

Blake Newsletter

Number 2

October 1, 1967

The Gnomes were at work in issue number 1, and the following errors and omissions should be noted:

The report on the Blake--Varley sketchbook (p. 2) appeared not in TLS but in the London Times. We thank Mr. Martin Butlin for pointing this out and Miss Mary Hanna for having sent us the clipping.

Mr. Fred Whithead, whom we again thank for a list of ongoing Blake projects, was incorrectly renamed Robert.

Our masthead was designed by Miss Amy Tsuji, who also compiled the list of articles on pp. 2-4 of number 1. On page 3, we should have included the contributions by Fred C. Robinson to the December 1966 PMLA discussion "Tense and the Sense of Blake's 'The Tyger'" (599-600, 602-603).

On p. 7 (Stevenson note 3), there were two obvious typos for "Keynes" and "Greek."

All of which reminds us that the crooked roads without Improvement are roads of Genius.

Newsletter number 3 is scheduled for publication on December 15, 1967. It will be dedicated to S. Foster Damon. We had originally intended to dedicate the present issue to Professor Damon, but have changed the date in hopes of getting more material from his students and colleagues. The deadline for copy will be December 1.

The BLAKE NEWSLETTER is edited by Morton D. Paley, Department of English, University of California, Berkeley, California 94720. Subscription price: two dollars for one volume (four issues). Please make checks payable to Morton D. Paley.

NEWS

SIR GEOFFREY KEYNES informs us that a revised and augmented edition of Blake's Letters will be published later this year by Rupert Hart-Davis. It will include "all that have turned up to be added in recent years, with corrections and some revision of notes. There isn't a great deal but it will bring us up to date." For the same publisher, Sir Geoffrey is preparing an enlarged edition of his Blake Studies for next year. Also, "The Kraus Reprint Corporation are making a reprint of my Bibliography of Blake (1921) and of the Census of the Illuminated Books. These will not be revised, but will be reproduced as they stand. The Oxford University Press is reprinting the Oxford Standard Authors Blake with some corrections and additions."

From Mr. KERRISON PRESTON: "All ten letters from Blake at Felpham to Butts at Westminster are now in the Preston Blake Library in London. Also Poetical Sketches marked by Blake (the Graham Robertson copy).

From Professor G. E. BENTLEY, Jr: "I am now about mid-way through revised page proofs of a volume to be called Blake Records, which is designed to embrace all the contemporary references to the poet and his family which I can locate. The systematic chronological limits are 1737 to 1831, with selected comments from surviving friends of Blake such as Linnell, Palmer, and Tatham. It comprehends the early biographies (J. T. Smith, Cunningham, Malkin, Tatham, H. C. Robinson), reviews, excerpts from letters, records in rate books, wills, voting records, and church records. It includes a good deal from Gilchrist, of course. A few score new references have turned up, but the vast majority of them have long been known. It contains evidence purporting to trace Blake's family to Rotherhithe, to associate his father with the Baptist church, to show Blake having a patron arrested for not paying for pictures, and so on. The book is designed as a reference tool, where biographical facts about Blake are collected."

"British Water Colors, 1750-1850," an exhibition of 100 paintings from the Victoria and Albert Museum, was shown at the California Palace of the Legion of Honor in July. It will subsequently appear at the City Art Museum of St. Louis (Aug. 15 - Sept. 15) and at the Cleveland Museum of Art (Oct. 3 - Nov. 5). Included are two paintings by Blake: "The Compassion of the Pharaoh's Daughter" (otherwise known as "The Finding of Moses") and "Moses and the Burning Bush." There are also several pictures by friends of Blake's: "Piling Straw" by Linnell, "Papigno on the Nar" by Palmer, "Sketch of a Lady" by Fuseli, "A Village Church Among Trees" by Palmer, and "View in the Pass of Llanberis" and "Fragnal, Hampstead" by John Varley. I found the Varley "View" (dated 1803) especially interesting, with the blue sky divided into planes of light oddly suggestive of the paintings of Lionel Feininger. The Palmer is in his richest style; also worth mentioning is a crucifixion by John Martin, with the vastness of perspective that gives such a strange quality to his work. MDP

STON

In June we noted a forthcoming new edition of Tracks in the Snow by RUTHVEN TODD. Mr. Todd writes: "Dover is to do it, with the addition of my essay on the printing techniques, which I worked on with Bill Hayter and Joan Miro in New York in 1947, and which appeared in Print in the following year. The new issue is to be called Some Aspects of Blake and Others and, in addition to the extra essay (which is now hard to come by), will have an introduction by Kathleen Raine, and a new index by Anne Collins McGuire." Mr. Todd also mentions that he has given the first copy of his Blake catalogue to the Lessing J. Rosenwald Collection of the Library of Congress.

