

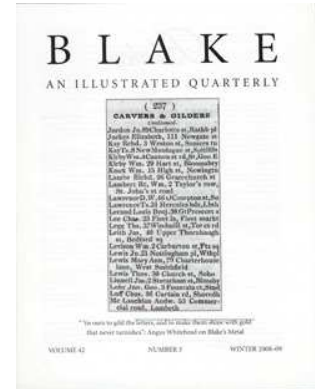
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R E V I E W

Wings of Fire: Exhibition at Muhlenberg College,
19 March-19 April 2008

James Rovira

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In 1895 Quaritch offered *The Works of William Blake*, ed. E. J. Ellis and W. B. Yeats (1893) at £3.3.0 and the large-paper format at £4.14.6. He quoted reviews in *Saturday Review* (4 Feb. 1893), *Times* (19 Jan. 1893), which seems to be based on a flier, and *Methodist Times* (5 Jan. 1893), which says “we have just seen the proof-sheets.”

Of the 650 sets printed (150 of them large paper), Quaritch gave 40 to Ellis (30 on large paper), 13 to Linnell, who had made *Vala* available to Ellis and Yeats, 1 to the British Museum Print Room, at least 11 as review copies (though his agreement with Ellis called for only 6), and an unknown number to Yeats. Not counting the sets for Yeats, which may have been included in the 40 to Ellis, Quaritch gave away ten percent of the press run.

R E V I E W S

Wings of Fire: Exhibition at Muhlenberg College, 19 March–19 April 2008

By James Rovira

MUHLBERG College’s Wings of Fire, an exhibition curated by Grant Scott and his senior seminar students, offered a range of Blake originals and historically significant facsimiles and other editions that collectively rep-

resent the complex history of Blake’s relationship with his audiences. The core of the exhibition comprised two originals on permanent loan to Muhlenberg’s Martin Art Gallery: a rare third-state impression of the 1810 engraving of *Chaucers Canterbury Pilgrims* and a colored copy of the 1797 Edwards edition of Young’s *Night Thoughts* with Blake’s illustrations. Florence Foerderer Tonner collected *Canterbury Pilgrims* and *Night Thoughts* in the early twentieth century, eventually leaving most of her large Blake collection to the Philadelphia Museum of Art; these two pieces were first donated to the Lutheran Church of America then passed on to Muhlenberg College. A local Blake scholar also loaned an uncolored copy of *Night Thoughts*, a first edition of *The Grave* with Blake’s illustrations, an 1874 edition of Blake’s engravings of the Book of Job, editions of William Muir’s lithographic reproductions from the 1880s, and high-quality facsimiles produced by the Trianon Press between 1951 and 1979. Wings of Fire also featured such additions as a beautifully bound copy of the Yeats edition of Blake’s works and two replica printing plates based on electrotypes cast from Blake’s original copperplates at the time of Gilchrist’s biography. Joseph Viscomi loaned these plates to the exhibition, opening it on 19 March with the lecture “Blake’s Enlightened Graphics: Illuminated Books and New Technologies.” Muhlenberg alumni and seniors closed the exhibition with a dance adaptation of “The Tyger” and selections of Blake’s *Songs* set to music.

Scott and his Muhlenberg seniors playfully designed the exhibition space with a spiral half-wall set up to display Blake’s *Illustrations of the Book of Job* toward the rear of the room. Students stenciled lines of Blake’s text in large letters on the walls and floor in the form of concrete poems. For example, the lines “How do you know but ev’ry Bird that cuts the airy way, / Is an immense world of delight, clos’d by your senses



Image courtesy of Grant Scott, the Martin Art Gallery, and Paul Pearson Photography.

five?" (E 35) were stenciled the length of an entire wall in the shape of a bird's wings, while other lines ran along the baseboard and around display cases, swirling and diving across other walls. The students working with Scott clearly loved their subject, their playfulness a sure indicator of how much Blake's work became their own. It's not hard to see why. If online images or print reproductions inspire, Blake originals inspire even more. What is now called book history has long occupied Blake scholars; seeing the Muhlenberg exhibit reminded me how much of this history was a labor of love, both for Blake and his readers.

Scott, Grant. *Wings of Fire: The Illuminated Books of William Blake*. Allentown: Martin Art Gallery, 2008. N. pag. [14 pp. + 17 illus., mostly color]

Christopher Rowland. "Wheels within Wheels": *William Blake and the Ezekiel's Merkabah in Text and Image*. Père Marquette Lectures in Theology, 38. Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2007. 43 pp. \$15.00, hardcover.

By Robert M. Ryan

IN this installment in a series of annual lectures sponsored by Marquette University, Christopher Rowland, Dean Ireland's Professor of the Exegesis of Holy Scripture at Queen's College, Oxford, examines Blake's response to the introductory chapter of the Book of Ezekiel: the prophet's vision of a God in human form enthroned on a chariot (*merkabah* in Hebrew) that moves on intricate wheels and is borne or accompanied by four living creatures that are simultaneously man and animal. The influence on Blake's conception of the four Zoas has long been recognized, but Rowland finds in Ezekiel a broader inspiration for Blake's confidence in the truth of visionary experience, his conception of the prophet's role in society, his insistence on the divine humanity, and his repudiation of any image of God as a distant monarchical lawgiver. In addition to discussion of *The Four Zoas*, Rowland offers thoughtful commentaries on Blake's reading of Job and the Apocalypse of Enoch and on the similarities between his response to Ezekiel and that of the mystic Joachim of Fiore. The lecture serves as a preview of a forthcoming book on Blake as an interpreter of scripture, a topic to which Rowland brings his impressive knowledge of the history of biblical exegesis.

N E W S L E T T E R

Blake in Paris

The first exhibition in France devoted to William Blake since 1947 will open at the Petit Palais on 1 April 2009 and run to 28 June. Curated by Michael Phillips, it will be composed of more than 150 works and represent Blake as a poet, painter, and artist-printmaker. The accompanying catalogue, in addition to listing the works, will also include over twenty essays by John Barrell, Martin Butlin, Elizabeth Denlinger, Anthony Dyson, Peter France, David Fuller, Suzanne Hoover, Andrew Lincoln, Saree Makdisi, Jon Mee, Martin Myrone, Morton Paley, Martin Postle, and Jon Stallworthy, amongst others. A program of lectures in both English and French is being organized by UFR d'Études Anglophones, Université Paris-Diderot (Paris 7), together with a conference on 30 May. A conference will also take place at the Collège de France on 3 June.

C O R R I G E N D A

The Huntington Library recently published a color reproduction of Blake's *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* copy E. I served as the volume's editor and provided a commentary on the poems and designs. In the "Acknowledgments" (177), I state that "we show the images on a background based on the original paper." In spite of the production team's best efforts, the paper color in the reproduction does not accurately represent Blake's paper. The reproduction is too brown, with a slight rosy hue, whereas the original is much whiter, with a slight yellow-gray tint. The one exception is "The Tyger," plate 40 in copy E. Because of overexposure to sunlight while on exhibition for many years, the paper has turned brown. The reproduction is accurate in this regard. The representation of Blake's inks and watercolors on all plates is also true to the original.

The following sentence appears on page 12 of the commentary: "We can see outward evidence of such unities in play, a central activity in several *Songs of Innocence*, because of the way the state of innocence promotes a spontaneous marriage of thought and deed, mind and body." The sentence should read as follows: "We can see outward evidence of such unities in childhood play, a central activity in several *Songs of Innocence*, because of the way play promotes a spontaneous marriage of thought and deed, mind and body." — Robert N. Essick