Blake

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CONTENTS

Blake's Jupiter Olympius in Rees' *Cyclopaedia*
by James Bogan, 156

Blake's Swans
by Robert F. Gleckner, 164

A Book to Eat
by David V. Erdman, 170

REVIEWS

David Irwin, *John Flaxman 1755-1826, Sculptor, Illustrator, Designer*
Reviewed by Janice Lyle, 176

David Simpson, *Irony and Authority in Romantic Poetry*
Reviewed by Gavin Edwards, 179

Milton Klonsky, *William Blake: The Seer and His Visions*
Reviewed by Gerda S. Norvig, 184

Kathleen Raine, *From Blake to A Vision*
Reviewed by Hazard Adams, 187

War and the Uses of Myth
Betty T. Bennett, ed., *British War Poetry in the Age of Romanticism: 1793-1815*
Reviewed by David Punter, 189

Leopold Damrosch, Jr., *Symbol and Truth in Blake's Myth*
Reviewed by Nelson Hilton, 192

Margaret Bottrall, "A Lecture on William Blake's *Songs of Innocence and Experience*"
Reviewed by Paul Mann, 197

MINUTE PARTICULARS

Blake and the Novelists
by Christopher Heppner, 198

Another Source for Blake's Orc
by Randel Helms, 198

NEWSLETTER

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INFORMATION

BLAKE'S JUPITER OLYMPIUS IN REES' CYCLOPAEDIA

JAMES BOGAN

From 1804 until 1820 Blake worked on his illustrated epic poem *Jerusalem*. During those same years Abraham Rees, a learned divine, was in charge of compiling *The Cyclopaedia; Or, Universal Dictionary of Arts, Sciences, and Literature*.[1] A major English encyclopedia was needed in "this period of illumination and general enquiry," as Rees stated in the Prospectus directed "To the Public."[2] The thirty-nine volume *Cyclopaedia* was to surpass the Edinburgh-based *Brittannica*, which was in its ten-volume fifth edition.[3] As for the compendious work of the French Encyclopedists, the following notice from the "Domestic Occurrences" columns of *Gentleman's Magazine* indicates the feelings of the encyclopaedia-buying public: "The Earl of Exeter expunged from his large and well-selected library, and burnt, the works of Voltaire, Rousseau, Bolingbroke, Raynal, and that grand arsenal of impiety, the French Encyclopedia."[4]

Rees was assisted in his worthy project for the edification of "intelligent and esteemed subscribers"[5] by "EMINENT PROFESSIONAL GENTLEMEN" and "THE MOST DISTINGUISHED ARTISTS."[6] The contributors were mainly Londoners, many of them drawn from the ranks of the Royal Academy and Royal Society and several of whom played significant roles in Blake's life. Sir Humphrey Davy was called on to provide the articles on Chemistry. John Bonnycastle, a friend of Henry Fuseli, wrote some of the Astronomy sections. The musicologist, Sir Charles Burney, did not refrain from including a facsimile of a hand-written score from Rousseau--his counterpart for the *Encyclopedie*. Major Moor, whose illustrated *Hindu Pantheon* Blake was familiar with, wrote on Indian Mythology. Mr. Mushett was the authority on blast furnaces, yet he mentions not a word about the blacksmith Los. Benjamin Malkin, a friend and sometime employer of Blake, wrote a few of the biographical articles for which the *Cyclopaedia* was specially noted.[7] The articles on painting were prepared by Thomas Phillips, who once had Blake sit for the portrait included in the illustrations to Blair's *The Grave*. Blake's old friend John Flaxman contributed articles on "Beauty," "Basso Relievo," "Armour," and a book-length treatise on "Sculpture," which was an extensive amplification of his "Lectures" at the Royal Academy. Among the engravers who made plates for the *Cyclopaedia* were Wilson Lowry, James Parker, Blake's one-time business partner, and Robert Cromek, his nemesis in the publishing world.

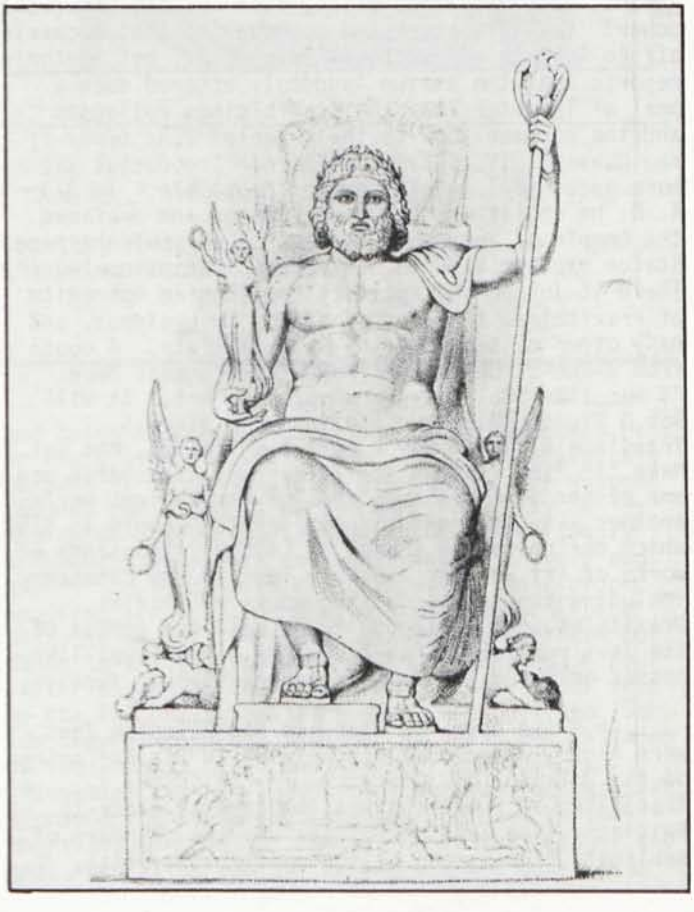
Blake himself was to join in the work on Rees' *Cyclopaedia* with this "eminent" and "distinguished" company of men. At a time when Blake was living in poverty and obscurity, John Flaxman steered an occasional job his way. They were not always very satisfactory opportunities for one of the geniuses of the age, but engraving a "butter boat" for Josiah Wedgwood's catalogue did put some food in the larder and porter on the table.[8] In 1815 Flaxman enlisted Blake to do the engravings for his "Sculpture" article, and also for "Armour," "Basso Relievo," and "Gem Engraving."[9] The four plates of the engravings for "Sculpture" include the old standards of Greek statuary: the Apollo Belvedere, the Medici Venus, the Knidian Aphrodite of Praxiteles, the Hercules Farnese, Jupiter Olympius the Athena Parthenos of Phidias, the Laocoön, and

others (illus. 1). Also represented is a statue of Durga drawn from Moor's *Hindu Pantheon*, an Etruscan Patera, a colossal statue at Thebes, a droll Chinese statue, and two examples of Persian sculpture from Persepolis. The plates in Rees are mere copywork, with perhaps one exception, the Jupiter Olympius, which stands out among the collection of gods, goddesses, and heroes. This stipple engraving of Jupiter is more concentrated, inventive, and minutely detailed than the rest, including the Laocoön which is certainly fainter by comparison.[10]

Before treating Blake's representation of the Jupiter Olympius, some background on the statue itself and its place in the history of art will provide a context for Blake's work. Phidias' statue of Zeus in the Temple at Elis, the site of the Olympic games, was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Strabo reports that when asked "after what model he was going to make the likeness of Zeus, [Phidias] replied that he was going to make it after the likeness set forth by Homer in these words: 'Cronion spake, and nodded assent with dark brows, and then the ambrosial locks flowed streaming from the lord's immortal head, and he caused great Olympus to quake' (*Iliad* I. 528)" (*Geography* viii. 3.30). John Flaxman describes the statue this way in his *Lectures*:

> But the great work of this chief of sculptors, the astonishment and praise of after ages, was the Jupiter at Elis, sitting on his throne, his left hand holding a scepter, his right extending victory to the Olympian conquerors, his head crowned with olive, and his pallium decorated with birds, beasts, and flowers. The four corners of the throne were dancing victories, each supported by a sphinx, tearing a Theban youth. At the back of the throne, above his head, were the three hours or seasons on one side, and on the other the three graces. On the bar between the legs of the throne, and the panels or spaces between them were represented many stories. . . . On the base the battle of Theseus with the Amazons; on the pedestal, an assembly of the gods, the sun and moon in their cars, and the birth of Venus. The height of the work was sixty feet. The statue was ivory, enriched with the radiance of golden ornaments and precious stones.[11] (illus. 2)

Prodigies were associated with the statue from the beginning. In his *Description of Greece*, Pausanias relates "that the god himself evinced his approbation of the art of Phidias; for, as soon as the statue was finished, Phidias prayed to Jupiter, and entreated him to signify if the work was pleasing to his divinity; and immediately after he prayed, they say, that part of the pavement was struck by



1 Rees *Cyclopaedia*. "Sculpture," Plate I.

2 "Jupiter Olympius."

lightning."[12] Martin Robertson notes that "the floor in front was paved with black marble and there was a reflecting pool of oil that not only served to preserve the ivory but to cast light up on and reflect the figure."[13] The seated figure filled the space, his lofty head almost touching the ceiling. Imagine the effect on a suppliant when the towering statue doubled in an eerie light! The effect was to induce a state of religious awe attested to by Dio Chrysostom, for one:

> O best and noblest of artists, how charming and pleasing a spectable you have wrought, and a vision of infinite delight for the benefit of all men, both Greeks and barbarians, who have ever come here, as they have come in great throngs and time after time, no one will gainsay . . . . Whoever is sore distressed in soul, having in the course of his life drained the cup of many misfortunes and griefs, nor ever winning sweet sleep--even this man, methinks, if he stood before this image, would forget all the terrors and hardships that fall to our human lot. Such a wondrous vision did you devise and fashion, one in very truth a
>
> "Charmer of grief and anger, that from men
> All the remembrance of their ills could loose!"
>
> So great the radiance and so great the charm with which your art has clothed it.
>
> (*Discourses* XII; 51-52)

The statue itself had a curious history. For six centuries it remained at Elis, revered by Greeks, Romans, and barbarians alike, such was its universal power. Caligula attempted to have the statue carried off to Rome to adorn the imperial city, but Suetonius reports that the statue "suddenly uttered such a peal of laughter that the scaffoldings collapsed and the workmen took to their heels" (*The Lives of the Caesars*, IV, 57). The Emperor Theodosius was more successful in plundering the temple. In 373 A. D. he abolished the Olympic Games and profaned the temple of Zeus when he had the chryselephantine statue expropriated to New Rome (Constantinople).[14] There it joined in captivity the Knidian Aphrodite of Praxiteles, the Eros of Mindos by Lysippus, and many other masterpieces by Greek artists. A quote from Blake's "On Virgil" makes apt comment here: "A war-like State never can produce Art. It will Rob & Plunder & accumulate into one place & Translate & Copy & Buy & Sell & Criticise, but not Make."[15] The fire at the library of Alexandria was one of the seven catastrophes of the ancient world; another was the great fire at Constantinople in 475, which destroyed the Palace of Lausos. Thousands of works of art were irrevocably lost in the disaster, including the Zeus and other works by Phidias, Praxiteles, and Lysippus.[16] No detailed copies of the Zeus remained, though dim one-dimensional likenesses on coins and some gem engravings do survive.[17]

In Blake's era Phidias and his Olympian Zeus were highly esteemed. Winckelmann in his *Reflexions on the Painting and Sculpture of the Greeks*, translated by Fuseli, gives the highest place to Phidias: "The Zeus of Phidias was the standard of sublimity, the symbol of the omnipresent Deity, like Homer's Eris, he stood upon the earth, and reached heaven."[18] In Joseph Spence's *Polymetis* (1747) is this passage on the Jupiter: "The superiority of Jupiter . . . was in that air of majesty which the ancient artists endeavoured to express in his countenance. If some of the nobler statues of Jupiter, as that of Jupiter Olympus made by Phidias, in particular, had remained to our times; we might see this more strongly at present; for that was reckoned the master-piece of the greatest statuary that ever was; and those who beheld it are said to have been astonished at the greatness of ideas in it."[19] The desire to have had a glimpse of the original is clear.

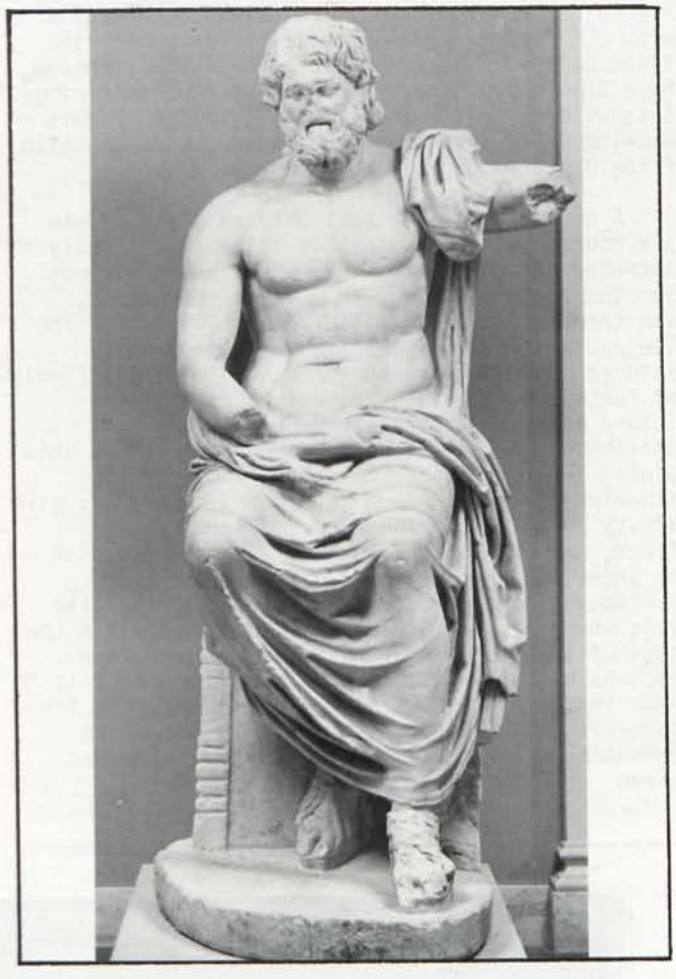
Though Blake took exception to the uninspired opinions of his patron William Hayley, he would not have quarreled with the gentleman's estimation of Phidias. Hayley had finished his *Essay on Sculpture* just before Blake came to work for him in 1800. In lock-step heroic couplets he describes how he is taken "in vision" to see the Zeus; then he addressed Phidias:

> All vouch thy fame, though not in speech--
> Thine, the prime glory pagan minds could reach--
> Thine, to have form'd, in superstition's hour,
> The noblest semblance of celestial power![20]

Blake himself thought Phidias ranked with Homer and Socrates (*Anno Watson*, K 388).