The BBC has made a television program on the subject of "The Tyger." Its producer, Mr. CHRISTOPHER BURSTALL, writes: "The film I have made is called 'Tyger, Tyger' and I hope that the subtitle 'An enquiry into the power of a familiar poem' will give you some idea of what it is all about. It will run for fifty minutes and includes some views by Kathleen Raine, Robert Graves, Richard Hoggart, Stuart Hall, George Goyder, The Rev. Gordon Davies, as well as the opinions of a lot of private and inexperienced people, old and young, who find the poem memorable. I made the film - it's a sort of 'Workshop' really I suppose, to try and show some of the qualities which make the Tyger so potent, so generally. It is not in any way an expert elucidation. We shall be transmitting it some time this winter, and I certainly hope that it will prove of interest to NET."

Professor S. FOSTER DAMON notes that in Kenneth Patchen's latest book, Hallelujah Anyway (New Directions Paperbook #219, price \$1.25), there's a prose poem with reference to Blake's Lamb and Tyger. "Patchen was an early lover of Blake--one of his first books was Journal of Albion Moonlight--and his 'picture-poems' were inspired by, but not an imitation of, Blake's combination of pictures and poems. I think that Hallelujah Anyway is one of his best books." [Kenneth Patchen has again been hospitalized with a recurring spine ailment, and collections have been taken up in the Bay Area to help him meet medical expenses. Should readers of the Newsletter want to contribute, his address is 2340 Sierra Court, Palo Alto, California 94303.]

Annals of the Tyger, by William Blake, 1794, pp. 121-122, in Annals of the Tyger, ed. by William Blake, London & New York, 1970, pp. 121-122.

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Blake Apocrypha

So ill-known was Blake among his contemporaries that few had even heard that he was a poet. Of those who had heard of his poetry, most probably agreed with The Antijacobin Review, which wrote in 1808:

Should he again essay to climb the Parnassian heights, his friends would do well to restrain his wanderings by the strait waistcoat. Whatever license we may allow him as a painter, to tolerate him as a poet would be insufferable.¹

As a consequence of this antipathy and obscurity, there is rarely any question of Blake's authorship of a given work, since almost all that survive are either in his own hand or printed by his own unique method of Illuminated Printing. Blake's works have often been suppressed, distorted, "improved," and misunderstood, but heretofore we have not been troubled with the problem which arises among more popular authors, of having the works of other men attributed to him. His obscurity has had at least this advantage from the scholar's point of view.

However, an apocryphal Blake poem has recently been noticed in a review published just over a century ago. In his 1863 biography of Blake, Alexander Gilchrist had quoted a number of Blake's doggerel poems from his Notebook expressing his resentment against his erstwhile patron William Hayley:

ON H[AYLEY] THE PICK THANK

I write the Rascal Thanks till he & I
With Thanks & Compliments are quite drawn dry.

Thy Friendship oft has made my heart to ache:
Do be my Enemy for Friendship's sake.²

One of Gilchrist's anonymous reviewers was W. M. Tarrt, who claimed that he had "met Cromek in 1808, as the guest of [Fuseli's patron] Mr. Roscoe at Allerton, and knew him afterwards."³ Tarrt is generally highly unsympathetic--"To enter upon a minute criticism of his [Blake's] poetry would be a mere waste of time"--but he does present one point of interest. In reference to "the trashy doggerel" which Gilchrist printed, such as that about Hayley quoted above, Tarrt said:

The best specimen, in this way, was circulated (and attributed to Blake) in the first decade of the present century; but it is not republished by Mr. Gilchrist.

¹Anon., "The Grave . . . illustrated . . . [by] William Blake," The Antijacobin Review and Magazine, XXXI (1808), 225-234; see Blake Records, 1967, p. 206.

²A. Gilchrist, Life of William Blake, ed. R. Todd, London & New York, 1942, pp. 196, 197.

³Anon., "'Pictor Ignotus,' A Biography," New Monthly Magazine, CXXX (1864), 309-319, revised in Tarrt's Essays on some Modern Works, London, 1876, Vol. II, pp. 192-215.

