

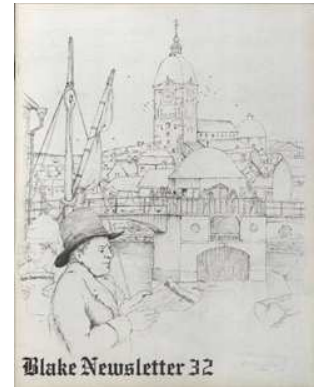
AN ILLUSTRATED QUARTERLY
BLAKE

N E W S

Report: 1974 MLA Blake Seminar

Donald Ault

Blake/An Illustrated Quarterly, Volume 8, Issue 4, Spring 1975, pp. 105-106



A GROUP OF PROLIFIC SOULS LIVING IN
GOLGONOOZA
 THE CITY OF IMAGERS AT THE FOOT OF THE HILL OF VISION, ARE
 ANNOUNCING
 AN EXHIBITION OF WORKS
 BY THE ARTISTS LABOURING COLLECTIVELY IN RECOGNITION OF
 SOUL, IMAGINATION, & ENERGY.
 IN DOING, WE ARE DECLARING OUR ACTIVITY AS THE BODY OF A
NEW MOVEMENT IN ART.

NEVER TWIN THE SWIFT COMMERCIAL FLOWS OF THE BIG-CITY, THE DIRECTION
 OF OUR ATOM FINDS ITS JAGGED COURSE IN DELIGHTFULLY ANSWERING
 THE THUNDEROUS CALLS OF OUR HEARTS. THE TREAT ON OUR
 PAINTED BONE IS FATTEN'D NOT ON CONTINUANCE, DISSECTION OF
 OTHER POPULAR VERNACULARS, THE DESIGNS OF ENERGETIC
 CREATION, BUT ON INSPIRATION AND VISION, THE LEAF-ETERNAL
 BODY OF ART. THE POETRY COMES PARTICULARLY AT THE COST OF
 OURSELVES.

GOLGONOOZA
 IS WILLIAM BLAKE'S CITY OF ART. THIS IS WHERE WE TAKE OUR RESIDENCE.
 Aethelred Eldridge
 IS THE CIRCLE AT THE BASE OF THE CONICAL MOUNTAINPEACE
 THROUGH WHICH POUR THE WORDS OF BLAKE'S PROPHECY.
 THIS PROPHECIC SHEEN REFLECTS ON ALL OUR WORK. IS
 NOT THE FORTELLING OF FATES, BUT THE RECOGNITION
 OF DESTINIES PRESENT, IN MARRIAGE WITH ORIGINS,
 ALSO PRESENT. THE UNION OF HEAVEN & HELL, AND
 THE RESURRECTION OF THE HUMAN BODY,
 REUNITED WITH SOUL, CONSTITUTING
 A RESUMPTION OF ART
 AND
 FRESH COALS IN THE POET'S
 FORGE

THE PUBLIC IS INVITED TO
 ATTEND THE EXHIBITION, TO PERUSE THE WORKS AND TO
 PERCEIVE THE VARIOUS THEATRICAL PRESENTATIONS
 WHICH WILL OCCUR. DETAILS FOLLOWING...

Newsletter Reprints

We have now reprinted the early issues of the *Blake Newsletter*, numbers 1-13, originally printed and published at Berkeley from 1967 to 1970.

In order that all our subscribers who need the reprints may have them at a reasonable price, we have designed a reduced--not abridged--format that compresses all the early issues into two printed parts of slightly more than 50 pages each. We think you will find that the format makes the reprinted issues quite simple to consult.

Both parts of the reprint series are now ready for mailing:

Part I, Numbers 1-8, 1967-69
 \$5 (special price of \$4 for individuals)

Part II, Numbers 9-13, 1969-70
 \$5 (special price of \$4 for individuals)

Please send your order to:

Reprints
 Morris Eaves
 Department of English
 University of New Mexico
 Albuquerque, New Mexico 87131

Make all checks out to the *Blake Newsletter*.