In 1800 John Flaxman was the "Happy son of the immortal Phidias" to Blake (Letters, K 807). Flaxman's thoughts on his spiritual father are given in the "Sculpture" article in Rees' *Cyclopaedia*: "Superior genius, in addition to a knowledge of painting, which he practiced before sculpture, gave a grandeur to his compositions, a grace to his groups, a softness to flesh, and a flow to draperies, unknown to his predecessors . . . . The discourse of contemporary philosophers on mental and personal perfection assisted him in selecting and combining ideas, which stamped his work with the sublime and beautiful of Homer's verse. . . . The great work of the great master, the astonishment and praise of after ages, was the Jupiter at Elis."[21] From ancient commentary to Blake's own friends the preeminence and power of Phidias were celebrated, and in 1815 Blake got the chance to turn praise into a picture.

The Olympian Jupiter was one of the statues to be engraved for the Sculpture plates in Rees' *Cyclopaedia*. Blake engraved the plate, but it is not entirely clear whether it was Blake, Flaxman, or the two together who worked out the design of the picture. Spence outlines the problem facing the artist: "It is a great pity that we have no better figures of Jupiter . . . they fall short even of the idea one can form of a Jupiter in one's own mind, by the help of ancient poets, and infinitely short of the celebrated Jupiter made by Phidias."[22] Here was a chance to create a likeness of Jupiter and in a way "to renew the lost Art of the Greeks," a one-time ambition of Blake (Letters, K 792).



3 "Jupiter," from Joseph Spence, *Polymetis*.

4 Marbury Hall Zeus, courtesy of the J. Paul Getty Museum, Malibu, California.

In addition to the imaginative powers of the designer, there were other sources for the engraving: traditional representations of Jupiter, the Hellenistic statue of Jupiter in Marbury Hall, and a literary description in the writings of Pausanias. The engraving in the *Polymetis* exemplifies the standard iconography associated with Jupiter (illus. 3). In the Marbury Hall Zeus we have a likely model for the basic attitudes of the Jupiter in Rees (illus 4). The torso, beard, and especially the pallium are similar, though the body is more symmetrically arranged in Blake.

For the fine detail in the engraving, we are directed to "See Pausanias," whose *Description of Greece* contains a minutely detailed verbal portrait of the famed statue. The engraving follows almost verbatim the description, of which Flaxman quotes the relevant sections in his Sculpture article. In giving Pausanias' account I have added a [Y]-yes- and an [N]-no-to indicate whether the engraving follows the description. As the picture is black and white/two-dimensional, some qualities of the sculpture do not apply: "The god is seated upon his throne [Y], made of gold and ivory, a crown of olive branch on his head [Y], in his right hand bearing a Victory [Y], also of ivory and gold; she bears a fillet, and is crowned [Y-but the olive crown is in her right hand]; the left hand of the god holds a sceptre of various coloured metals [Y]; an eagle of gold sitting upon the sceptre [Y]; his garment is of gold, and on his garment are wrought animals and flowers, particularly the lily [N[23]]; his sandals are of gold; the throne is variously ornamented with gold and gems, and also ivory and ebony: on it animals are painted in their proper colours, and sculptured with great labour [These pictures on the sides and back of the work are not shown in the frontal view of the engraving]. Four victories, as in the dance, are on the hinder feet on the throne, two on each side [Y-two of the four are brought forward]; and on the front the children of the Thebans taken away by the sphynx [Y] . . . . [Pausanias goes on to describe numerous scenes that surround the statue but are not included in the engraving]. Upon the throne, above the head of the god, Phidias carved the Graces and the Hours [Y].

Three of them large; these are called daughters of Jove. [Three of these Graces form the outer ring of the halo-arch over Jupiter's head. Two, though there should be three, cherubs make the inner ring]." It is evident that the engraving is based on this description, but as to the character and expression of the Jupiter there is more to say.

A quote from Homer that Phidias did not note as a source of his inspiration still felicitously describes this Jupiter: "He, whose all-conscious Eyes the World behold, / Th' Eternal Thunderer, sate thron'd in Gold" (*Iliad* VIII, 550-51).[24] The face radiates omniscience and the symmetrical features indicate harmony. The heroic torso, firmly-set feet, and symbols of power all combine to picture majesty of character. Even the beard contributes to the effect. Spence comments on this point: "What is nobler than the long beard in Michaelangelo's Moses? A full beard surely may give majesty as well as a long one, and you see, in effect, how much it gives . . . . to the heads of the Greek Jupiters . . . . A full beard still carries the idea of majesty with it, all over the East; which it may possibly have had ever since the times of the patriarchal government there. The Grecians had a share of the oriental notion of it."[25] Power inhabits the Jupiter from the head, with its flame-like laurel wreath, to the feet where the redoubtable Sphinxes are stationed like obedient guards.

Still there is not much sign of the wrathful, terrible thunderer in this picture. Spence explains how the benevolent aspect befits this deity:

> Among the different characters of Jupiter, I think I have mentioned to you those of the Mild and of the Terrible Jupiter . . . Mild Jupiter's face has a mixture of dignity and ease in it. That serene and sweeter kind of majesty . . . The statues of the Terrible Jupiter were represented in every particular differently from those of the Mild Jupiters. These were generally of black marble, as those were of white. The one is sitting with an air of tranquility; the other, is standing and more or less disturbed. The face of one, is pacific and serene; of the other angry or clouded. On the heads of one, the hair is regular and composed; in the other, it is so discomposed that it falls half-way down the forehead.[26]

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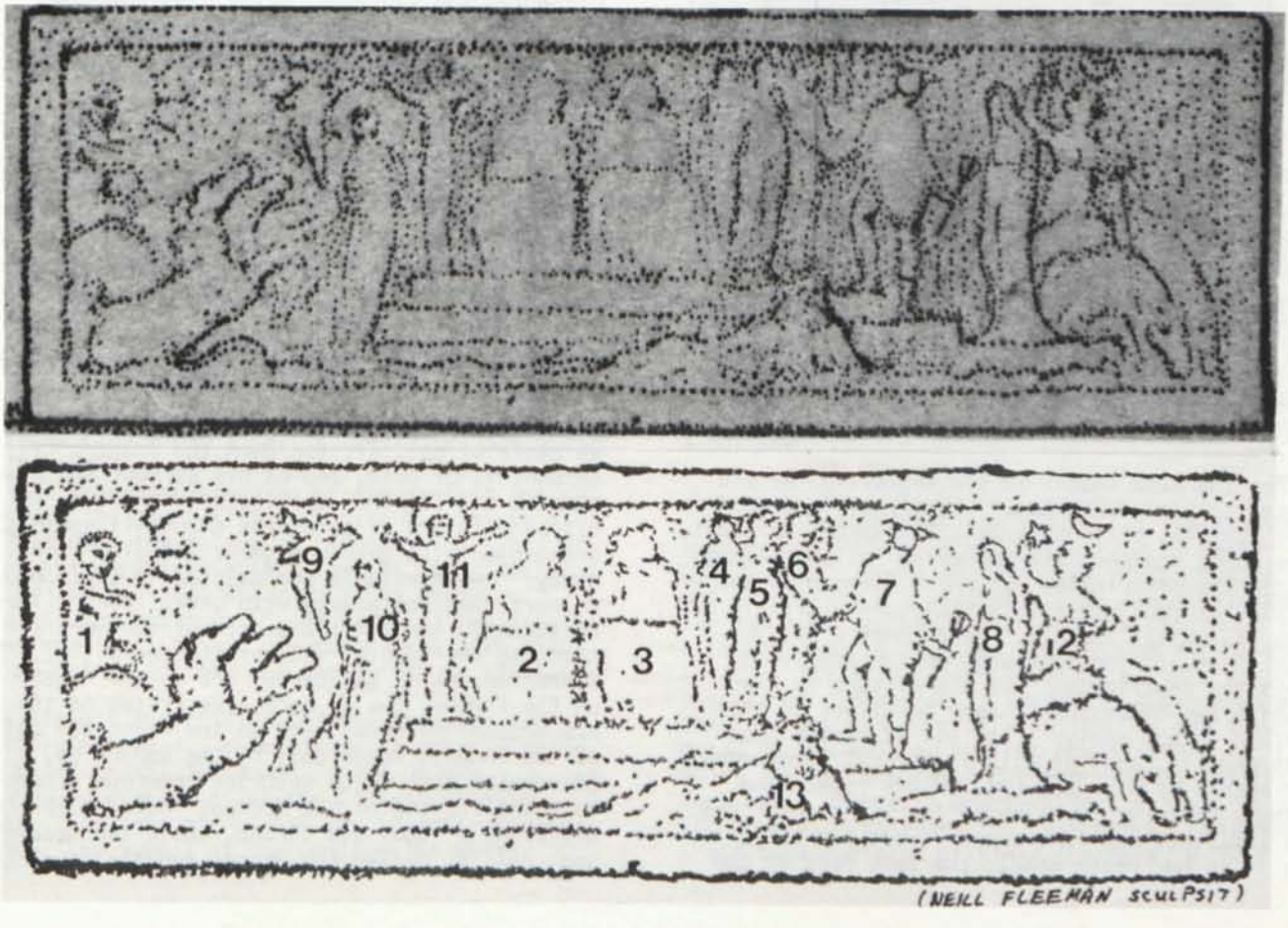
5 "Jupiter Olympius" pedestal and key to pedestal as follows: (1) Sun, (2) Juno, (3) Jupiter, (4-5-6) The Three Graces, (7) Hermes, (8) Vesta, (9) Love (Cupid), (10) Venus, (11) Persuasion, (12) Moon, (13) Neptune.



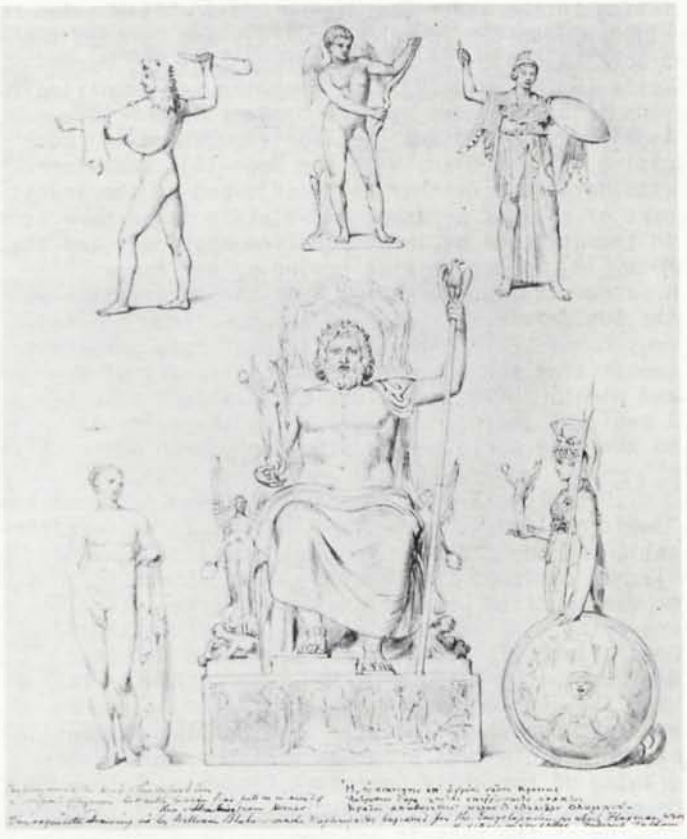
The "Terrible Jupiters" have distant cousins in the truculent demons that guard the gates of many Hindu and Buddhist temples; but in this engraving we are certainly presented with a "Mild Jupiter."

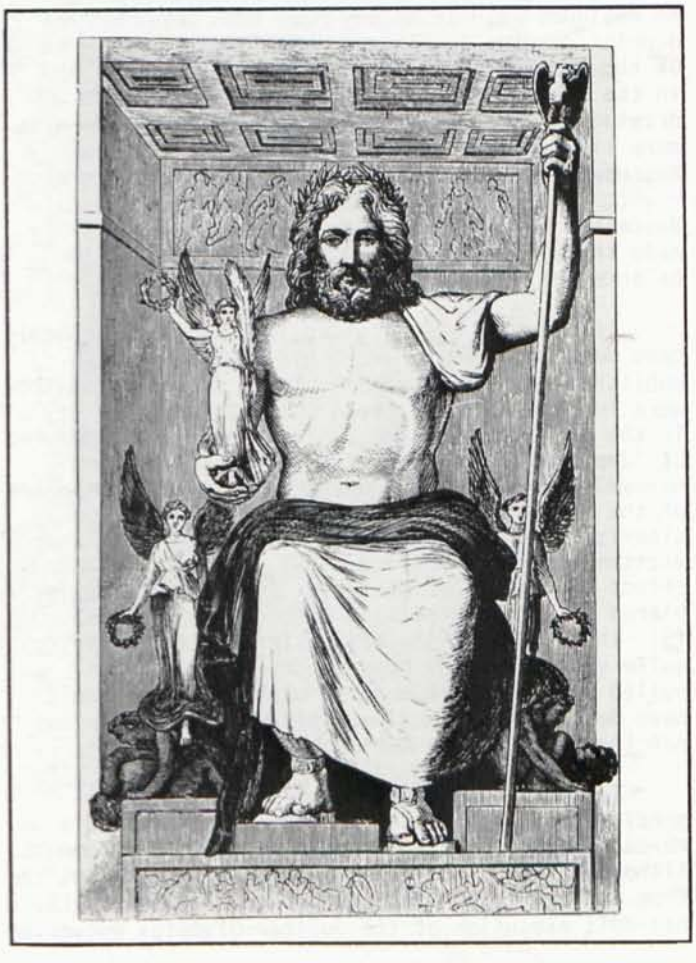
The combination of strength and benevolence evident in the statue is further explicated from the glosses of Thomas Taylor: "'Jupiter is seen holding a sceptre, and [winged] victory.' Jupiter is every where called by Homer . . . 'the father of gods and men, ruler and king, and the supreme of rulers . . .' On account, therefore, of his *commanding* or *ruling* characteristic, he is very properly represented with a sceptre, which is certainly an obvious symbol of command. The symbol of victory likewise justly belongs to him, on account of his all-subduing power, which vanquishes all mundane opposition, and causes the war of the universe to terminate in peace."[27] Hayley declaimed the virtues of the peace-bestower in his *Essay on Sculpture*:

> Lo, in calm pomp, with Art's profusion bright
> Whose blended glories fascinate the sight,
> Sits the dread power! Around his awful head
> The sacred foliage of the olive spread,
> Declares that in his sovereign mind alone
> Peace ever shines, and has forever shone.[28]

The divine nature of the subject is emphasized by the arrangement of Graces and Seasons about Jupiter's head. The halo-effect of the attending Graces and Seasons is *not* accounted for in Pausanias; in fact he mentions that they are disposed to the right and left of Jupiter's head. Haloes around the heads of pagan gods are found elsewhere in eighteenth and nineteenth century art,[29] but the effect in this picture certainly contributes to the portrayal of Jupiter as a Prince of Peace. This Jupiter is neither a despotic Greek god nor a tyrannical Urizen. Blake himself says forthrightly: "Consider that the Venus, the Minerva, the Jupiter, the Apollo. . . are all of them representations of spiritual existences, of Gods immortal to the mortal perishing organ of sight; and yet they are embodied and organized in solid marble" (*Descriptive Catalogue*, K 576). A representation of celestial power has here been embodied and organized in dots of ink.