"Tickle me," said Mr. Hayley,
 'Tickle me, Miss Seward, do;
 And be sure I will not fail ye,
 But in my turn will tickle you.'
 So to it they fell a-tickling.

'Britain's honour! Britain's glory!

Mr. Hayley that is you.'
 'The nine muses bow before ye!
 Trust me, Lichfield's swan, they do.'

Thus these feeble bardlings squand'ring

Each on each their lavish rhymes,

Set the foolish reader wond'ring

At the genius of the times!"⁴

Though the reciprocated admiration between Hayley, the hermit of Felpham, and Anna Seward, the Swan of Lichfield, must have been known and amusing to Blake, no verses remotely like these have been attributed to him by anyone else, and the verse style seems quite alien to him.

Fortunately, however, we have something more to go on in defending Blake from the allegation of authorship of these verses than mere stylistic disparities. The central quatrain of the poem has also been attributed to William Lort Mansel (1753-1820), the epigrammatical Bishop of Bristol.

Mansel's poem is a series of couplets:

"Prince of poets, England's glory,
 Mr. Hayley, that is you."

"Ma'am, you carry all before you,
 Lichfield Swan, indeed you do."

"In epic, elegy, or sonnet,
 Mr. Hayley, you're divine."

"Madam, take my word upon it,
 You yourself are all the Nine."⁵

Unfortunately the scholar who quoted these lines did not indicate their date or derivation, and I have been unable to discover a contemporary source for them. Probably they were current before Miss Seward died in 1809.

The light-hearted merit of the lines, combined with contemporary topicality, explains easily enough their currency about 1808. Their misattribution to William Blake may perhaps have occurred during his lifetime, but it seems more likely that it is a trick of an old man's memory writing fifty-six years after the events he recalls. Whether the lines are most interesting for what they tell us of William Blake, William Hayley, William Mansel, W. M. Tarrt, or the Swan of Lichfield, Tarrt was surely right in thinking that they deserved no more than a footnote. Their interest for Blake lies not so much in the plausibility with which they may be attributed to him as in the fact that a contemporary thought it worth fathering such by-blows upon him.

--Gerald E. Bentley, Jr., University of Toronto

⁴When the article was collected in book form, the introductory paragraph was retained but the verse itself was omitted.

⁵The Private Letter-Books of Sir Walter Scott, ed. Wilfred Partington, London, 1930, p. 215; in deference to the necessities of scansion and rhyme, I have taken the liberty of altering the penultimate line from "word for it."

QUERIES

Several answers have been received concerning Blake courses. Professor G. E. Bentley, Jr. writes: "Frye and I have for alternate years given graduate courses on Blake at Toronto." Professor John E. Grant of the University of Iowa says: "I have made him the sole or primary subject of the seminar on Romanticism for the last two years and will again do so next year. Specifically: 1966, Poetry and Design in Blake; 1967, Long Poems of Blake and Keats; 1968, 'Lyrical Ballads' and 'Songs of Innocence and of Experience.'" Professor Irene H. Chayes gave an undergraduate and a graduate course on Blake at the State University of New York at Binghamton in 1966-67. Professor Martha W. England gave a graduate seminar on Blake at Queens College (City University of New York) in the spring of 1967. "The title was catalogued 'Blake and His Contemporaries,' but we discussed only contemporary artists--and these very briefly. Discussions were based almost altogether on color slides of Blake's books."

Re. Stevenson's query about the Druids in Annandale: John Adlard's "The Annandale Druids: A Blake Crux" N+Q NS 14.1 (January, 1967), 19-20. This is certainly a more important article than Harrold's (your No. 19) in the same issue and the information could justifiably be stretched to cover even more than Adlard does--enough to cover most people's curiosities, I should think. --John E. Grant

Response to David V. Erdman: I'm afraid I agree with the PMLA authors on the robed figure in the design accompanying "The Little Boy Found," although I disagree with their reading of the poem as a whole. In fact, for several years in my classes I have been pointing out that the figure is a fusion of the mother to whom the lost child is returned and the supernatural rescuer who returns him. Such an observation has important critical implications which are perfectly justified in the context of both Songs of Innocence and of Experience and Blake's later work. --Irene H. Chayes, Silver Spring, Maryland

(Further discussion appears on

Mrs. Irene Tayler (Department of English, Columbia University) writes: "I have just completed a dissertation on Blake's illustrations to Thomas Gray, but I am still expanding work on the project and would appreciate any information that readers might have to offer."