SECOND

THE EVENT WILL TAKE PLACE ON THE FIRST WEEKEND IN MAY.
 DOORS WILL BE OPEN FOR TRAVELERS TO PASS INWARD ON
 SAT., MAY 10, FROM 1:00 TO 5:00, AND
 SUN., MAY 11, FROM 10:00 TO 5:00

THE BODY OF THE HUMAN IMAGINATION WILL STAND IN MANIFOLD
 EXPRESSION OF MENTAL WARFARE WORKED OUT OF EARTHLY
 ELEMENTS, THROUGH THE PASSAGE OF TIME. ✦ PAINTINGS AND
 DRAWINGS ON PAPER, CLOTH, PARCHMENT, BONES AND WOOD ✦
 FIBRES OF NERVES, WOVEN AND MACRAMED ✦ GLASS STAINED
 AND FITTED INTO IMAGERY ✦ JEWELRY STRUNG AND MOLDED TO
 ADORN THE LIMBS ✦ THE TREES OF THE HILLS CRAFTED INTO TOYS,
 FURNITURE, MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS ✦ SCULPTURES AND CARVINGS
 OF WOOD AND STONE ✦ FOR THE FACE, MASKS. FOR THE MENTAL
 THROAT, CALIGRAPHY ✦ BRACELETS AND OTHER OBJECTS OF METAL
 WILL BE HAMMERED FROM THE HOT FORGE, AS MEDIEVAL GAMES
 ARE PERFORMED, AND NOTES STRUCK INTO QUACKERING MUSIC. . .

THE CHURCH OF THE WILLIAM BLAKE
 SOCIETY WILL MEET AS USUAL ON SUNDAY
 MORNING AT 10:00, AETHELRED ELDRIDGE
 DELIVERING THE THIRTY SEVEN. ALL
 ARE WELCOMED TO MAKE THEIR
 PRESENCES VISIBLE.

NOTE: FOR THE
 AGGREGATE AND
 GENERAL APPRECIATION
 MANY THANKS WILL
 BE FOR SALE.

Report: 1974 MLA Blake Seminar

"Perspectives on *Jerusalem*" was the topic of this year's seminar, at which Edward J. Rose presided. Three essays, each representing a different approach to the poem, furnished the material for discussion. (These essays appeared in a special edition of *Blake Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 1, prior to the conference.) Methodological considerations are especially pertinent to *Jerusalem*, where Blake, in creating his system, draws on such a diversity of sources--philosophical, scientific, historical, religious, artistic, and literary.

E. B. Murray's "*Jerusalem Reversed*," briefly summarized by Rose, presents a structural approach. Murray states that reversals are intrinsic to the poem's meaning. Applying this idea and concentrating his attention on Vala, he holds that she represents hate or a reversal of Luvah. Those present at the seminar agreed that reversal is indeed a recurrent motif in the poem; there was some disagreement, however, about his analysis of Vala. It was pointed out that despite his strong insistence upon critics always sticking to the text, Murray himself had not done so: he explains not the name Vala but *Vah-lu*. "*Vah-lu* is Vala and La-Va is Luvah," he concludes. Since Murray was not on hand to explain the large concepts on which his meaning depends, there was no further discussion of his essay. Unfortunately, only one author of the essays selected for discussion was present; exploration of the proposed subject therefore was often limited.

Mollyanne Marks, who happily was present, views her subject thematically in "Self-Sacrifice: Theme and Image in *Jerusalem*." After a fairly long summary, in which she focused on the problematic relation between self-sacrifice and selfhood, she put before the seminar the following question: are self-delusion and selfhood identical? There was general agreement among the audience that the two concepts certainly are related, but the precise nature of that relationship was never resolved. Marks had confined too narrowly the poem's action, limiting it to Blake's own personal struggle. To be sure, his artistic conflicts are intimately bound up with the conflict he represents in *Jerusalem*, but he puts his story in a larger national context. Not only artists but also nations, Blake asserts at plate 3, are destroyed or flourish in proportion as their arts are destroyed or flourish.