On the base of the Jupiter statue is a picture of a bas-relief in such minute detail as to call for a magnifying glass (illus. 5). The Lilliputian beings outlined in dots are a company of Olympian gods that appear more the size of fairies. Once again the artist has stayed close to the description in Pausanias, which allows us to identify the characters: "Upon the base of the throne, which great mass was wrought in gold, are other ornaments re-





6 Blake's drawing for Rees' sculpture plate, courtesy of the Lessing J. Rosenwald Collection in the Library of Congress.

7 "Jupiter Olympus" by John Flaxman.

lating to the god. The rising Sun in his chariot [1], and Jupiter [3] and Juno [2], and by them the Graces [4,5,6]; these lead Hermes [7], and Hermes Vesta [8]. Cupid [9] also from the sea receiving Venus [10], who was crowned by Persuasion [11]. Apollo was with Diana [Apollo is subsumed in the rising Sun and Diana with the Moon-12], and Minerva with Hercules [neither pictured]; and on the lowest part of all was Neptune, [13-Blake's image here is in the attitude of the Capitoline Neptune], and the Moon [12] in her chariot urging on her horses."[30] A noteworthy improvisation from the description is the Sun driving his chariot led by a team of vigorous horses, while the Moon's team grazes, thereby emphasizing the active/passive contraries of day and night. Hermes' costume could almost make him a medieval jester. Besides being the guide of souls to the underworld, he is also the patron of tricksters.

Finally there is the matter of who designed the "Jupiter Olympius" engraving. There is no identification of the designer on the plate itself. When Flaxman designed the "Basso Relievo" plate in 1804, he was credited with it and James Parker with the engraving. "Blake del[iniavit] et sc[ulpsit]," in Rees' Plate III with the Laocoön tells us Blake drew the picture and engraved it. On Rees' Plate I with the Jupiter simply appears "Blake sc." He engraved the plate, but the designer is not mentioned. Blake did make a rather finished preliminary drawing of the whole page that Frederick Tatham described as "exquisite" (illus. 6).[31] Blake's drawing of the page is not conclusive proof that he designed it, for he may have been working from a prior drawing by Flaxman. Still, the existence of the drawing makes it likely that he had a hand in the design, and two differences between the drawing and the final engraving itself make it even more likely: (1) In the bas-relief on the base Neptune is moved from the left foreground to the right. (2) The Moon-goddess is moved closer to Vesta and her right arm is raised. Blake probably made these changes as he understood the need to balance the groupings more effectively.

If a design was provided it would most probably have been by Flaxman. When his *Lectures* were published in 1838, sculture plates from his drawings were included. While there is a basic similarity in the two engravings of Jupiter, Flaxman's picture of "Jupiter Olympus at Elis" (illus. 7) differs *markedly* from the Rees Jupiter: (1) The expression of the face and drawing of hair and beard are clearly different. (2) The eagle, sphinxes, and victims are more detailed. (3) There is no halo effect of Graces and Seasons. (4) The statue is placed in a temple setting with roof and walls. (5) The design of the bas-relief differs by being quite vague, and the Moon is driving a chariot pulled by two active horses. While Flaxman could have done another drawing, this Flaxman design was *not* the basis of the Rees engraving.

The mild Jupiter that dwells in the dusty precincts of an outmoded household encyclopaedia reveals many elements of Greek religion and thought. Although Blake's attitude towards the Greeks shifted from admiration to distrust between 1800 and 1815, his deft execution of the Jupiter Olympius engraving belies a dogmatic dismissal of Greek tradition. This miniature colossus invites contemplation by any who would like a glimpse of one of the sculptural wonders of the Golden Age.

[1] London: Longmans, 1819.

[2] "Dr. Rees' New Cyclopaedia" (London, 1801). Copy courtesy of the University of Reading Library Archives.

[3] Robert Collison, *Encyclopedias* (New York: Hafner, 1964), p. 141.

[4] (August, 1798), LXVII, 718.

[5] "Preface," *Cyclopaedia* (London: Longmans, 1819), I, viii.

[6] *Ibid.*, title page.

[7] Alexander Gordon, "Rees, Abraham," DNB (1896).

[8] G. E. Bentley, Jr., *Blake Records* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), p. 240.

[9] G. E. Bentley, Jr., *Blake Books* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), #489.

[10] The two most extensive treatments of Blake's use of sculpture are to be found in Stephen Larrabee's *English Bards and Grecian Marbles* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1943) pp. 99-119, and Morton Paley's "'Wonderful Originals'--Blake and Ancient Sculpture" in *Blake in His Time*, ed. Robert Essick and Donald Pearce (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978), pp. 170-97.

[11] The account is based on Pausanias' *Description of Greece* (v. 11.1-9). John Flaxman, *Lectures on Sculpture* (London, 1838), pp. 89-90.

[12] Pausanias, *The Description of Greece*, trans. Thomas Taylor (London, 1824), I, 29.

[13] *A History of Greek Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), I, 317.

[14] Enno Fraxius, *A History of the Byzantine Empire* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1967), p. 43.

[15] *Blake: Complete Writings*, ed. Geoffrey Keynes (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), p. 798. Subsequent references to this edition appear in the text.

[16] Georgius Cedrenus, *Historiarum Compendium*, 322C, Vol. I, p. 564 (*Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae*, Vol. 34).

[17] See G. M. A. Richter, *The Sculpture and Sculptors of the Greeks* (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 1970), figs. 647-53.

[18] (London, 1765), p. 148.

[19] Spence, p. 51.

[20] Hayley, p. 55.

[21] Abraham Rees, *Cyclopaedia* (London: Longmans, 1819), XXXII, not paginated.

[22] Spence, p. 46.

[23] This detail is followed in Flaxman's designs to the *Iliad*, (London, 1805), plate 5.

[24] Alexander Pope's translation.

[25] Spence, p. 52.

[26] *Ibid.*

[27] In the commentary to Pausanias, III, 193.

[28] Hayley, p. 53.

[29] Flaxman's *Iliad*, plate 9, and *Odyssey*, plate 1, are two examples, the styles of which contrast with the halo in Rees.

[30] *Cyclopaedia*, "Sculpture," not paginated.

[31] With the Greek quotation translated, the text in Tatham's hand reads: "The Glory round the Head of this superb Jove is composed of figures. That noble God-like head puts us in mind of these sublime lines from Homer. 'Cronion spake and nodded assent with dark brows, and then the ambrosial locks flowed streaming from the lord's immortal head, and he caused great Olympus to quake' [*Iliad* I.528]. This exquisite Drawing is by William Blake-made & afterwards Engraved for the Encyclopaedia for which Flaxman wrote the article on Sculpture. Frederick Tatham." In Martin Butlin, *The Paintings and Drawings of William Blake* (New Haven and London: Yale Univ. Press, 1981), this drawing is 678A recto, pl. 896A; the verso is reproduced as pl. 897.

BLAKE'S SWANS

ROBERT F. GLECKNER

The swan is as rare a bird in Blake's works as he said London print shops were in his youth[1]--though their appearances, in text and design, span almost his entire working career from *There Is No Natural Religion* through *Jerusalem*. Critical interpretations of them have been sparse and, even if one cannot expect consensus, they are unusually varied: the Female Will, chariot of inspiration, a pen, the river Severn, arsenic, the soul, desire, the body (or Generation), Blake himself as poet-painter.[2] By far the most elaborate of these interpretations is Erdman's commentary in *The Illuminated Blake* on plate 11 of *Jerusalem*, which is the only one to really try to come to grips with that puzzling design by seeing it as a sublime allegory of Blake's marriage of copper-plate etching (of text and design) and the printing and coloring of that design on paper. Since the *Jerusalem* plate is especially complex, let me leave it aside for a moment to deal with some "simpler" swans.

According to the Blake concordance there are only two swans in his writings, neither apparently remarkable enough to elicit any comment except from Kathleen Raine who, in glossing the "bright swan" of *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* (plate 3), identifies the whole scene as Plotinian, the swan as "Plato's emblem of the soul," here dipping "its wing in the 'red earth' of the natural body, which is the ever-flowing river of generated life."[3] Although it is certainly possible that Blake was aware of this Neoplatonic interpretation of the *Phaedo*, Raine's gloss on the *Visions* passage (3:18-19; E 46) commits precisely the same error that so frustrates Oothoon in Theotormon's reaction to her rape and "defilement" by Bromion. Her invoking of the swan here is not to corroborate such simplistic body-soul dichotomizing but to counteract it. The swan is but one of three parallel images, the others being fruit and lamb. As the worm feeds on the sweetest fruit, she argues, so is the "new wash'd lamb ting'd with the village smoke" and "the bright swan / By the red earth" of the river of life (that is, by the red clay of Esau-Edom in Genesis 25:25-30). But unlike these, she says, "How can I be defild when I reflect thy image pure?" Adopting Theotormon's mistaken orientation, she turns it against itself: unlike the swan "I bathe *my* wings. / And I am white and pure"--Blake's grammatical construction here denying a cause and effect relationship. She *is* sullied to Theotormon's morally jaundiced eye but to hers, bathing in "our immortal river" leaves no residue of "generation's" slow stain. The seed of Oothoon's conception, perhaps even the seed of Blake's entire conception in the *Visions*, is in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*: "As the catterpiller chooses the fairest leaves to lay her eggs on, so the priest lays his curse on the fairest joys"; but "The soul of sweet delight, can never be defil'd"--by village smoke, red earth, or hypocritical moral and religious judgement.[4]

Oothoon's swan, then, is not the Platonic soul but rather an image of her eternal imaginative individuality, her fundamental and divine ("pure") humanness in its "eternal joy" (8:8). In Raine's footnote to her Plotinian interpretation, however, she superimposes upon it an allusion to Plato that does lead us in a direction pertinent to virtually all of Blake's swan images, even as it leads us further and further away from *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*: "The soul of Orpheus," she reminds us, "enters the body of a swan, in the myth in the tenth book of the *Republic* (620A); but this is usually understood in a symbolic sense, the swan being the emblem of the poet."[5] While the Orpheus-swan connection in the *Republic* is clear, there is

no evidence so far as I know that that connection evolved into an iconographical (or even mythological) tradition. Nevertheless, the fact that Orpheus was an especial favorite of Apollo's (some said even his son) validates the swan association in that the bird was sacred to him. As Robert J. Clements points out, the most popular symbol of the poet in the Renaissance was the swan, its consistent linkage to Apollo according it prophetic powers.[6] Blake's intimate knowledge of Renaissance emblem literature is now generally accepted,[7] and Cesare Ripa (*Iconologia*, 1593), Geoffrey Whitney (*Choice of Emblemes*, 1586), and Alciati (*Emblemata*, 1551; it went through over 150 editions before 1621 and Clements calls it "the bible of emblem books" [p. 785])--as well as any number of their imitators--all identify the swan with Apollo, the poet, poesy, prophecy.

The only other instance of a swan in Blake's writings seems to argue further for his awareness of this tradition, even if not for a specific textual or emblem source. In *The Four Zoas* Urizen, fallen and "shut up in the deep dens of Urthona," spills out his "Woes" in a lament for the lost Eden:

> My fountains once the haunt of Swans now breed
> the scaly tortoise
> The houses of my harpers are become a haunt of
> crows
> The gardens of wisdom are become a field of
> horrid graves
> And on the bones I drop my tears & water them
> in vain (Night V, E 336)

The fact that Urizen is associated in the remainder of this Night with Apollo and the chariot of the sun solidifies the allusion, Blake of course transforming both the Apollo and Orpheus myths (which he knew probably from Ovid) into the fall of all Art. Though the fallen prophet's tongue (or the voice of wisdom) remains eloquent,

> in vain the voice
> Of Urizen in vain the Eloquent tongue. A Rock
> a Cloud a Mountain
> Were now not Vocal as in Climes of happy
> Eternity
> Where the lamb replies to the infant voice &
> the lion to the man of years
> Giving them sweet instructions Where the Cloud
> the River & the Field
> Talk with the husbandman & shepherd. . . .
> (*Four Zoas*, Night VI, E 341)

More impressive evidence of Blake's knowledge of the swan of emblem literature, however, is in the most regal of all his graphic swans, that adorning the titlepage of his illustrations to Gray's poems. The caption is "The Pindarick Genius recieving his Lyre," the latter descending from the sky to the youthful poet who is riding the swan with so loose a rein that he virtually gives it its head. Blake, of course, may be merely echoing here Pindar's common characterization as the "Theban Swan,"[8] for he has indicated elsewhere that he was reasonably familiar, if not with Pindar's poetry directly, with his reputation and the legends and stories about him.