When the article was collected in book form, the introductory paragraph was retained but the verse itself was omitted. The Blake's Letters-Books of Sir Walter Scott, ed. Wilfred Harrison London, 1910, p. 115; in defence of the necessity of omission and space, I have taken the liberty of altering the punctuation line from "you for it."

DISCUSSION

"With intellectual spears, & long winged arrows of thought."

Recognizing Fathers

Re. Thomas E. Connolly and George R. Levine, "Pictorial and Poetic Design in Two Songs of Innocence," PMLA, LXXXII (May, 1967), 257-264, and the query by David V. Erdman in Blake Newsletter I,...

There are so many marks of weakness and unfamiliarity with the basic facts of Blake scholarship in this article by Connolly and Levine that it would take many pages to identify and correct them all. One must, however, share the exasperation of Erdman at the contention of these authors that the guiding figure depicted in "The Little Boy Found" is the boy's mother. To be sure, they hedge their identification by conceding that "there are traces of the Blakean version of Christ's face in the face of the female figure. Perhaps Blake, by interfusing the face of Christ with that of the earthly mother, attempted to suggest the interpenetration of the human with the divine . . ." (p. 263). But they return to their assertion that the guide is the mother and it is this identification which is sure to be referred to in all subsequent discussions of the design. The methodological as well as interpretational problems raised by this article make it particularly apposite for readers of the Blake Newsletter.

That the reader cannot be depended on simply to look at the picture and then make up his mind as to whether the guide is a man or a woman must immediately be conceded. The basic reason that this is not possible, of course, is that it is not self-evident what we are referring to when we speak of the "picture." Because Connolly and Levine don't know how to identify the picture, as it exists for systematic scholarship, it is not surprising that they don't know how to interpret the few versions of it that they claim to have seen. In their "Appendix" (p. 264), where they give almost all their detailed data, they mention having examined "all the British Museum copies of Innocence and Experience"--"subsequent to this paper's being sent to the printers"[!]"--and they also mention the copy "that Blake gave [sic] to Henry Crabb Robinson in 1826," though it is not perfectly clear that they have actually seen the original of this copy. They also show no awareness of the Keynes-Wolf William Blake's Illuminated Books: A Census (1953), which changes the letter designations of Keynes's Bibliography (1921) that they employ to identify the four copies they seem to have seen.

I suppose all Blake scholars would agree that such carelessness and evasiveness is avoidable, but it remains possible that Connolly and Levine may be right about other more important things. What there is likely to be less unanimity about is how many copies of the Songs a scholar ought to study before he is competent to pronounce on niceties of color or iconography. Probably four copies taken at random are not enough;

certainly four are not enough if the would-be scholar has not read the Census and shows no awareness of the Blake Trust facsimiles, as Connolly and Levine do not. It seems inevitable that the Blake Trust facsimiles should be the first source cited for evidence of what the pictures look like since the facsimiles are widely available and since everything averred by true scholarship should aspire to be verifiable. The facsimiles are not perfectly reliable (as I imply on p. 6 of Newsletter I) but none of the pages of Songs should mislead anyone who has seen enough original copies to know how to interpret the stencil colored pages.¹

Because Connolly and Levine refer to Keynes "Z," the Crabb Robinson-Rosenwald copy of Innocence and of Experience, they might seem to have covered themselves with regards to the Blake Trust facsimiles, but they do not even hint that they have seen the Blake Trust facsimile of Innocence, Census "B," (also Rosenwald) of the uncombined anthology. If they had done so they would have seen a version of the guide who has nothing that can be called a halo, though in their lengthy discussions they assume that this figure always possesses one.

On the other hand, Erdman seems to imply in his query that if the figure (usually) possesses a halo it couldn't be the mother who is depicted as the guide. This objection is not sustained if we look--properly, it seems to me--at the facsimile of copy Z and also at the Micro Methods color microfilm of copy AA.² In both copies the figure in the right margin, with outstretched arms, has a halo. Connolly and Levine refer to her as an "angel," though she has no wings (like the four indubitable angels in LBL) but she must be the mother about to take over, just as the poem says she does.

