumably older, has his left foot thrust forward and his right evidently drawn back, holds a great book across his legs, presides over an untroubled scene, etc. When the picture is carefully studied, one first notices that Enoch's hands hold the book down, which is a different gesture from those of either of the other two, but then he notices that Enoch's fingers are in almost the same position as those of the Conjuror and that if Enoch raised his arms he would be making the identical gesture. If he spread them, however, he would resemble the posture of the "Cherub Contemplation" in the first design for Il Penseroso.

These symbolic connections are suggestive, but certain visual connections between Enoch and figures in other designs indicate a fragility in the posture of Enoch which might, in turn, be taken to qualify the prophetic image of the Conjuror in Red. Enoch certainly resembles the God of Job (as well as Job himself, of course) particularly as he is depicted in Job pl. 16, with the book, and even more as he appears in pl. 14, without the book, but with his right foot advanced. I take it that Enoch is represented favorably, though a case could be made that this picture shows a fragile prelapsarian condition of the Arts. Such an interpretation is strengthened when one recognizes that the relationship between Enoch and his poetical scribe on the stepped platform is derived from the one between the females Reason (right foot advanced) and Faith in Night Thoughts (no. 151, engr. 41) in which the dominant figure is undoubtedly sinister. But there is a more decisive resemblance between the Enoch design and the title page for ARC where the patriarchal figure must be favorably presented. As is often the case, it is easier to discern a connection than to define the extent of contrariety.

Another design in the Job series more directly related to ACP is Job, pl. 11, "With Dreams upon my bed thou scarest me & affrightest me with Visions." In this picture, cloven-hoofed God-the-Satan points back and up at the tables of the Decalogue with his right hand while pointing forward and down into the raging fire with his left. Job himself is shown stretched out on Blake's characteristic rolled funeral woven mat, holding up his hands to ward off the infernal deity he has conjured up, and gazing with horror into the fire out of which two Satanic ministers have seized him, while a third brings up a chain to bind him. The relational connections to the Philoctetes are obvious, especially because Neopotolemus wears scaly armored drawers and a snaky strap over his shoulder, while the hellish God of Job becomes entwined in the serpent, but many of the details have distinct counterparts in ACP as well. The Veiled Lady likewise points up and down, though her hands are reversed,



and her left indicates the flames in heaven, while her right points to the flames below. In posture the figure of Job's deity generally resembles both the Horned shell-helmeted Man (shown from behind and on his back, of course), who manages the watery flames, as well as the Sea Goddess, who rides in the vehicular wake of the "Neptunian horses of passion. One is bound to observe the anatomical strain involved in making the left leg of the former and the right leg of the latter so unmistakably prominent. In the case of the man it is clear that he is striving to touch the huge root of the tree with his toe (he does not touch a root in the preliminary drawing but there appears to be an explosion--or a net--at his toe), whereas in the case of the woman there are only the small bubbles that connect her with the Veiled Lady (in the drawing, where this figure is hardly developed, there is no indication of them). The analogy of position indicated by the devilish God of Job, pl. 11, allows for the suspicion that both the man and the woman may have something to hide, such as a cloven hoof, on their hidden feet but I cannot imagine anything so drastically at odds with their healthy appearances.

Another connection with Job pl. 11 is that Job's tormentors are three, like the Fates, though they are shown working from beneath, rather than from above, on their intended victim; their chain corresponds to the rope of the Fates. Doubtless this, Job's most desperate plight, is a product of his own self-righteousness and feelings of guilt, but note that there is a potential condition of degradation as a result of superstition that Blake else where depicts but to which his Job does not fall. That is, Job does not fall to worshipping Satan and his minions and, though he cannot exorcise, he can resist feebly and save his life. This is a precondition to receiving the blessing by Job's redemptive God in pl. 17, which is bestowed with a gesture very like that of the Conjurer in Red in ACP.

In this perspective one might argue that the serpent covering of the nightmare God in Job pl. 11 is the counterpart of the veil on the Veiled Lady and that one thus has a further sign of her sinister influence. But I am not persuaded: a cloven-footed God can be no other than the Accuser, but can the Veiled Lady be accusing the Man of having put the Sun God to sleep? I still see her neither as an accuser nor as a temptress but as an admonisher, carrying out an authentic prophetic task, the burden of which is expressed in the formula "If you go on So the result is So" (E 607). Or she may be saying, to whomever has ears, "Since the Sun has doubted, his light has gone out; will you then allow yourself to be woman-dominated like the nether god?"