In *An Island in the Moon*, for example, Suction asks at one point "if Pindar was not a better Poet than Ghiotto was a Painter" (E 444), but the question is never answered in the ensuing squabble over whether Plutarch, who quotes Pindar but says little about him, was prejudiced against Italians. There is little evidence in the context that Blake knew much more about Plutarch than that he wrote "lives" --though it's interesting at least to recall, in connection with the poet-prophet idea, the comic discussion in Chapter 3 of *An Island* of "Phebus," who was, among other things according to Obtuse Angle, the "God of . . . Painting, Perspective . . . Phraseology . . . Mythology . . . in short every art & science adorn'd him as beads round his neck." He also "understood Engraving"--though in the course of the insane conversation he ultimately is confused with Pharoah.[9] Blake's only other mention of Pindar by name is in an inscription on one of his pencil drawings: "Corinna the Rival of Pindar Corinna the Graecian Poetess."[10] The allusion here is to the story that Pindar in his youth was defeated in a poetical contest by Corinna, who then advised him to use more mythology in his poems; when he did so she ungraciously criticized his using it too profusely. The suggestiveness of this Pindar-lyre-swan-genius association (occurring as it does about 1797 when Flaxman commissioned the Gray series for a gift to his wife)[11] is strengthened by the earlier appearance in *America* of a comparable swan (plate 11), like the Gray swan being ridden with gentle--though not quite so gentle--rein. Erdman describes this one as hastening "from Albion's fires . . . to safer homes inland" (*IB*, 149), though such action seems hardly to demonstrate prophetic power or fortitude. (If indeed the swan-rider is fleeing "the British bombardment of coastal towns" as Erdman claims, we might wonder why he heads East instead of West, as the fleeing family in plate 3 does.) Yet Erdman does identify the rider as an Orc-Los "image," as Samuel Adams (that is, "Boston's Angel" who speaks the prophetic words of plate 11), Tom Paine, and "the poet himself in disguise . . . like Horace." While his additional idea of this being a "pen swan" may not be as far-fetched as it sounds on the surface, Erdman's Horatian reference is most unfortunate. Horace did prophesy his poetic immortality in the context of feeling himself turning into a swan (surely echoing Socrates), but it is hard to imagine any poet who would serve less well as a prophetic model, or indeed any kind of poetic model, for Blake. The fact is, of course, that Horace is alluding to the very tradition Blake himself is making use of. Erdman is right: the rider is the poet, prophet, Blake--riding Eastward toward the advancing "dragon form" of "Albion's wrathful Prince" (*America* 3:14-15).

As attractive as all this may be, one may still wonder about the swan's being bridled, however gently.[12] If indeed its rider here is Orc-like, as his origins in the fiery figure of plate 10 suggest, what we have in the total icon is poesy or prophecy being pressed by its rider into the violent action of bloody battle and the final loosing of plagues, "fierce disease and lust" (16:21) on England, a holocaust totally out of keeping with Apollo, Orpheus, the "Pindarick Genius," poetry, and prophecy as Blake understood them. It is instead

prophecy perverted to war-song, one of the things he saw happening in Gray as well. Is this why the rider looks back, doubletaking his own violent image as well as the lost Eden of Atlantis on the previous plate? And is this why, as it seems to me, the swan strains at the rein? The contrasting view is seen in the serpent figure at the bottom of the page, which Erdman properly sees as smilingly attentive to its riders, so limply reined as to be free (note the limp arm of the rein-holder as distinct from the sharply tensed wrist of the swan-rider),[13] its tail spiralling off into infinity-eternity, its riders "in long drawn arches sitting" feeling "the nerves of youth renew" (15:24-25). These riders, we should note, reverse (and hence annihilate) time through the true prophecy of the serpent, Blake moving us from the youthful rein-holder back to child back to infant back to the prophetic coils of the snake's tail, repeating almost exactly the curlicue soaring upward from the "P" of "Prophecy" on plate 3,[14] growing "vitally upward in endless communication that expands into words and poetry" (*IB*, 143). Erdman himself seems to sense something of the falseness of the Orc-prophecy and the dawning of Los-like vision in his commentary on the "Preludium": "The poem beginning on Plate 3 presents a potentially cyclic revolution of rise and fall, rebellion and enslavement, threatening a perpetual dull round";[15] and also in his interpretation of the "Finis" design at the foot of plate 16, corroborating my reading of the serpent-swan opposition on plate 11: "Coiling among thorny but blossoming red roses, his head another rosebud, he directs his tongue in the proper prophetic position . . . ."[16]

The Illuminated Blake indexes a number of other etched swans in the early works--up through *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (though I find none in "The Ecchoing Green" or on plate 8 of *The Marriage* as indexed), none of them incontrovertible except those in *There Is No Natural Religion* and "The Little Boy lost." While it is possible that in the former (plate 8a) the boy approaches the swan because it "might be ridden" (*IB*, 29), the text suggests it as the visible expression of the increasingly unlimited desires of the reaching child. If "More! More! is the cry of a mistaken soul" and "less than All cannot satisfy man" (*No Natural Religion*, 7b), the child as he stands is no better off than the reachers of *No Natural Religion*, 7b; but as the numerically comparable plate 7a vividly suggests, that "All" is the imagination that produces "the spiritual music rising from the pipe of the musician" (*IB*, 29). In plate 8a, then, the swan *will* rise and fly freely (not, I think, reined) as the Renaissance's Poesia or Blakean prophecy in precisely the same way as the mind-forged-manacled man of *No Natural Religion* 8b rises from the morass in plate 9b. It is quite possible, of course, that such a "retrospective" reading of this earliest of all Blake's swans, from the perspective of *America* and the Gray illustrations, is an over-reading, but the nature of the prophetic tracts, along with the earlier allusions to "Phebus" and Pindar in *An Island in the Moon* at least allow the possibility. In this light Erdman must be correct about "The Little Boy lost" plate in saying that the swan there, also floating behind (or in) the "y" of "Boy" in the title, is a "fitter object for boy with outstretched arms [precisely, one might add, in the same striding position as the *No Natural Religion* boy--though he moves *toward* the swan and is, importantly, unclad] to pursue . . . " (*IB*, 54). And "The Little Boy lost" is, of course, also a poem about erroneous perception. In both cases, then, it seems proper to identify the swans, not with desire itself, but rather with the prophetic, visionary, imaginative perception and art that is the product of desire, and the child as the incipient poet who will not ride the swan but, like Orpheus or Pindar, become it.[17]

I pass over *Jerusalem* 71 here as a clear anti-swan image, bat-winged and not only firmly planted (apparently on the ground) but even grovelling ridiculously and "fatuously kissing or nibbling at the toes" of the Leda-like Vala (*IB*, 350). If she puts on his knowledge with his power (both of which seem calculatedly absent in Blake's satiric portrait of the spectrous swan), both will eventuate in the maze of error, prophecy become labyrinthine mystery, emanating from the Vala-like figure's head. But we cannot pass over the most troublesome of all Blake's swans, the one in *Jerusalem* 11.

Most recently David Bindman, obviously unhappy with the Erdman reading I shall turn to in a moment, advanced two other interpretations of plate 11 (Ovid's King Cygnus legend and the swan as the River Severn), only to argue persuasively against both.[18] I am less sceptical about Erdman's elaborate allegory of the swan as both singing and etching the plate with its beak, complemented by the swimming-flying figure at the bottom of the plate producing "infinite illumination": "Like the serpent of Hell [in plate 15 of *The Marriage*], the serpent-necked swan projects lineation. Like the eagle, the feather-finned skimmer adorns the surface with living colors (needing the spectral fins while the colors are wet, the feathers for rising from illustration to Illumination)."[19] Given the text of the plate, there seems to me little doubt that Erdman is on the right track, however much one may balk at his wrapping up all of the plate's minute particulars so tidily. Even so, I still have some problems with his reading. While the design, as he notes, is one of only ten white-line etchings in *Jerusalem*, the text is in Blake's usual relief etching, the contrary processes married. It doesn't really matter, then, which process the swan is engaged in. What is to the point are its bubbles (acid), eating into the plate, and swimming-flying through it, corroding apparent surfaces away to reveal the infinite that was hid. Part of the "infinite" is the text itself, which we note is under water, that is, within the plate on which the swan-prophet-graver sits. The rest of the infinite is the text humanized, still streaming the acidic bubbles on wrists, neck, and hair (or head-dress).[20] At the same time, although Blake repeats in this lower design the lines of the water above to remind us that the swimmer is within the plate, not merely "on" it, the figure is also clearly flying, arms outstretched in a familiar Blakean gesture of airy freedom. In a sense, then, this is the swan, now fully humanized and in full flight, no longer merely floating (or planted) in the materials of the artifice but assuming total mythographic status as poet-prophet-artist as well

as poem-prophecy-art. The entire plate is thus the Erin of the text, not merely the swimmer-flyer as Erdman suggests: "And the Spaces of Erin reach'd from the starry heighth, to the starry depth," the spaces that are the enabling agency for the process that will eventuate in the immediately following plates (12ff). It is, to borrow Angus Fletcher's terms, the prophetic moment, space and time (Los's "pulsations of time, & extensions of space" during and in which he performs his "sublime Labours"--*J*, 11:2 and 10:65). That the moment does not last the text tells us, as well as the parody of this visionary creative activity that is imaged in the margin of plate 12--for "Around Golgonooza lies the land of death eternal; a Land / Of pain and misery and despair and ever brooding melancholy" (13:30-31). But the moment's augury is too powerful to be denied: the embrace of plate 99 will come.

Even if we accept the view of plate 11 that I have advanced, or some compromise between it and Erdman's, the sexes of both swan and swimmer-flyer, as well as the Indian appearance of the latter still nag (on the Indian see my note 20). The safest answer is the one Erdman gives: "In their present appearance both figures are androgynous, possibly nearer Eternity than Beulah, possibly nearer Ulro" (*IB*, 291). Possibly. Damon sees both as female, the swan "the Female Will," the lower figure "Inspiration (an Emanation)," and Yeats suggests "Leda-Swan" for the one, "Vala, or America, as Oothoon, taking 'her impetuous course' o'er Theotormon's reign" for the other.[21] If indeed *Jerusalem* 71 recalls the Zeus-Leda myth, as it certainly seems to, can we arbitrarily ignore that myth on plate 11 and invoke Horace and King Cygnus instead? I think not. I have already indicated that Horace is a most unlikely and inapropos allusion, and none of the three Cygnus stories told by Ovid has the remotest connection with anything on this plate--not to mention, as Bindman reminds us, that Cygnus was "indubitably male."[22] If a simple spectre-emanation contrariety were all that Blake wanted, he surely would have made that clearer. What, then, does the Ledean swan have to do with the Orphic swan?

Let us go back to Cygnus for a moment. There is an interesting connection between the Leda-Swan story and Cygnus in that both have reference to the Trojan War. In Book XII of the *Metamorphoses* Achilles, in the height of the battle for Troy, seeks out Cygnus, who unknown to Achilles, has been made invulnerable to spear and sword by his father Neptune. Achilles finally corners him, however, pressing him against a rock, then throws him down and, kneeling on his ribs, strangles Cygnus with the thongs of his own helmet. It is at that moment that Neptune transforms Cygnus into a swan. As I indicated earlier, it seems ridiculous to associate *Jerusalem* 11 with this bloody story, but the collocation of Leda (who, we should recall, became Nemesis after her rape), Zeus-swan, the Trojan War, Achilles, and Cygnus-swan is difficult to ignore entirely. However circuitous a route this is into Blake's conception on plate 11 of *Jerusalem*, that plate does immediately precede the building of Golgonooza (as opposed to the destruction of Troy), the "realizing" of true prophecy as opposed to the bloody realization of "all human history flowing from" the false prophecy inherent in Leda's rape.[23] Although the union of Zeus and Leda would seem to be especially apropos in light of Blake's woman-swan, then, its applicability, if any, must lie in his transformation of Bromion-like tyranny and its consequent vengeful destructiveness into the productive union of divine and human as the artist-builder. Blake was not unacquainted with Homer, as we know. His antipathy to the "Classics . . . that Desolate Europe with Wars" erupts angrily in the 1820 etching "On Homer's Poetry & On Virgil":

> Sacred Truth has pronounced that Greece & Rome as Babylon & Egypt: so far from being parents of Arts & Sciences as they pretend: were destroyers of all Art. Homer Virgil & Ovid confirm this opinion. . . .
> Rome & Greece swept Art into their maw & destroyd it. . . . Grecian is Mathematic Form Gothic is Living Form. . . .[24]

Such living form is what the swan of *Jerusalem* 11 creates, the product of a "redeemed" Leda-Swan / Los-Enitharmon being not war but the corrosive spirit that burns away the apparent surfaces of history to reveal the infinite "Nature of Eternal Things . . . All Springing from the Divine Humanity" (*A Vision of the Last Judgment*, E 551); for

> All things acted on Earth are seen in the bright Sculptures of
> Los's Halls & every Age renews its powers from these Works
> With every pathetic story possible to happen from Hate or
> Wayward Love & every sorrow & distress is carved here
> Every Affinity of Parents Marriages & Friendships are here
> In all their various combinations wrought with wondrous Art
> All that can happen to Man in his pilgrimage of seventy years
> Such is the Divine Written Law of Horeb & Sinai:
> And such the Holy Gospel of Mount Olivet & Calvary (*Jerusalem* 16:61-69)

With no mention of Leda anywhere in Blake's works, however, we may still rest discontented with this sort of Blakean transformation of the "classics" and the "detestable Gods of Priam" (*Milton* 14:15)--though it is worth recalling here that in such influential emblem books as Ripa's *Iconologia* and Christophorus Giarda's *Icones symbolicae*, Poesy (or Poesia) is almost always a female figure, holding a lyre in one hand and a plectrum in the other, with a white swan attendant.[25]

One final suggestion about Blake's swans, one that may have some bearing, particularly, on *Jerusalem* 11: Spenser's *Ruines of Time*--which I have already suggested Blake knew well[26] and which includes allusions to "fair Ledaes warlick twinnes" (l.386), Orpheus and Eurydice (ll.391-92), and the immortality of art, which laments the ruin of "Verlame," and which is an elegy on the death of Sidney--concludes with six verbal emblems, the first two of which may have some relationship to *Jerusalem* 11. The first of these is Sidney as a swan floating

down the Thames and sweetly singing "the prophecie / Of his owne death in dolefull Elegie," after which

> With loftie flight aboue the earth he bounded,
> And out of sight to highest heauen mounted:
> Where now he is become an heauenly signe.
> (11.599-602)

Similarly constellated is the Orphean harp of the second emblem:

> Whilest thus I looked, loe adowne the *Lee*,
> I sawe an Harpe stroong all with silver twyne,
> And made of golde and costlie yuorie,
> Swimming, that whilome seemed to haue been
> The harpe, on which *Dan Orpheus* was seene
> Wylde beasts and forrests after him to lead,
> But was th'Harpe of *Philisides* now dead.
>
> At length out of the Riuer it was reard
> And borne aboue the cloudes to be
> diuin'd. . . . [27]

Even if the swan here is indubitably as male as Cygnus (was Blake conflating the indubitably female swans of the *Prothalamion* with this one?), the context of *The Ruines of Time* is marvellously apt--for, as we know, "The Ruins of Time builds Mansions in Eternity" (E 678), precisely what swan-flyer-swimmer, Los-Enitharmon, Sidney-swan, Orpheus-harp, and Blake all demonstrate in their own respective ways. In his youth Blake, imitating Spenser, called upon these detestable gods of Priam--Apollo, Mercury, Jove, and Pallas Athena--but it did not take him long to recognize that pantheon's dead-endedness and to take flight, in his own transmutation of part of that pantheon, as a swan.