It must be admitted, however, that the guide ("the nightgowned adult," Erdman) does not always look very masculine. In copy Z the somewhat indistinct features are almost as feminine, though quite different, as those in copy T, which Connolly and Levine reproduce. The fact that the guide is generally busty will not persuade Blakeists who have seen many of Blake's pictures of Christ in Empire nightgowns that the figure in question is a woman. An especially well-known representation of Christ in this costume and in almost the same position will be found in the first picture of Blake's Grave, entitled, "Christ

¹I too was happy to see the announcement in Newsletter I, 5, that the Trianon Press is about to issue a photographic reproduction of the facsimile edition. But the quality of the plates in Keynes's Blake: Poet, Printer, Prophet (1964) was often quite poor. The new edition of Songs is likely to cause trouble. See also fn. 2.

²These microfilms, which in the case of the Songs are of copies B and AA, ought to have authority comparable to that of the Blake Trust facsimiles and thus should also be cited in all real scholarly work. Until somebody carefully reviews both the microfilms and the facsimiles, opinions as to which is more reliable will not be worth much. "Reliability" may, indeed, not be what is at issue: perhaps we should be concerned with "proper uses and proper purposes."

Descending Into the Grave." This figure is almost as busty, even though Schiavonetti's engraving stands between Blake's conception and the reader. The only significant difference is that the guide in LBF has no beard, as do almost all Blake's representations of the mature Christ, including the one on the second page of "The Little Black Boy" (pl. 10). If Connolly and Levine had bothered to present this evidence to substantiate their claim that the guide is female they would at least have made an impressive case.

But the evidence that the guide is supposed to be either a woman or Christ per se cannot be found in either the poem or the picture. Where Blake wanted an indubitable Christ, as in the aforementioned plate 10, he depicted one; where he wanted an unmistakable God the Father, as in "The Little Vagabond," (p. 45), he also depicted one; likewise, where he wanted to depict women he did so with unquestionably female figures. There is one figure³ depicted in Songs, however, who is clearly related to the beardless guide of LBF. I refer to the nude and beardless male supported by two females and being given water by a bearded man in "To Tirzah" (pl. 52). This figure undoubtedly suggests Christ after the deposition, though His notable lack of beard is remarkable in view of Blake's iconography elsewhere. The fact that this picture was probably made after 1805, much later than the rest of the anthology, probably has no bearing on this iconographic detail. Even if fashions in facial hair were changing, Blake's indubitable Christs continued to be bearded.

The probable explanation for the lack of beard on the man in "To Tirzah" is that the reader is being invited to see that he too is in a plight similar to that of the male victim, who is in the condition of the crucified Christ but is not dignified, remote, and therefore irrelevant. This, at least, is what the refrain of the odd poem that was oddly added to the anthology much later seems to imply. Every man needs to say, Woman, "what have I to do with thee?" In a somewhat similar way the reader of LBF is shown a guide who, though he is God, appears like the boy's father, not like the Savior who is depicted in Church. Every reader should be able to penetrate this clean-shaven disguise but it will not help the innocent little boy to think he has no earthly father. Presumably he does not have to envision this father as a rough, tough, two-hundred percent male in order to believe in his existence.

John E. Grant
University of Iowa

³I am reminded by E. J. Rose that other kinds of connections can also be made to such a figure as that mysterious adult on plate 28, the frontispiece to Experience, who carries a winged child on his head.

* * * * *

A reply by Professors Connolly and Levine will appear in Newsletter No. 3.

Our second discussion article, by Mr. Michael Tolley of the University of Adelaide, refers to my own "Tyger of Wrath," PMLA, LXXXI (December 1966), 540-551. --MDP

Remarks on "The Tyger"