The manner in which an indubitable tempter works is exemplified by Satan in the Second Temptation in the Paradise Regained series (Masters, pl. XII). Satan's crooked and insubstantial offer is partly expressed by the twist in his body and the sharp bends in the joints of his arms, as well as by his unsupported position standing in the middle air; all this is in maximum contrast with rigidly statuesque erect posture of Christ, whose hands (though reversed as to left and right) indicate the same directions as do those of the Devil. Blake is also careful to delineate the three kingdoms of this world that are the basis of this temptation, whereas the Veiled Lady in ACP really has nothing to offer that could seem desirable. In any case, Mrs. Warner, who called my attention to the relevance of the Paradise Regained picture in this context, does not feel that the similarities between Satan and the Veiled Lady are in themselves sufficient to discredit the Veiled Lady.

Positioned as he is between two women, it is natural to suppose that the Conjurer in Red is being subjected to a choice between two contradictory life styles such as is, for example, shown in Raphael's famous Vision of a Knight (--in the National Gallery, London. The fact that Raphael's lady who offers love is clearly identical with the left nude in the companion picture of The Three Graces and that both resemble the Veiled Lady is also suggestive). But Blake's point seems to be different from what Mrs. Warner would make it; not only is the Conjurer in Red turned away from the Sea Goddess, he is equally turned away from the Veiled Lady. If he had been absorbed into the Veiled Lady's sphere of influence he would have been turned wholly around like the spiritual portrait of Blake discovering Los in M 21 or, even more, like the youth who is learning the wisdom of the serpent from the malevolent lady teacher in A 14. Is it not more consistent with the penetrating look he gives in the direction of the Spectator to suppose that the Conjurer in Red knows what we need to know and that he is shown to be doing what needs to be done?

The Conjurer in Red must be related to another Watcher who also sits on a rock and eyes the Spectator. In J pl. 78, the eagle-rooster headed man, in the position of The Thinker, is both a fallen eagle vigiling while the sun goes down and an awakening cock (M 28:24-26) or eagle (M 39) who attends its coming up. He is evidently an avatar of Los (see FZ 7 a: 204-208, J 94:15, MHH 9:15), as Wicksteed and others have supposed. But he is not yet engaged in redemptive action partly because the lines denoted beneath him, which probably represent the Polypus, have not, at this point, been sorted out--the task assigned



to the Fates and their horned shell-helmeted companion in ACP. When this Watcher becomes fully humanized, he will be ready to raise his hands to help, like the Conjurer in ACP. And he will doubtless continue to look to the Spectator to lend a hand, knowing that if the Spectator goes on so, refusing to get involved, there will be no result at all.

Some inconclusive evidence of what the Veiled Lady is capable of may be found in the sketches for the Book of Enoch and in the drawings for Night Thoughts. The chief female in the first three sketches for Enoch (Pencil Drawings II, pls. 45-47) rather closely resembles the Veiled Lady, in one way or another, particularly as she appears in the preliminary drawing for ACP (Pencil Drawings, II, Pl. 40), which was presumably done about the same time. The fact that none of the women in the Enoch designs is draped serves to distinguish them from the Veiled Lady, but it appears that in this series, nudity is not necessarily a virtue. The fact that clothing is not an unambiguous guide to meanings is one of the many complications in Blakean symbolism which upset ready and easy explanations of his "system." But no moralist of any stature would presume to pronounce on the general question as to whether nudity is a good or bad thing. Obviously for the artist, it all depends.

Mrs. Warner observed that in the drawing the Veiled Lady has stars in her veil and she takes this to be a sinister symbol. I believe Mrs. Warner would agree that it is risky to reason forward from the drawing to the much different picture, but in themselves the garment stars are not a propitious symbol. Still, in one of the designs for Gray's poems an indubitably Bardic figure wears a star-studded robe. Moreover, careful study of the actual drawing indicates that there are as many as six stars, together with what is perhaps an eye (comparison with other pictures makes this not improbable), and also four round objects which are more likely to be grapes than anything else and, as such, would tend to counteract the possibly sinister implication of the stars.