[1] *The Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, ed. David V. Erdman (Garden City: Doubleday, 1965), p. 679, hereafter cited in text and notes as E plus the page number.

[2] Successively S. Foster Damon, *William Blake: His Philosophy and Symbols* (New York: Peter Smith, 1947; orig. ed. 1924), p. 469; David Bindman, *Blake as an Artist* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1977), p. 182; Erdman, *The Illuminated Blake* (Garden City: Anchor/Doubleday, 1974), p. 149, hereafter cited in text and notes as *IB* plus the page number; Bindman, loc. cit.; W. H. Stevenson, ed., *The Poems of William Blake* (London and New York: Longman/W. W. Norton, 1972), p. 646n.; Kathleen Raine, *Blake and Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), I, 177; Erdman, *IB*, 54; Joseph Wicksteed, *William Blake's Jerusalem* (Trianon Press, n.d.), p. 217; Erdman, *IB*, 54, 290. There are others as well. Interestingly Damon does not index the swan in *A Blake Dictionary* (Providence: Brown University Press, 1965).

[3] *Blake and Tradition*, I, 177. In the *Phaedo* Socrates, talking to Simmias of immortality, mentions swans as sacred to Apollo and as having the gift of prophecy, but he does not specifically identify the swan with the soul.

[4] Orc reiterates Blake's point, even more powerfully, in *America*, plate 8:

> That stony law I stamp to dust: and scatter religion abroad
> To the four winds as a torn book, & none shall gather the leaves;
> But they shall rot on desart sands, & consume in bottomless deeps;
> To make the desarts blossom, & the deeps shrink to their fountains,
> And to renew the fiery joy, and burst the stony roof.
> That pale religious letchery, seeking Virginity,
> May find it in a harlot, and in coarse-clad honesty
> The undefil'd tho' ravish'd in her cradle night and morn:
> For every thing that lives is holy, life delights in life;
> Because the soul of sweet delight can never be defil'd.
> (5-14)

[5] *Blake and Tradition*, I, 410-11. While, as almost all critics note, Plato is clearly the source of Shelley's "Enchanted Boat" lyric, with its swan, in *Prometheus Unbound*, the application of his imagery to Blake is justifiable only if one is indifferent to Blake's unalterable opposition to the ideas that inform Plato's conception. Besides, Raine ignores Plato's explanation of Orpheus's metamorphosis: his soul "chose" the swan because of hatred for womankind (since women had killed and dismembered him) and because therefore he did not wish to be conceived and born of woman. Cf. Wither's emblem of Ganymede astride Jupiter's eagle as the soul mounting to heaven (*A Collection of Emblems 1635*, ed. John Horden [Yorkshire: Scolar Press, 1968], p. 156). Piloo Nanavutty in "Blake and Emblem Literature," *Journal of the Warburg & Courtauld Institutes*, 15 (1952), p. 260, identifies *America 11* with this myth.

[6] "Iconography on the Nature and Inspiration of Poetry in Renaissance Emblem Literature," *PMLA*, 70 (1955), 784. Clements notes that Cicero, in the *Tusculanae Disputationes*, says that swans were gifted with powers of divination. The information in the rest of this paragraph is from Clements. See also J. Rendel Harris, "Apollo's Swans," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 9 (1925), 372-416.

[7] See, e.g., Nanavutty's essay cited above, pp. 258-61; Mary Lynn Johnson, "Emblem and Symbol in Blake," *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 37 (1974), 151-70; and Judith Wardle, "'For Hatching ripe': Blake and the Educational Uses of Emblem and Illustrated Literature," *Bulletin of Research in the Humanities*, 81 (1978), 324-48, esp. her "Appendix."

[8] Gray himself, however, whose steady praise of Pindar and his own writing of "Pindarics" Blake obviously knew well, describes Pindar as the "Theban Eagle . . . / Sailing with supreme dominion / Thro' the azure deep of air" ("The Progress of Poesy," l. 115--subtitled "Pindaric" with an epigraph from Pindar). Gray's note to the passage simply says that "Pindar compares himself to that bird." The swan epithet belongs to the family of Mantuan Swan and Swan of Avon, though it was Cowley who attached the swan to Pindar (noted by Roger Lonsdale, *The Poems of Thomas Gray, William Collins, Oliver Goldsmith* [London: Longman, 1969], p. 176). That attachment is echoed by Denham in his "On Mr. Abraham Cowley." Irene Tayler, in *Blake's Illustrations to the Poems of Gray* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), identifies the swan of Blake's titlepage to Gray as "Apollo's bird" (p. 22).

[9] E 442-43. Earlier Blake invokes Apollo with his "rays of light" and "truth's beams" in his *Poetical Sketches* poem, "An Imitation of Spencer."

[10] See *Pencil Drawings of William Blake*, ed. Geoffrey Keynes (London, 1927), p. 45. The Corinna episode was among the most commonly retailed of Pindar anecdotes.

[11] Mary K. Woodworth, *Notes & Queries*, 215 (n.s. 17) (1970), 312-13.

[12] In commenting on Blake's water-color drawing of "Fiery Pegasus," however, Robert Essick says that this "emblem of inspiration . . . must be organized by a more restrained vision. The reins will become the bound and outward circumference of creative energy without destroying it" ("*Preludium*: Meditations on a Fiery Pegasus," in *Blake in His Time*, ed. Essick and Donald Pearce [Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1978], pp. 9-10). I'm not so sure of that. Prince Hal's vaulting into the saddle, "turning and winding" Pegasus, and "witch[ing] the world with noble horsemanship"--the passage from *Henry IV, Part I* that Blake is illustrating--seems hardly an appropriate paradigm of the prophetic poet; more like Pope's *Essay on Criticism*. Is this why Blake does not have the flying poet-prophet (?) bridle Pegasus at all but has him fly with (or as) Pegasus?

[13] One might compare this limp rein with the even limper one of the strange phallus-cloud-borne figure atop plate 1 of *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* (*IB*, 129), where the rein is attached, appropriately, to the "V" of "Visions," the other vertical of the "V" terminating in a serpentine prophetic trumpet.

[14] In the cancelled variant of this plate (*IB*, 392) that curlicue is absent.

[15] *IB*, 139. The bridled swan, like Essick's potentially (or necessarily) bridled Pegasus, has its counterpart in the Gray titlepage, which may, then, be a satiric rather than complimentary portrait. In fact, the poet of the title-page may be seen as an idealized portrait of Blake himself (the Gray of plate 2 is at least reminiscent of Gray's profile, and in any case is most unlike the face of the "Genius"). Tayler, in *Blake's Illustrations to . . . Gray*, takes no note of the differences but does certify plate 2 as "strikingly similar to Gray's as it had appeared in the Basire engraving done while Blake was Basire's apprentice, and also to Blake's later pencil sketch, 'The poet, Gray'" (p. 22). My suggestion is lent credence by the final plate of the series, "Gray himself, guided by his visionary illustrator," as Tayler puts it (p. 146). Here Gray and Blake look alike.

[16] *IB*, 155. In Ovid as elsewhere Venus's chariot is drawn by winged swans (*Metamorphoses*, X), making an association of serpent, rose, and swan in Blake at least tantalizing. In Edward A. Armstrong's *The Folklore of Birds* (New York: Dover, 1970; orig. ed. 1958), there is an engraving (after an unidentified Roman work) of Apollo in a swan-drawn chariot (p. 51) and one of a vase or wine-jar design of Adonis and Aphrodite riding in a chariot drawn by two swans (p. 45). For other less-than-sanguine readings of *America* see Robert E. Simmons, "*Urizen*: The Symmetry of Fear"; Michael J. Tolley, "*Europe*: 'to those ychain'd in sleep'"; and Erdman's longer version of his *IB* commentary, "*America*: New Expanses"--all in *Blake's Visionary Forms Dramatic*, ed. Erdman and John E. Grant (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970). The latest "pessimistic" reading of *America* is Minna Doskow's "William Blake's *America*: The Story of a Revolution Betrayed," *Blake Studies*, 8 (1979), 167-186.

[17] In *IB* Erdman indexes a number of other possible swans in the *Songs*, *The Marriage*, and *Milton*, some of these, at least, suggesting a confusion in his mind (or eye) between his bird of paradise (the imagination, often accompanying the birds of the five senses) and swans. Perhaps Blake's lack of discrimination, or etched definition, here is intentional? In any case, it is probably safe to say that flying swans are "better" than floating ones.

[18] Bindman, *Blake as an Artist*, p. 182. Erdman mentions Cygnus also, gingerly; see *IB*, 290. Yeats predictably invokes "Leda-Swan" (*The Works of William Blake*, ed. Yeats and E. J. Ellis [London: Quaritch, 1893], II, 357).

[19] *IB*, 291. Erdman's yoking of swan and eagle, albeit qualified by his reference to the serpent, interestingly parallels Gray's "confusion" of Pindar as swan and eagle (see my note 8).

[20] It would be nice, if perhaps foolish (though his detailed recall of his own past work is astonishing), to think that Blake here remembered a part of the "Phebus" passage in *An Island in the Moon*: " . . . in short every art & science adorn'd him [Apollo] as beads around his neck" (E 442). Is it possible that Blake knew any of the myths of swan-maidens, which appear all over Europe and in Ireland (not, so far as I know, in England), and which involve, among other characteristics in common, a magical necklace as not merely a talisman of swan-womanhood but the agency of the transformation? See Anna Louise Frey, *The Swan-Knight Legend*, in *Contributions to Education Published under the Direction of George Peabody College for Teachers*, No. 103 (Nashville, 1931). Ripa has an interesting Indian with headdress and beads in his "America" emblem (*Baroque and Rococo Pictorial Imagery*, ed. Edward A. Maser [New York: Dover, 1971], No. 105). In any case, Aradobo and Obtuse Angle ignorantly confuse Phebus and Pharaoh, and if Mrs. Sigtagatist chides them all for "making use of the names in the Bible" (E 443), Blake did not hesitate to put the classical sun-god in the Bible and, in the true Christian tradition, Christianize him into Jesus Christ, the imagination, the archetypal Artist.

[21] *William Blake: His Philosophy and Symbols*, p. 469; Ellis and Yeats, II, 357. In his admirable *Blake's Composite Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), W. J. T. Mitchell argues a similar opposition between the two figures, the "prophetic swan-woman versus the fashionable goldfish-woman" (p. 200), part of a pattern he sees throughout *Jerusalem* of contrasting female images, one "the naked, sexually liberated guide . . . who leads humanity to the realm of imagination and forgiveness . . . and the heavily clothed Vala-sibyl who keeps her subjects' minds . . . on mundane matters" (p. 199). Mitchell seems to have in mind Blake's goldfish in his designs to Gray, and it is certainly true that plate 4 of "Ode on the Death of a Favourite Cat" includes two figures reminiscent at least of the swimmer-flyer of *Jerusalem* 11. I see less thematic and iconic connection here, though, than in Gray's lines on the "Theban Eagle" Pindar in "The Progress of Poesy" where he "sails" with "supreme dominion / Thro' the azure deep of air." In any case, given the entire text and design, I cannot regard the two figures in *Jerusalem* 11 as opposed to each other.

[22] *Blake as an Artist*, p. 182.

[23] Raine, II, 306.

[24] E 267. Such sentiments are found in Blake as early as *King Edward the Third*; see especially its sixth scene (E 428-30). We should also recall his condemnation of Jupiter as "the enemy of conjugal love . . . an iron-hearted tyrant, the ruiner of ancient Greece," a "spectrous Fiend," and "the ruin of my labours" (letter to Hayley, 23 October 1804, E 702); also *The Laocoön* plate and the half-dozen references in his works to the "Gods of Priam."

[25] Clements, "Iconography . . .," p. 782. According to A. and B. Rees's *Celtic Heritage* (1961), "swan" was frequently used in both Irish and Greek literature as a metaphor for "girl" (noted in the very beautiful book, *The Swans*, ed. Peter Scott [Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1972], p. 155; see also the entire essay, "The Swan in Mythology and Art" by Mary Evans and Andrew Dawnay, included in this book).

[26] "Blake's 'I Saw a Chapel All of Gold,'" *Colby Library Quarterly*, 15 (1979), 37-47.

[27] Ll. 603-11. Ovid has the waters of Hebrus receive Orpheus' dismembered head and lyre and, as both floated down midstream, "The lyre uttered a plaintive melody and the lifeless tongue made a piteous murmur" (*The "Metamorphoses" of Ovid*, trans. Mary M. Innes [Baltimore: Penguin, 1955], Book XI, p. 247).

A BOOK TO EAT

DAVID V. ERDMAN

Mitchell's *Blake's Composite Art* is "open" both in its cordial, transformative embrace of earlier readings of Blake and in lighting the way to further interpretation. In the suitably named final chapter on "Living Form" Mitchell improves on previous readings, for example, of *Jerusalem* 76 and 78, refining the ironies of their complexity persuasively toward the positive pole.[1] In the Crucifixion picture (*J* 76), he asks, which sun is the natural sun, which the spiritual? "The answer is both, or neither, because the important sunrise in the picture is Albion himself, rising like Samson (whose name was translated as 'sun'), shaking off his spiritual darkness and blindness" (p. 211). Mitchell illustrates the point that Blake's meaning derives from "traditional renderings of the Crucifixion with St. John the Evangelist (the only disciple who witnessed the Crucifixion) at the foot of the cross" and whose gesture there is repeated in Blake's "Glad Day" posture--in *Albion rose* and in the standing Albion of *Jerusalem* 76.[2]

Following close after this, the melancholy, bird-headed figure in *Jerusalem* 78 must represent living genius more positively than ironists have supposed, Mitchell pleads. Here again, "the iconography of St. John" as eagle-headed prophet is shown in pictorial analogues that are to dispel our clouds of doubt, while the brooder's posture is said to be alluding to the symbolism of Dürer's *Melencolia I*. We may hesitate to agree that the emblem of Plate 78 constitutes "a rather direct transposition of the description of Los in the accompanying text" but are compelled to recognize that it gives this text important coloring: "Los laments at his dire labours, viewing Jerusalem, / Sitting before his Furnaces clothed in sackcloth of hair." In effect Albion as St. John and Los as St. John are becoming one. If the eagle-man is meant also to recall Hand with his "rav'ning" beak (as I suggested in *The Illuminated Blake*), then surely, urges Mitchell, "we are seeing him transformed here from predatory adversary to prophetic ally, using his eagle's head for vision, not violence." He cites the Hand of Man that "grasps firm" in *Jerusalem* 97 and reminds us that St. John is the patron saint of engravers, printers, makers of books--the wheels of Hand!