Your study offers a great deal that is of interest and assistance, particularly your relation of the poem to the tradition of the sublime. (By the way, have you read Murray Roston's Prophet and Poet (Faber 1965) on this?) But I'm sorry to find that I cannot agree with your basic interpretation of the poem. My own findings are also mainly from the Book of Job, and so it is surprising that we should diverge so deeply. But I think you have been misled by some misconceptions that have closed your mind (the fatal and one might even feel fated thing in Blake scholarship) to what should, I think, otherwise have been clear enough. One of these misconceptions is in Blake's relation to Boehme's doctrine of the two Principles. On p.544, you quote a passage from Aurora part II, which points out that "the Light, which dwells in the Fire, . . . is not apprehended or laid hold on by the Fire". It seems to follow that these are not contraries in the Blakean sense: they are not a devouring-prolific pair of opposites. The light co-exists with the fire, and is inseparable from it. This is not true of innocence and experience, which are separate states: one gives oneself up wholly either to the one or the other. Now the tyger is not at all necessary to the lamb, except in the sense that the tyger is one of the means of limiting the lamb's prolificness. But the lamb is necessary to the tyger, in a much more direct sense. However, the lamb must be destroyed by the tyger only on the earthly, fallen plane: in eternity, affairs are arranged differently. But eternity and the fallen world co-exist simultaneously, so that what appears to the fallen eye as a horrible act of destruction (tyger eats lamb) may appear to the eternal eye as a marriage of contraries. But such an eternal appearance could be caused only by an act of divine redemption: Blake is not so irresponsible as to suppose that what we do in our limited life does not effect our greater life. Our tragedy is just that we are crippling our eternal potentiality (putting it to sleep, in fact, at the mildest interpretation). You will see that the world-view postulated in MHH backs up this account of Blake's doctrine. It is, however, crucial to the interpretation of "The Tyger" to realize the implications of the narrator's fallen world-view of the beast. Because the eternal tyger is too great for the eye of man, we cannot see it as anything other than a horrible monster; accordingly, our fallen reasoning about the tyger's creator will be warped. I may say that, as far as "The Tyger" is concerned, it also follows that we shall be given a vision only of "God out of Christ" - we cannot see beyond the "consuming fire". (You will notice how Christ dominates the Hervey design - Damon should have been more surprised than he is that there is hardly any evidence of permanent wrath - wrath is rather swallowed up in mercy.) To Blake, Christ was the important, all-inclusive Godhead; and Christ has no part in divine vengeance. At this point I daresay you will object that I am outlining Blake's later doctrine. However, there are several indications in earlier or contemporary poems that Blake's position, while it may have received fuller and more direct expression, did not substantially alter after these years. The "Introduction" to S.E. is clear enough (my own independent study backs up Frye's reading here) and MHH contains several palpable signs of this exaltation of Christ over (what the Angels think of as) Jehovah. The Angel's view of hell proves chimerical: it has no mental reality. (Bloom is absolutely right in linking tyger and leviathan, as I will proceed to show, but so are you. It is not necessary to suppose that the Revolution symbolism affects Blake's theodicy.) The Leviathan in MHH

is tyger-striped to enhance its terribleness; but this beast is only the product of the Angel's warped mind (just as fallen tigers are only the products of our fallen minds). Then of course Blake makes a great play with Christ's denial of the law of the ten commandments, the point of which catalogue is to show that these commandments no longer should be supposed to carry divine vengeance in their wake. "The Everlasting Gospel" stresses forgiveness, but this is implicit in MHH. When Blake says earlier in MHH that Jehovah in the Bible is "no other than he that dwells in flaming fire" he is being mighty ambiguous. I think there is a reference here to Isaiah 33,14f, but in any case this is a Jehovah of the right sort, if he is a devil in MHH parlance. You will recall that in the Book of Urizen, it is Urizen who asks the Eternals why they live in unquenchable burnings: Urizen here cannot be the "Jehovah of the Bible" a/c MHH. Such a passage as that in J61: ". . . if I were holy: I never could behold the tears / Of love! of him who loves me in the midst of his anger in furnace of fire" offers the very careful distinction which in MHH is left for the reader to find. But of course MHH deals with the energy-restraint conflict to the exclusion of the sin-forgiveness idea which later dominates, and so we do not expect to find statements of the kind that crop up everywhere in Jerusalem. I think that, similarly, we would not expect to find a Wrath-Love opposition in S.E., because Blake is there intent on pointing out that men see the world as exhibiting the effects of divine vengeance only because they have misunderstood the divine intention. God's love does not have to be vindicated here: it is only necessary to show that man's point of view has nothing to do with God at all. "The Tyger" is a crucial weapon in Blake's armoury because it exposes a key misunderstanding - that God must be responsible for the dreadful things we find in this universe.

But let me try to clear out of the way another misunderstanding. On page 547 you say that "Contraries are not Negations. The Tyger is not 'a symbol of competitive, predacious selfhood.'" But Blake had not yet stated his doctrine of Negations, and we must try to reconcile the obvious fact here (tygers are negative) with contemporary theory. It works, I think, in this way: the eternal tyger is not a negative but a true contrary; however, on this fallen plane he can only appear to be negative. The distinction is made with admirable clarity in FZ VI, where Urizen finds that the fallen creatures are not as they were "in Climes of happy Eternity / Where the lamb replies to the infant voice, & the lion to the man of years / Giving them sweet instructions; . . . / . . . But these attack'd him sore". But in that much misunderstood and neglected work closer to "The Tyger", VDA, it is clear enough what Blake thinks of this creature of night that is blotted by the mild beam of day. Blake believed that the two contraries should not be reconciled, but it is always clear that he himself wishes to be on only one side - the innocent one. (The last Judgment effects this separation, so that the creators can get on with their job of being prolific undisturbed.)