In the Night Thoughts designs there are a number of veiled admonitory or witnessing women who wear a veil and keep track of the transgressions of male figures. Blake certainly did not approve of all these avatars of "Conscience," but it is not yet clear that he always disapproved of them either. Toward the end of the series (IX, 83, no. 501) this figure is modulated into a huge impressive female angel "Night," who has a veil over her face and holds open before her a great book that contains the stars. The record here is sublime, not petty or captious,



and the record keeper worthy of admiration, not unlike the Sea Goddess in ACP, who also brings on the night. (In the previous picture (no. 500) an impressive Diana is shown walking with a moon in her hair, another connection with the Sea Goddess in her aspect as Hecate.)

But of all the designs in the Night Thoughts series the one that is most closely connected to ACP is probably no. 465 (IX, 47), which illustrates the line "Nature herself does Half the Work of Man." Here Nature is shown as a huge woman who reaches her left hand up to the crescent moon, and has her left leg still in the sea, while climbing up a cliff much like that in ACP with the assistance of her right hand and bent right leg. She is back to the Spectator but her face is not sinister. The porticos of at least two classical temples are visible in the middle of the hill she is climbing, and these are surmounted with church spires. The moral of this picture seems to be that if without assistance Nature can make it to the level of natural religion, it ought not to be so difficult to get her other foot free to achieve the next development for Mankind. But many of those who stop to rest in the temples of the detestable gods of Priam, we may surmise, find it too hard to take the final step. The wonder in this picture, however, is that so much progress has already been achieved. In the green foreground is a tent, presumably a prophetic vantage point from which to observe so prodigious and efficacious an event.

Probably the most decisive vindication of the Sea Goddess, in her being if not in all her consequences, is to be found in her close physical resemblance to the spiritual self-portrait of Blake himself which is drawn with the Upcott autograph (Erdman, ed. il. 4). The Upcott figure is presumably of the opposite sex (though it could be an androgyne), but its posture is very similar and its face might even be that of the Conjuror in Red after he had had a rejuvenative shave. Moreover, the wirey bounding scroll wielded by the Upcott figure must be related to the vortex cloud cover (or smoke screen) issuing from the right hand of the Sea Goddess. Doubtless dark images of truth that must be read to be believed are written on both of them. The Spectator's success in reading part of this endless scroll will perhaps strengthen him to read other parts that he needs to know, until that time when the scroll is rolled together (Rev. 6:14), a text Blake must have thought about at least once a day.

Indeed I have come to believe that if one wishes to understand ACP he should look for still another avatar of this figure of the Interpreter. From a different angle he



appears in an important though a little-known picture identified by Essick as representing the "Genius of Shakespeare" (repr. Apollo N.S. LXXIX (1964), 321.) But the exact counterpart of the Sea Goddess is to be found at the center of the "Whirlwind of Lovers" (Divine Comedy nos. 10 and 10E) where she is working to overcome those deprivations which would forever forbid the return of mankind into paradise. I shall maintain that this great picture acts as an explanatory sequel to ACP.

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2. Blake and Tradition: "The Little Girl Lost"  
and "The Little Girl Found"

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In his review of Kathleen Raine's Blake and Tradition (BNL, Vol. III, Whole # 11), Daniel Hughes mentions my name in connection with a pair of Blake's poems on which I have taken a stand in print. Since Mr. Hughes does not examine any of the Raine readings he commends, I would like to supplement my incidental criticism of seven years ago.

For at least some of us who have needed no introduction to Thomas Taylor and have remained unconverted, what is at issue in the Neoplatonist chapters of Blake and Tradition is what was at issue when they were published first as separate essays: not the "poetic process," but critical method; not whether Blake knew Taylor's translations and commentaries (he probably did, as he knew other books of the time), but how close they can or should be brought to his poetry; not what Taylor said, but what Blake means. With respect to the Lyca poems, I still believe that there is something of the Dissertation on the Eleusinian and Bacchic Mysteries in "The Little Girl Lost", and something less and of a different kind in "The Little Girl Found." The images in the first poem (I would not call them "symbols") of the moon and the caves, the desert, the "southern clime," the animals and their ceremonial behavior, do gain from the associations of both the Mysteries ritual and the Neoplatonic concept of the descent of the soul, which Taylor brings together in a confused mixture of metaphor, abstraction, and allegory compounded upon allegory. But I still maintain also that the Dissertation contributes less to the whole poem, and less to some of the same images, than such other sources of analogy as the ballad "The Children in the