"It is clear that there is a great deal more to be said on the matter of the presence of St. John in Blake's verbal and visual art." Indeed there must be. And Mitchell proceeds to discover his presence in that complex and baffling image of the flaming giant in *Jerusalem* 62 (illus. 1). Some of the components were recently clarified by Irene H. Chayes in the *Bulletin*, details that place this anguished giant between a Polyphemus figure in Tibaldi and the figure of Giant Despair in Blake's Bunyan designs.[3] Mitchell suggests that the giant whose body is covered by the text "is" the "'mighty angel' whose feet are described as 'pillars of fire' in Revelation 10:1, and the tiny figure between his feet is St. John." Before the doubter can raise a hand--isn't Blake's giant being *consumed*, to free the text from his clutch?--Mitchell shows us Blake's own painting of *The Angel of the Revelation* (illus. 2), between whose flaming legs sits, not stands (but Blake in *Jerusalem* 62 has moved from writing table to furnace) a tiny St. John. One hand of the angel is "stretched downward, holding the little book that St. John will consume, the other 'lifted up . . . to heaven'; Rev. 10:5." In the *Jerusalem* context, of course, this tiny figure is Los. In the context of *The Four Zoas*, a similarly flaming pair of feet, on page 16 (illus. 3), are identifiably Christ's (or Luvah's), and the alarmed little figure observing them must be Vala, who exclaims: "I see

not Luvah as of old I only see his feet / Like pillars of fire travelling thro darkness & non entity."[4]

Mitchell might have called our attention to the little figure in *Jerusalem* 37 [41] who represents Blake as author, equipped like St. John with pen and scroll but busy writing at the feet of the sleeping giant Albion. This giant appears, at least, to be sleeping but may be secretly reading Blake's scroll as it crosses his belly.

But other things draw Mitchell's attention. One of these is the posture of the central figure in the second titlepage of Blake's Genesis manuscript.[5] Here Albion/Adam is wide awake and standing free, as/because he is receiving inspiration from his friend Jesus (above him on his right), not in book form but as a scroll that loops gracefully down from the left hand of Christ into the palm of the open right hand of Adam. Most auspicious is the living flow of text from Jesus' hand through the scroll to the hand of Adam and through his body to the letters of our Book, "GENESIS." In *The Angel of the Revelation* St. John's attention is not upon the open book in the angel's hand. He is busy writing about the seven horses and horsemen, or rather, noticing with grim face the textual intrusion of the Angel's body upon his penned account of the horsemen (Rev. 9). But it is time to return our attention to *Jerusalem* 62.

As Irene Chayes has noted, the imminence of a Last Judgment is suggested by the burning giant's triple headdress of serpent, sunrays, and eyed peacock feathers (with rainbow colors in the Mellon copy). "Seen in relation to the page of text he is at once displaying and trying to rise out of, the giant of *Jerusalem* 62 . . . may be the emblem of an ultimate inner enlightenment and transformation that will accompany the burning away of the physical body: a Last Judgment in Blake's sense, which supplements the 'Divine Vision among the flames of the Furnaces' (62:35) Los is beholding" (p. 124). But his eyes tell us how late it is. If Adam in the Genesis page looks forward with the world all before him, and the Angel of the Apocalypse looks upward for guidance, the anguished giant in *Jerusalem* 62 has almost stopped looking and has obviously begun crying out. "Slanting and oval in shape," notes Chayes, "with each iris diminished to a pinpoint, his already conventionalized eyes are multiplied and repeated as an abstract pattern on the feathers that surround his head, as though in a peacock's fan." Among all these analogues, his is the only open *mouth*. It is later than St. John

1 *Jerusalem* 62. Copy D. Reproduced by permission of the Houghton Library, Harvard University.

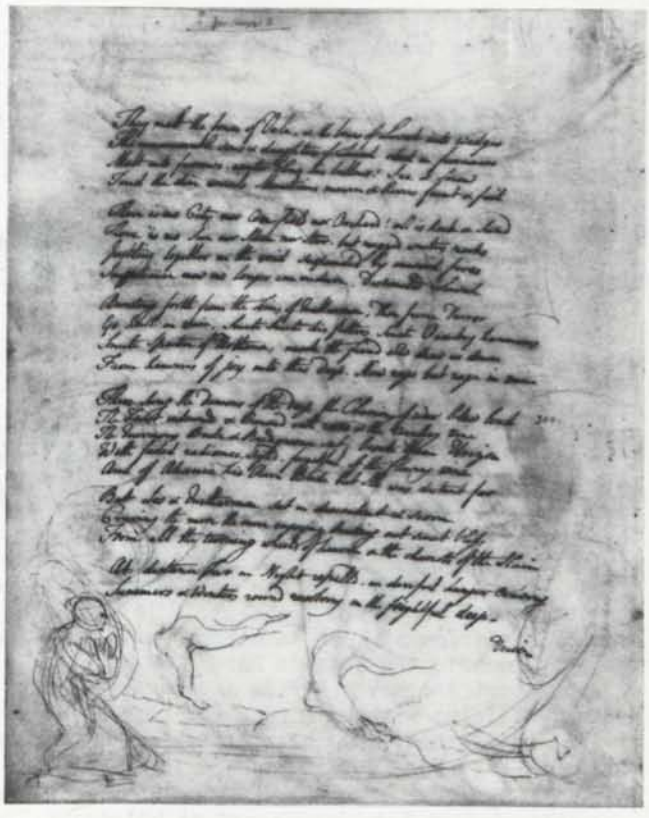
2 *Angel of the Revelation*. Watercolor with pen and ink. Reproduced by permission of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1914.

may think; we may say that the little book he must eat has already been digested by William Blake and is here held up by his Spectre for all to see. The tiny book of Revelation has been as it were magnified into the text of Blake's copper plate. While his Spectre grasps the edge of the rock with both hands, we read its opening words, a variant, we may suppose, of the text of the scroll flowing from Christ's hand to Adam's: "Repose on me till the morning of the Grave. I am thy life" (*J* 62:1).

As we grasp Mitchell's text in our turn, we appreciate his leaving it for us to ponder further the presence of St. John. Let us turn to *Jerusalem* 99 (illus. 4) for a culminating yet sublimely modest example, on Blake's part. Let us consider the tiny black book in the left hand of the aureoled elder, embracing his youthful friend (Jerusalem of course, but symbolically all the lost and divided persons in the book) yet keeping his book open with his index finger. (The book is quite visible in copies A and C and posthumously printed ones, but obscured in others.) In *The Illuminated Blake* I merely conjecture that "Tomorrow Urizen (Jehovah) will resume reading the Everlasting Gospel."

On Plate 99 of course we have reached "The End of The Song of Jerusalem." In Chapter 10 of Revelation there is a good deal more reading to be done. But a voice from heaven tells St. John to stop writing. Instead he is advised to "Go and take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel which standeth upon the sea and upon the earth." "And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book. And he said unto me, Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey." And St. John tasted and ate and found that this was true.[6] "And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings." In *Jerusalem* 62 if we see Adam/Albion in the giant, we see that he is not yet risen as the sun--his rising is shown and described on Plate 95--but that he is bearing the whole weight of the text, like the Titan Enceladus when flattened by Mount Etna (theatrically depicted in early illustrations of Ovid: see illus. 6).[7] Indeed, the text is bitter in his belly. Yet he is no longer drowsing while Blake writes, as in *Jerusalem* 37 [41] (illus. 7) where Blake is preparing a text for Albion to read in the mirror of annihilation. He is now awake, holding for us to read--we are his mirror--the dialogue of Jerusalem and Jesus "among the flames of the Furnaces." Dare we become what we read here, finding even the honey of "hope" amid the bitterness of "a hard journey" and "terrible pains" (*J* 62:27, 35-36, 42)? We can see from Plate 100 that the prophet's work is never done.

The modesty of Blake's handling of this emblem may impress us. But Harold Bloom, with whom I have just discussed the eating and digestion of the book, noted that Blake's lifelong immersion in the language of the Bible must have developed as a matter of second nature his prophetic recourse to the company of Isaiah and Ezekiel. Look up Ezekiel 2 and 3, he advised. "And when I looked, behold, a hand was sent unto me; and, lo, a roll of a book was therein . . . and it was written within and



without: and there was written therein lamentations, and mourning, and woe. Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, eat that thou findest; eat this roll, and go speak unto the house of Israel. So I opened my mouth, and he caused me to eat that roll. And he said unto me, Son of man, cause thy belly to eat, and fill thy bowels with this roll that I give thee. Then did I eat it; and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness." The Lord does not mention any embittering of the prophet's belly. But he expresses an irony which Blake, often bound to "sullen contemplations in the night," well understood. If I had "sent thee," the Lord tells Ezekiel, "to many people of a strange speech and of a hard language, whose words thou canst not understand . . . they would have hearkened unto thee." But his own nation, who could of course understand, "will not hearken unto thee; for they will not hearken unto me. . . . " Nevertheless the prophet is sent; he must speak to his fellow countrymen "whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear." The Lord hardened Ezekiel's "forehead against their foreheads." "So the spirit lifted me up . . . and I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit; but the hand of the Lord was strong upon me." Thus Blake in his youth wrote, with a "voice of honest indignation," a bible "which the world shall have whether they will or no" (*Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, 12, 24) and in times of stress was hardened to set "my forehead against their foreheads" (Letter of 6 July 1803).

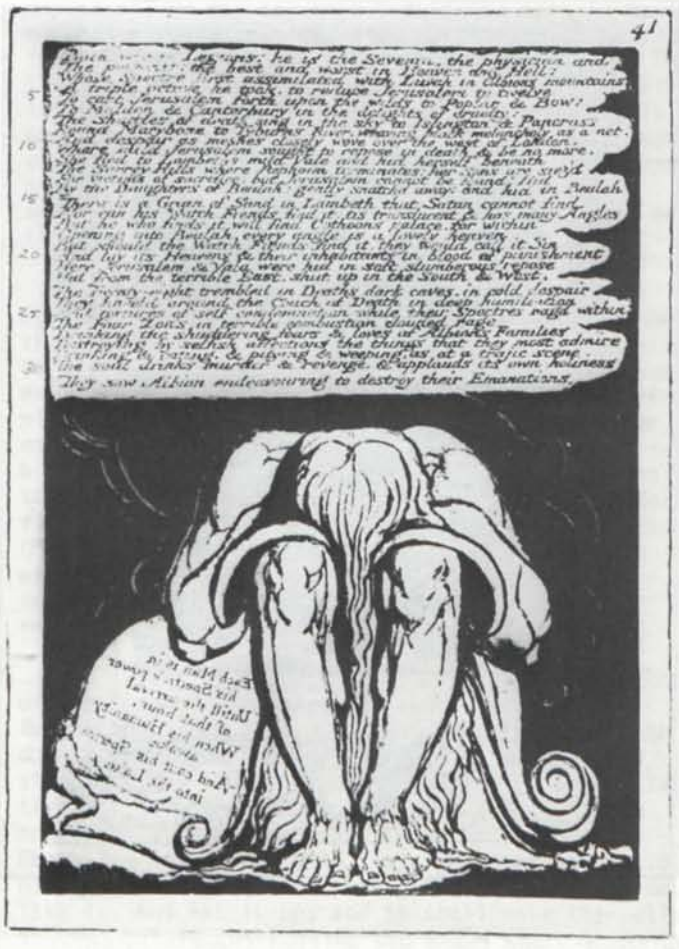
But how does a message have effect in a world which will not read? At this point a fellow scholar,

3 Page 16, *The Four Zoas*. Reproduced by permission of the British Library.

4 *Jerusalem* 99. Copy J. Charles J. Rosenbloom collection.

5 *Jerusalem* 99, detail. Copy J. Charles J. Rosenbloom Collection.

6 Bernard Picart's "Enceladus burried under Mount AEthna," page 3 in *The Temple of the Muses*, 1733.



7 *Jerusalem* 37 [41]. Reproduced by permission of the Houghton Library, Harvard University.

8 Dürer, *The Angel of the Apocalypse*. In the extra-illuminated *Kitto Bible*, vol. 60. Huntington Library.

Mark Heumann, brought me an offprint, which I have now eaten if not digested: "Towards a Valid Theory of Biblical Hebrew Literature," by Isaac Rabinowitz.[8] "The utterance of prophetic words . . . is for the purpose of getting them into the world so that they may act upon the world; as such they are conceived as transcending the limits of communication, and so do not necessarily require an audience" (p. 324). Rabinowitz translates Isaiah 55:10-11 thus, emphasizing this aspect of the meaning with shifts of tense:

> For as the rain or the snow comes down from the heavens,
> and returns not thither except it have watered the earth,
> and, having made it give birth,
> made it sprout growth,
> have provided seed for the sower,
> and bread for the consumer,
> so shall My word be,
> that which issues from My mouth:
> it shall not return to Me empty,
> but it shall have accomplished what I desire,
> and shall have prospered that as to which I sent it.

Blake approximated the same extra-communicative sentiment in some of his remarks to Crabb Robinson. Utterance was all: "the moment I have written I see the words fly about the room in all directions--It is then published and the Spirits can read. . . . I have been tempted to burn my MSS. . . ." Robinson objected that the Manuscripts were not Blake's property but the Spirits': "You cannot tell what purpose they may answer. . . . He liked this."

From another perspective, the text clasped by the giant hands in *Jerusalem* 62 can be seen as the stone lid of the tomb which is everyone's "till the morning of the Grave"; and the words are Christ's (whose "voice" is heard by Jerusalem on the preceding page) yet appear to accompany Albion's gesture ("Repose on me") even while he is looking offstage, with those multiplying eyes--toward the voice?

[1] W. J. T. Mitchell, *Blake's Composite Art: A Study of the Illuminated Poetry* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1978).

[2] Irene H. Chayes tells me that Blake could have encountered directly an earlier tradition from which these "renderings" were derived.

[3] "Blake and Tibaldi," *Bulletin of Research in the Humanities*, 81 (1979), 113-25, illus.