Of the three papers, Irene H. Chayes' "The Marginal Design on *Jerusalem* 12" elicited the strongest reactions. Although Chayes was absent, Rose gave a cogent summary of her lengthy essay. Obviously, her approach to the poem is through illustrations, and her particular concern is with the minor designs, which she feels have been neglected. They form a consistent group of figures, she argues, yet their relation to the text on the same plate is frequently oblique or incidental. In her analysis of *J* 12, she offers a method which she believes can be profitably applied to other marginal designs in *Jerusalem*. After isolating the verbal keys on *J* 12, Chayes leaves *Jerusalem* to discover similar drawings as well as pictorial descriptions in other works. In this search, she ranges widely, examining not only many of Blake's works, among them, *America*, *Europe*, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, and *The Songs of Experience* but also some of Milton's poems, such as *Paradise Lost* and *Lycidas*. The details of this examination do not clarify the meaning of the three figures and the globe illustrated at *J* 12. As one participant at the seminar stated, Chayes' introduction of serpents' coils and whirlpools from *Europe* together with her long discussion positioning the objects on *J* 12 adds lots of unnecessary description but nothing to his understanding of the poem. David Bindman expressed the general sentiment of those present when he said that Chayes was creating a problem where none existed. It is somewhat paradoxical to hold that visible objects have obscure meanings when Blake intended that they should convey his total meaning more directly. How shall we interpret the illustrations? Bindman suggested that we should be faithful to what Blake actually inscribes on the plate. For example, the spherical object on *J* 12 is neither a sun nor a lantern continually changing into some potentially realizable object, but is plainly the global earth. Likewise, the figure with the compass measuring out space on this earth is clearly Newton. John Grant made a point related to Bindman's. He emphasized the need of keeping one's eyes not only on the objects depicted on the page but also on its text as a control in any interpretation of designs. Otherwise any interpretation, however misleading, is possible. One must trust the visible objects as Blake presents them in a particular situation. Although

there may be similarities of figures in Blake's other works, the function, and hence the meaning, of these figures depends on what is going on in the poem they illustrate.

In sum, the discussion of these three papers reaffirmed an important critical principle: *Jerusalem* must be considered in respect to both its verbal and its graphic language. (Joanne Witke, University of California, Berkeley)

Also organizing a substantial portion of the debate at the Blake seminar was the issue of how and to what extent Blake intended his pictorial designs to function as objects of critical interpretation. David Bindman emphasized Blake's role as book designer and therefore was quite willing to accept "doodles" as purely "decorative" aspects of Blake's composite page. Others, including David Erdman and Stuart Curran, were less willing to relegate any of Blake's designs to a simply decorative function, even though they agreed that such a function might play a significant role in the meaning of a design. There was a strong feeling, to paraphrase Stuart Curran, that until the last doodle had been interpreted, one should not accept the methodological premise that Blake ever simply doodled at all.

Martin K. Nurmi entered another kind of caution which he felt should be invoked in interpreting pictorial designs, especially those such as appear on *J* 12. Nurmi argued that there is a tension between the flat page laced with images which do not physically move and the symbolic gesture the designs may make. For example, Nurmi drew attention to the fact that the globe of the world depicted in the text is structurally both three-dimensional and literally in motion, whereas the globe of the design is two-dimensional and stationary. Nurmi's suggestion seems especially helpful in *J* 12 where the text describing the compass-point rotational momentum of the globe visually spreads into the space on the page occupied by the visual globe. It seems clear that the Newton-like figure can measure with compasses the visual globe but would never be able to get a sufficient perceptual fix on the textual globe to be able to measure it. The differences in perspective relationships between perceiver and object perceived and between the possibilities for compass measurement are integral to Blake's perceptual strategy on the plate. (Donald Ault, University of California, Berkeley)

Blake Poster

A reproduction of "The Great Red Dragon and the Woman Clothed with the Sun" is now published by Trig Graphics, 55 Maple Avenue, Hastings on Hudson, New York 10706. The size of the reproduction is 19 x 28 1/2 inches. The retail price is \$8, plus \$2 shipping and handling charge (plus 40¢ New York state tax, when applicable).