On page 547 you also say that "Wrath is a vice only in the unfallen world of Innocence; in our world, . . . Mercy and the other virtues of Innocence are vices." This is stating things wrongly. It is only the experienced experiencer (not the innocent experiencer) who thinks that Mercy's existence depends on our making somebody poor: this is because he has a wrong, utilitarian, view of Mercy. Mercy in the world of experience becomes debased, but it remains an ideal by which the debased form can be tested.

You are wrong, too, for the purposes of this interpretation, in seeing Wrath primarily in terms of God's righteous, often future, expression of displeasure with man's sin. "The Tyger" is essentially a backward-looking poem: it looks to the Creation and Fall rather than the Parousia (a word not used in Revelation, by the way, though the concept is there). And in seeing wrath as destructive, rather than redemptive, in the context of Experience, you are led to say absurd things (excuse me) like "If the just man is to find his way out of the forest around him, he must give over his modest stillness and humility and imitate the action of the tiger." Wrath, in MHH, means primarily "righteous indignation" (and so I would read that proverb, "The tigers of wrath are wiser than the horses of instruction"; i.e. it is wiser to rebel against this world than submit to instruction in its ways); such indignation is behind poems in S.E. like "London," "Holy Thursday," and "A Little Boy Lost." "A Poison Tree" is of course highly relevant to this view, and it is the result of not telling one's wrath that is really tiger-like. As a parody of the Genesis 3 story, it helps to indicate what Blake thought was the true reading--God "told his wrath," and it ended there, but man misunderstood God.

I think at this stage, I can go on to offer a brief reading of salient parts of "The Tyger." As I mentioned, this is helped by reference to Job. You missed the point, I think, because it never entered your head that Blake could be criticizing such passages full of sublimity. What you have to say about the sublimity of Blake's poem is most interesting and perhaps it does help to explain why a poem nobody seems to have understood should have been so popular. (But Swinburne was pretty close, at least.) However, Blake's rhetoric serves an entirely different purpose from that of Job's God. When you say, on page 546, that "Did he who made the Lamb make thee?" no more demands an explicit answer than "Who hath divided a watercourse for the overflowing of the waters, or a way for the lightning of thunder?" you fail to see that they are completely different kinds of question. Job's question, which he puts into the mouth of his God, is designed to admit of only one answer. Blake's question is highly loaded by its direct reference to "The Lamb" in S.I. and asks whether it is possible for one Creator to rejoice in two productions, one of which is designed to murder the other. Blake's is a real question; but he asked it because he had made up his mind as to the answer, and wanted his reader to make the same leap.

The poem begins by questions reflecting primarily the awed wonder of the speaker confronted by this fiery beast, which he already sees as fearful, so that already he is questioning how beauty can be allied with something frightful (the answer is that beauty is a non-moral thing). He does not dwell on the tyger's possible connotations of wrath (your ref. to Jeremiah is indeed close) but is concerned to begin with entirely with the "how?" of the beast's creation. The notorious confusion of beast with creator which develops in "dread hand" and "dread grasp" implies a shift to moral considerations and carries a reference (see Bloom) to passages in Job 40f, where the Creator brags hideously of his own power--"he that made" behemoth "can make his sword to approach unto him" (40.19) and, talking of leviathan (41.10): "None is so fierce that dare stir him up; who then is able to stand before me?". Leviathan is indeed a "child of pride." The suggestion is so inevitable, that the reader should realize that Blake is really talking about Job's Creator. Accordingly, he should be able to appreciate the savage twist

of Job 38.7 in the lines

When the stars threw down their spears,
And water'd heaven with their tears,
Did he smile his work to see?

Blake thus shows how his speaker, contemplating such a dread beast, is forced to reject the historicity of a joyful reaction such as "When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?" Surely, the stars must have wept - with pity for the tyger's victims and anguish for this parody of divine creation. Miner has sufficiently demonstrated that throwing down spears is a gesture of despair (and I think you have not paid his remarkable study sufficient attention). It is possible that the spears also come from Job 41 (where they are no use against leviathan) and that Blake found particular irony in Job 41.9: "Behold, the hope of him is in vain; shall not one be cast down even at the sight of him?" (These sources do not account for all the imagery, but I do not see how we can avoid accepting the twist of 38.7).