[4] This pertinent text, *FZ* 31:9-10, is cited by G. E. Bentley, Jr., ed., *William Blake's Writings* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), II, 1100n., and he too can see only the feet, "two feet walking toward the right." Evidently lacking a photograph that shows the lines of the body, Bentley supposes that the feet are "not related to the large sketch" on the page which "seems to have represented Christ." (Comparison with the drawing of Christ walking toward the right on *FZ* p. 116 will reveal the same head and arms positions and similar body lines. On p. 16 Blake first drew bowed, kneeling angels in the lower corners, then added the small gowned figure [of Vala] partly on top of the drawing of the angel at the left.)

[5] Mitchell, failing to recognize this figure as Adam (as the context requires), surmises that this is "one of the four figures of divine inspiration" and therefore "our 'mighty angel' of Revelation" (p. 212). Both figures have raised right hands, and near Adam's right foot is St. John as an eagle-beaked "zoa." But Adam's left hand is half raised, not lowered; his feet are not in flames; his eyes do not, as the angel's, look up to heaven for inspiration but forward.

The halo around Adam's head does make him a sort of angel, but it implies a more striking role change than that. Viewers of Blake's *The Fall of Man* are startled to recognize in the central figure of that picture, walking forward on the earth, not an angel leading Adam and Eve out of Paradise but Jesus himself, with flaming halo. Now, in the Genesis titlepage, Christ gives that role to Adam, the central, haloed figure standing atop the curve of the earth and flanked, further back stage, by Jesus and Jehovah in luminous clouds but without particular haloes. Adam's own naked body is incorporated into the design as a support for the letter "I"--figleaf turned into selfhood, we might think, but for the positive, flourishing spirit of the whole design.

Adam's "head is framed by a rose-pink circle forming a kind of halo behind which the red dawn of a new day is streaked across the sky. With his right hand he grasps the Pledge of the Redemption from Christ. The left arm is flexed at the elbow, but the hand is unfinished"; Piloo Nanavutty, "A Title Page in Blake's Illustrated Genesis Manuscript" (1947; rpt. pp. 127-46 in Robert N. Essick, ed., *The Visionary Hand* [Los Angeles: Hennessey & Ingals, 1973], illus.) The verb "grasps" is wrong for Adam's open, receptive hand; but the details and identifications in this article are generally sound.

[6] The face of Dürer's St. John expresses an awareness of the bitter taste even as he takes his first bite of the text. But Dürer's symbolism conflates the whole process of transmission; the book his St. John is writing is already filling with text. Joseph Anthony Wittreich, Jr., from whose *Visionary Poetics: Milton's Tradition and His Legacy* (Huntington Library, 1979) I borrow the Dürer picture (illus. 8), cites this as symbolizing the "prophetic moment" from which poetry issues with dramatic intensity (p. 55).

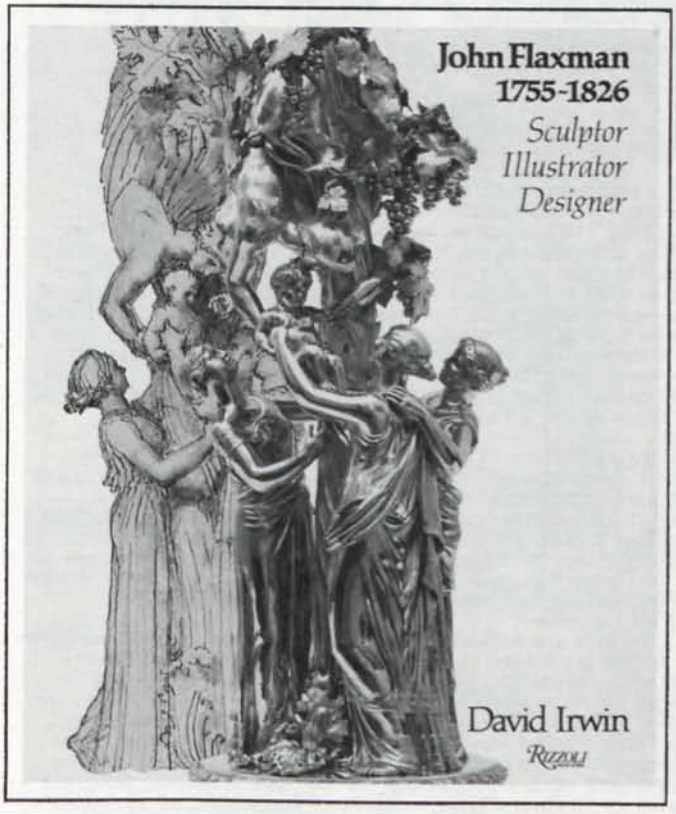
[7] A picture book available in Blake's day in various formats and full of likely influences is *The Temple of the Muses*; or, The principal histories of fabulous antiquity, represented in sixty sculptures; designed and ingraved by Bernard Picart le Romain, and other celebrated masters (Amsterdam: Z. Chatelain, 1733; derived from *Tableaux du Temple des Muses* [Paris, 1655]).

We cannot see the feet of the giant "Enceladus burried under Mount AEthna" (sic), but the rock looks like a text in his mouth (and gripping hands). Is the fire in the belly of the mountain in combat with the relayed Jovian thunderbolts? (Compare the ambiguities of fire in Blake's "Spiritual form of Nelson.")

In this same collection, the Picart "Andromeda" seems to me more like an American Indian and closer to Blake's Oothoon than is the derivative version by Bartolozzi reproduced by John Beer in his "Influence and Independence in Blake," in *Interpreting Blake*, ed. Michael Phillips (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1979), pp. 196-261; Beer explains his preference in n. 22, p. 211.

[8] Pp. 315-38 in Luitpold Wallach, ed., *The Classical Tradition*: Literary and Historical Studies in Honor of Harry Caplan (Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1966).

REVIEWS



David Irwin. **John Flaxman 1755-1826, Sculptor, Illustrator, Designer.** London: Studio Vista/Christie's, 1979. New York: Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., 1980. xviii + 249 pp., 282 illus. $55.00.

Reviewed by Janice Lyle

Until recently the only full-length monograph on John Flaxman available to scholars was the limited edition of W. G. Constable's biography published in 1927. However, 1979 saw Flaxman's full re-emergence as an artistic personality. The re-evaluation of his importance reached its peak with the major Flaxman exhibitions held in Hamburg, Copenhagen, and London accompanied by an extensive catalogue edited by David Bindman, the numerous reviews of these exhibitions, and the publication of David Irwin's monograph, *John Flaxman 1755-1826 Sculptor Illustrator Designer*. Thus, John Flaxman, whose art Irwin promoted as early as 1959 (see "Reviving Interest in Flaxman," *Connoisseur*, 144 [1959], 104-05), is now the subject of much modern attention.

In the Preface of his book, the first full-scale appraisal of Flaxman's life and work, Irwin states:

> My aim has been a comprehensive examination of all aspects of Flaxman's career between the covers of one book. Different areas of his work are interdependent, thus making separate studies by their very nature incomplete. I have not traced his influence abroad, nor included his influence on Victorian artists. I have tried, however, to discuss as many of Flaxman's works as possible, short of producing a *catalogue raisonné*.

Irwin has been quite successful in the task he set for himself. He has assembled and collated information from widely diverse and often hard-to-find sources into a logical, cogent--if at times dry--exposition of Flaxman's development. Undoubtedly, the book's greatest contribution to scholarship is its presentation of factual information in an organized format.

Technically the book is excellent. It is well-designed and offers 282 illustrations, all black-and-white (a fact which is less distressing with Flaxman's work than with that of most artists, as the majority of his drawings are pen-and-ink while his sculpture is uncolored marble). The illustrations are located either on or near the page of the discussion, and there are notably few errors in corresponding plate numbers.

The format is basically thematic, although the progression of Flaxman's interests allows the author to place the ten chapters in a generally chronological sequence: (I) Early Career; (II) Artist and Industry: Wedgwood; (III) To Italy; (IV) Sculptures in Italy; (V) Illustrations; (VI) Sculptor of Tombs: after 1794; (VII) Sculpture: Secular Commissions; (VIII) Portraits; (IX) Royal Plate and Other Metalwork; (X) Professor of Sculpture; Epilogue: Victorian Taste. Notes, bibliography, index of works and general index follow.

The outstanding feature of Irwin's study is his presentation within a single volume of the entire range of Flaxman's activities. Besides lecturing at the Royal Academy, Flaxman was a prolific sculptor of tombs and monuments, an influential illustrator of important literary works, and a recognized designer of pottery and silver. Irwin's greatest contribution to our understanding of Flaxman's work is his chapter on Flaxman's interest in Italian Trecento and Quattrocento art. The care with which Irwin cites only those frescoes that Flaxman could have seen in the 1790s is a credit to his thorough art-historical methodology. In addition, he incorporates an excellent selection of photographs to demonstrate the Italian sources for Flaxman's art. The author's discussion of the close relationship between John Flaxman and William Young Ottley offers valuable insights into a relationship which has received too little attention. In this context, Ottley's dedication of his volume, *A Series of plates engraved after the paintings and sculptures of the most eminent masters of the early Florentine school*, 1826, to John Flaxman deserves further study. Certainly Ottley's admiration for Flaxman is evident in his drawing style. Many Ottley drawings, made in preparation for the volume on Florentine art and also based on Flaxman's engraved designs to Dante, Homer, and Aeschylus, are stylistically so close to Flaxman that they have been incorrectly catalogued as Flaxman drawings.

Despite the importance of this instructive research on Flaxman, some minor criticisms are necessary. In many instances, the author seems to have unnecessarily limited his aims and viewpoint. All too often he confines himself to a mere recitation of events and description of works. Flaxman's interaction with other artists of the period is seldom discussed, and the artistic theories prevalent at the time are not explored in relationship to Flaxman. Indeed, Irwin fails to make critical judgments about Flaxman's place in the art world of 1800. One example is his discussion of Flaxman's *Triumphal Arch surmounted by Britannia* where no mention is made of French visionary architects like Boullée and Ledoux. These architects conceived projects of enormous proportions that undoubtedly furnished precedents for Flaxman's design.

Symptomatic of the limitations of Irwin's methodology is the comparison of Flaxman's *Achilles Shield* and Thomas Stothard's *Triumph of Bacchus and Ariadne: Sideboard Dish* which appear as consecutive illustrations in Chapter X. Irwin writes:

> The Shield of Achilles was displayed prominently at the coronation banquet in July 1821. The royal collection already possessed a large sideboard dish illustrating the theme of the *Triumph of Bacchus and Ariadne*, which had been designed by Stothard, and also made for Rundell's, in 1814 (Plate 271). The composition of this dish and the shield are in some respects similar, and it is possible that Flaxman influenced his fellow artist. The similarities may however have been prescribed in the commisions [sic]. Both works have a central motif of a chariot flanked by several figures, but whereas Flaxman's represent constellations, Stothard's are putti; Flaxman's chariot is pulled by horses, Stothard's by centaurs.
>
> (pp. 194-95)

John Flaxman's refinement of composition, his ability to design complex figural groups which remain clear and distinct, and his sensitive use of three-dimensional qualities contrast sharply with Stothard's overly-elaborate compositional elements and less well-proportioned figures. The author's exposition of these important differences would certainly clarify the positive aspects of Flaxman's style and his sensibility in design.

In Chapter IV Irwin notes that

> Flaxman's volumes [of illustrations to Homer, Aeschylus and Dante] were therefore published either without any quotations at all or with only a minimal number of lines under each plate. This novel form of publication undoubtedly contributed to their contemporary visual impact and their far-reaching influence.
>
> (pp. 68-69)

This "novel form of publication" is significant and deserves elaboration. The history of book illustration offers some prototypes for this format, such as Stothard's *Pilgrim's Progress* series of 1788-91. A broader view of context and influence would have added to the scholarly insights in this volume.

Blake scholars will be disappointed by the paucity of references to the object of their interest. For example, Flaxman's drawings for the *Book of Enoch* (one of which appears as figure 140) display many correspondences with Blake's drawings of the same subject, while the similarities between Flaxman's drawing for William Collins' sculptural monument (figure 77) and Blake's illustrations for *America* will be obvious to Blake scholars; Irwin's reticence on these points is regretable. The discussion of Flaxman's designs for Homer, Aeschylus, and Dante rightly stresses the importance of symmetry in these works. Flaxman's illustrations, produced in Italy during the early 1790s, rely on a simplification or distillation of each form, a positioning of those forms in a perpendicular or parallel relationship to each other, and a division of the abstract spaceless ground into geometric segments. It is likely that upon Flaxman's return from Italy in 1794, these engravings had an important stylistic impact on Blake. That the period 1794-1795 was traumatic for Blake has often been noted in reference to his poetry and his political beliefs. The French Revolution, the execution of Louis XVI, the Reign of Terror, and the repressive measures instituted by the English government all contributed to the disillusionment of Blake and other radicals of the period. This disillusionment caused Blake to alter not only his political and philosophical attitudes, but his poetic and artistic methods as well. Flaxman's designs are more abstract and refined than Blake's, but Blake was capable of translating the compositional elements of Flaxman's engravings into the powerful images of the 1795 series of color-printed drawings. As Blake is now the most popular

and well-known artist of this period, it is unfortunate that such specific correlations in style, technique, and theory between the two close friends are not included in Irwin's study.

The only really distressing aspect of the book is Irwin's attitude toward references. Footnotes in the volume most often cite contemporary sources or the manuscripts and drawings themselves. This approach ignores the more recent critical commentary on individual Flaxman works. Thus, when Irwin refers to Goya's use of Flaxman's Dante designs, he does not cite Sarah Symmons' excellent article, "John Flaxman and Francisco Goya: Infernos Transcribed" (*Burlington Magazine*, 113 [Sept. 1971], 508-12), nor does he specifically credit Robert Wark with the cogent analysis of Flaxman's drawing style in *Drawings by John Flaxman in the Huntington Collection*, 1970. In his discussion of deathbed scenes he does not refer to Robert Rosenblum's seminal work on the topic in *Transformations in Late Eighteenth Century Art*, 1967, a book whose footnotes have provided the stimulus for numerous dissertations. Irwin's exploration of Flaxman's publication of Hesiod does not direct the reader to G. E. Bentley, Jr., "Blake's Hesiod" (*Library*, 20 [1965], 315-320); and although he does cite Bentley's *Blake Books*, the awkward format of the footnotes requires one to go from Chapter V, footnote 30, back to Chapter I, footnote 7, to discover to which work by Bentley Irwin is referring.