The wrath in "The Tyger" is principally Blake's (the Creator smiles): and the speaker is moved to express righteous indignation in the last line of the poem (= "How dare he?"). Blake rouses our indignation at this false idea of God ("The Lamb" can be used as a test, if it need be) and so sets us wondering (a) who the Creator really is? (b) what is the real God's relation to the Creator? Basically, of course, the Creator of the tyger is man himself; he has created this whole space-time universe by seeing the Eternal world narrowly (and guiltily). But Los is put forward as a kind of Gnostic Creator, and as you note there is a clear cross-reference from the end of B.L. to "The Tyger". Los is man's fallen organizing principle here, completing with much toil only "a Human Illusion", which in S.L. becomes "a Philosophy of Five Senses" that makes even Urizen weep. Ultimately, Blake is able to see this work of Los as an act of mercy, but in S.E. he is concerned with rousing man to a sense of his own limitations and particularly to show man that he has treated God unjustly by attributing evil to him.

Michael J. Tolley
The University of Adelaide
Adelaide, South Australia

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First, I think it's you who have misread Boehme. The contraries are inseparable in the Godhead, but man separates them. In the Fall, man leaves the unity of the two Principles and by an act of will exposes himself to Wrath cut off from Love. The Love principle persists, however, if man will turn to it--just as the possibility of a regained Innocence is implicit in Experience. The Tyger does not eat the Lamb; its prey is the false good of priest-and-king morality. You are merely assuming the narrator's "fallen world-view." The perspective from Experience is a partial one, but so is that from Innocence. The speaker of "Pity would be no more" is right from the perspective of Experience: charity only masks the viciousness of the world in which he lives. But his view is a dead end, leading not to the achieving of a triumphant harmony (Oothoon) but to bitter passivity.

Why are the questions of Job and of "The Tyger" different? The lightning

of thunder, Leviathan and Behemoth are all terrible creations as is the Tyger, yet they were made by God. You haven't given any reason for believing that Blake is criticizing the sublimity of the original here. The weeping of the stars is certainly an act of despair on their part, but considering the meaning of the stars in Blake's symbolism, their despair is auspicious--it means that man is about to emerge from their domination. Blake may be alluding to Job 38.7 here, as you suggest, as well as to Revelation 12.4; but in any case it is to invest the stars with his own meaning. He is saying, in effect, that the stars should have wept when the Tyger was created, for it meant that their power would be overthrown.

Blake does, later, create a demonic parody of Leviathan in the Nelson portrait, and this is a parody of the sublime, along with Behemoth in Pitt and the two monsters in the Job engraving. But this was after Blake had concluded that all violence was evil, that revolutionary violence corrupted the ends which revolution was supposed to bring about, and that the only solution for human society was regeneration through love. This was not his view in 1792, as we see in the "Fayette" poem, for example, where LaFayette's pity for the Queen is vehemently criticized. Blake's pacifism emerges with the failure of the French Revolution and the development of the Napoleonic tyranny; his later views should not be back-read into his earlier ones. This, I think, accounts for most of the differences in our interpretations--you are assuming that all Blake's works fit into a consistent pattern of thought, while it seems clear to me that there are some profound changes in his ideas between The Marriage of Heaven and Hell and Jerusalem, with the main transition taking place during the years when Blake was working on The Four Zoas.

MDP

One of the pleasantest results of publishing the Newsletter has been receiving letters from many Blake scholars in the U.S. and elsewhere in the world. All too often, I'm afraid, my answers have been shorter and later than I could wish. This situation will probably get worse rather than better, as it would be impossible for me to take the time to answer letters as they deserve and put out the Newsletter, in addition to doing my own work. Therefore I ask the understanding and indulgence of our readers, who have been (and will, I hope, continue to be) generous with their contributions of material and comment.

This winter I expect to be travelling to a number of Blake collections, and although mail will eventually reach me, forwarding may take as much as two weeks. It would be helpful if readers marked Newsletter correspondence "Blake Newsletter" in the lower left hand corner of the envelope. In that way, I can make whatever special arrangements are necessary more easily. The deadline for copy for the next issue is December 10. --MDP