The problems in citation may appear trivial, but a volume with pretentions to offering a thorough discussion, short of a *catalogue raisonné*, of the works of a single Neoclassic artist is definitely more than a coffee-table book. As such, one expects a thoroughness in the footnotes that will provide valuable research assistance. (It is possible that the reservations noted in this review may be partly the result of the delay between completion of Irwin's manuscript and publication.) Undoubtedly, Irwin's book will be the primary Flaxman reference for many years to come. The catalogue edited by David Bindman (*John Flaxman, R. A.*, London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1979) will better serve scholars interested in the broader questions slighted by Irwin, such as Flaxman's place within the context of his contemporary art scene and the exploration of his international influence. Irwin's book, however, has the virtue of providing a comprehensive life of Flaxman with the traditional biographical elements and a straightforward exposition of his major works. Taken together, these two recent volumes should promote a more informed appreciation of John Flaxman's *oeuvre* and furnish the basis for further, more detailed studies of his career and influence.

David Simpson. **Irony and Authority in Romantic Poetry.** Totawa, New Jersey: Rowan and Littlefield, 1979. 267 pp. $22.50.

Reviewed by Gavin Edwards

The novelty of what David Simpson is doing in this book about irony in Romantic poetry is indicated by the fact that Byron gets only one brief mention in it. Correlatively, Simpson aims to unseat established views of Romantic poetry as personal expression or as poetry of experience (though lines of communication are kept open with both views). Instead, the work of Keats, Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Shelley, and approximately contemporary tendencies in philosophy and aesthetics (notably the work of Hegel) are described as ironic, but not in a sense which most readers will be familiar with. But then "defamiliarisation" is what the book is all about.

Most of us think of irony as, with various provisos and sophistications, "saying one thing and meaning another." David Simpson is talking about a more radically unsettling practice, a practice named in a German theoretical tradition and invoked in some recent North American criticism (notably, and relevently, by Paul de Man in "The Rhetoric of Temporality"). According to the notion of irony with which most of us are more familiar, the *meaning* of what is said, the real position of its author, can be deduced *from* what is said. The reader knows where he stands because he knows where the author stands: a reciprocal identification established via the material through which they communicate. Romantic irony on the other hand insistently disturbs or even subverts these relationships, drawing attention to the processes of identification and interpretation themselves. Language, if it can still be talked about as a "medium" at all, becomes "a medium which takes us by the arm and shakes us into activity, rather than one which vanishes in reverence to the prior clarity of the message it embodies" (p. 56). Romantic irony forces us to construct meaning for ourselves in what is therefore a "performative" activity: an activity, that is to say, which involves making meanings as much as responding to and describing them. All such attributions of meaning, interpretations, are therefore, by definition, themselves put into question. The link between the question of irony and the question of authority is evident: Simpson avoids the pun on authors and authority, but perhaps a reviewer may be allowed it.

He quotes Shelley on the primary task of philosophy:

> Philosophy, impatient as it may be to build, has much work yet remaining, as pioneer for the overgrowth of ages. It makes one step towards this object; it destroys error, and the roots of error. It leaves, what it is too often the duty of the reformer in political and ethical questions to leave, a vacancy. It reduces the mind to that freedom in which it would have acted, but for the misuse of words and signs, the instruments of its own creation.[1]

What is identified, in the poetry and the philosophy, is this work of deconstruction; and reconstruction, except that such reconstruction is never more than provisional, itself always subject to further deconstruction. David Simpson moreover shares the principles he finds at work in Romantic writing. That he does so is, as he is well aware, itself unsettling. He is aware of the questioning which must attend continually on his own critical discourse; aware that it cannot exclude itself from the paradoxes of that "hermeneutic circle" to which it refers. A book of this kind is bound to be difficult, and this is certainly a difficult book. Its success needs to be judged by its ability to go on thinking clearly when what has to be thought clearly is the impossibility of thinking clearly, or at any rate without doubleness. By this criterion the book is, most of the time, an outstanding success.

The book's descriptions of its own procedures necessarily resemble the poetic procedures to which it refers. Thus "we shall find ourselves constantly laying and unlaying the same bricks, in a process marked by repetition rather than clearly defined progress" (p. 24). The book begins with detailed readings of *Ode on a Grecian Urn* and *La Belle Dame Sans Merci*. Thereafter individual chapters are devoted to specific issues--the image of childhood, theories and practices of language, the relation between author and narrator, metaphor, irony--which are at the same time reapproaches to a single chameleon problematic. Some poems are discussed, or referred to, repeatedly; so one way of grasping the drift and force of the argument, in the context of the present review, is to describe some of these readings.

In Wordsworth's *The Thorn*, Simpson argues, we may eventually decide that no real facts are available to us that are uncontaminated by the gossip of the community in which Martha Ray lives or by the "old sea captain" who is identified by Wordsworth, elsewhere, as the "loquatious narrator" of the poem. Even the description of the moss upon the little hill at the beginning of the poem

> As if by hand of lady fair
> The work had woven been;
> And cups, the darlings of the eye,
> So deep in their vermillion dye

> introduces under the cover of "observation" the primary images and metaphors of the human drama to which all this is supposed to be but a preface (p.104).

The insidious thing about such figurative language in the poem

> is that it is just ambiguous enough to make the casual reader think that he is making genuine connections and finding things for himself; whereas all the time he is simply falling into the trap laid by an unconsciously cunning narrator. (p. 105)

So the poem must encourage the *un*casual reader to get "beyond, in our own voices, the sorts of misprision which the old sea-captain inflicts on the landscape, and on the human beings who are dragged into it." (p. 105). But this is impossible; by definition since the contamination is complete and no other source of information is available. A commitment to "things in themselves" is both posited and put out of reach. In this respect the poem, and our experience as readers of it, dramatizes what Simpson calls Wordsworth's "uncontrollable epistemological predicament." After all, *The Lyrical Ballads* are about situations wherein "the feeling therein developed gives importance to the action and situation and not the action and situation to the feeling." And this is, as Simpson says, "a positive manifesto as much as a crime" (p. 107). In which case the would-be open minded narrator of the poem can indeed be seen as an emblem of the poet Wordsworth himself. So that poet and narrator, whom we have to separate, also come together again. And Simpson connects this, through a discussion of certain developments in eighteenth-century philosophy, with a widespread instability in "the very vocabulary and concept of distinction" (p. 122). The mind's relation to the world, to itself, and to its possible "parts" is uncontrollably shifting: "Each is present, or absent, simultaneously with the other" (p. 123).

What happens to names, the practice of naming, is a central instance of this complex instability. And some of the most interesting remarks on Blake's work appear in the context of Simpson's discussion of how, for the Romantics, the "disruption of the stability of objects and names . . . unsettles the subject whose tools they are" (p. 70). "Blake's undertaking begins, notoriously, with the proper name itself" (p. 76). In speculating on the etymology of "Urizen" Simpson argues that the "list of homophonal substitutions which can be made into this name seems almost infinite" (p. 76). His own suggested substitutions are, he insists,

> not matters for scholarly proof, perhaps, and what I have suggested will no doubt be accorded various degrees of probability by different readers. But this could be exactly the point. In the fallen world which Urizen, and our reason, represent, dominated as it is by intentional projections and inflections of the self into the world (a process which Blake the artist does not consider himself immune from), is not this fronting of the altering eye the most important meaning of all? (p. 77)

Naming is also the theme of Simpson's discussion of *Infant Joy*. He rejects the notion that the *Innocence* poems are spoken by Innocence and that we therefore need to slough off adult sophistication in order to read them properly. Some, at least, can be read as spoken by dramatically presented adult narrators implicitly conditioned by the properties of experience. *Infant Joy* is a case in point. It is usually read as "a celebration of maternal love, a loving dialogue between adult and infant" (p. 52), and "the flower containing the group of figures" in the illustration "is usually deemed to be opening, with the limp flower yet to open." But Simpson points out that "this latter flower could as well have gone through its cycle already, and the open flower could be in the process of closing" (p. 53), a reading which of course gives a very different significance

to the family relationships going on in the open flower. And in the poem the speaker

> turns (that is, paraphrases the infant into turning) the description of a state--"I happy am"--into a proper noun--"Joy is my name"--society's gesture of appropriation and admission, and, of course, of signification. (p. 53)

Sweet joy be*falls* the helpless infant. But we are not offered a simple reversal of the standard positive reading:

> I do not mean to imply that my reading is the authoritative one, and it is not simply modesty which makes me say so. For we can pass on beyond it, to a higher level of consciousness and self-consciousness. The benediction again comes to seem positive, and the smile again holds a degree of promise, when we recall or realise that the fall is a necessary fall, and that there is no innocence except as it is discovered or constructed. (p. 54)

A discovery and construction which applies of course both to our relationship to the text and to the other kinds of relationship to which the text refers.

The image of the child has a crucial role to play in this reading of Romanticism, as of course it has in other readings. But for Simpson it is very much the *image* of the child which is at stake. Childhood reproaches us with "the errors of acquired folly" as Blake put it. And the child, who is therefore an agent of deconstruction is also the Romantic ironist *par excellence*: he is never reachable except as the receding image which the adult consciousness has of him. The child disrupts institutions and personalities outside himself by being conceived as their "other" but by the same token "is himself denied the level of metacommentary, the stable identity which would enable him to replace in any absolute way the authority which he challenges" (p. 33).

Clearly Simpson commits himself to the view that there was something which can be called Romanticism. A commitment of this kind needs to accomplish two things, I think, in particular. It needs to show that the writers so designated are linked by their differences as well as by their similarities. And it needs to show that what is said of them cannot really be said of other writers.

On the first count the book is impressively successful. At least so far as the poetry is concerned; I am less competent to judge the philosophical texts, though there certainly seems to be a close analogy between what the poetry is doing and what the philosophical texts are saying (and sometimes doing). As for the poetry it is already clear that, for instance, Blake is more extreme and more self-possessed in his engagement with issues that Wordsworth also addresses. Blake, that is to say, is more thoroughgoing, enthusiastic, and explicit in his subversion of self-possession.

The chapter on metaphor is perhaps the most difficult part of the book, and I am not sure that its various elements are ever effectively coordinated. Nevertheless it is in this chapter that I get the strongest sense of writers who are linked by their differences. Simpson sets out to show that Shelley's commitment to metaphor as the *sine qua non* of poetry is consistent with a deep scepticism about metaphor on the part of Wordsworth, Coleridge and Blake. The figurative language of the old sea-captain is evidence of the dangers involved in metaphor for Wordsworth. We may be deceived into believing that relationships made by the mind and through language are already present in the real world as facts which the mind and language then respond to. In other words a danger of reification is built into metaphor, "both of [consciousness] and of the elements of its world, reciprocally" (p. 160). We are tempted to deny the performative character of our activities as minds in relation to the world, as authors or readers in relation to texts.

The hostility to metaphor is most explicit in Coleridge's criticism and theory, as part of his campaign against our tendency to be convinced by "impressive images in juxtaposition." Wordsworth's ambivalence on this issue will already be evident from the ambivalent relationship between "author" and "narrator" of *The Thorn*. Blake prefers analogy to metaphor because it brings out, what metaphor tends to conceal, the *activity* of making connections. And Simpson suggests that for Blake the uncreative activity of creation (as it is evoked for instance in *Europe* when "Thought changed the infinite to a serpent") is "exactly the metaphorical process, which shuts up the infinite revolutions" (p. 159). In a similar way one could say that the passage from joy to Joy in *Infant Joy* imposes on the child a name that is then said to be proper to it.

The central place given to metaphor in poetic creation by Shelley is a different response to the same kind of insight. "The reification through metaphor which Wordsworth fears so much is countered by Shelley with an oversupply of metaphor which prevents us ever coming to a *stop* in the production of meanings" (p. 161). Shelley's metaphors tend to "interfere" with one another; "each single relation develops out of and turns into another." And correlatively "the subject which is accustomed to the 'outering' gesture as a means of establishing its identity will also be in a state of becoming, the ethical corollary of which is love, where all things 'meet and mingle'" (p. 163). As Shelley said, "Veil after veil may be withdrawn, and the inmost naked beauty of the meaning never exposed."[2]

In its attempt to show that things are true of these writers which are not really true of previous writers the book is I think less successful. In effect Simpson presents a kind of "modernization theory" which claims that there is a direct link between the spirit of our age and the spirit of the Romantic age and a pretty clear historical break between Augustan and Romantic discourse.

> Augustan discourse was usually content to insinuate the unquestioned verification of the perceiving subject by never describing it, never suggesting that it might be responsible for what it sees. It exists as an unspoken

> but implicitly central presence from which, and not through which, the landscape is organised, and the precision-crafted gallery of general specificities, visual and psychological, which it conveys, are deployed through the rhymed couplet. Romanticism, on the other hand, seems fundamentally committed to a model of 'reciprocal causality', wherein the self and object are articulated coinstantaneously, and poetic description, with its implication in and dramatisation of temporality, must then tend to provide an unsettled rhetoric out of which this synthetic moment emerges 'negatively', if at all, from a context of surrounding qualifications and blunted approaches. (pp. 138-39)

This is a helpful formulation. And it is unfair to criticize a book about one mode of discourse for not offering equally nuanced and complex analysis of other modes with which it is contrasted. But there is a particular problem when the modes of discourse involved are the Augustan and the Romantic. There is frequently in such cases, as I think there is here, a suspiciously perfect co-incidence between the description and what is described: we have a composed and generalized description of a composed and generalizing discourse and a complex, paradoxical, and very detailed description of a complex and paradoxical discourse. David Simpson is acutely conscious of the paradox involved, from a hermeneutic perspective, in offering to establish an historical origin for that perspective; acutely conscious of the probability of finding just what he is looking for. But this self-consciousness would be more convincing if some attempt had been made to analyze a few non-Romantic literary texts with the kind of concentration and deconstructive intent he brings so effectively to Romantic ones. He does comment on a few lines of Cowper and Crabbe; but since I disagree with what he says about the lines of Crabbe, I don't know whether this just means that Crabbe has been put on the wrong side of the line or that the line doesn't really exist in the way Simpson suggests. I suspect that the most resolutely composed Augustan poems can (and should) be discomposed. They can be read as ironic in the Simpson sense, even if secretly or reluctantly so. But this does not simply mean that the Augustan/Romantic distinction should be drawn less sharply. It needs somehow to be redrawn.

There could be no better indication of the distinction between the two concepts of irony than the distinction between *A Tale of a Tub* and Leavis' notable essay *The Irony of Swift*. Leavis' blindness, in my view, to an important dimension of Swift's practice coincides precisely with his use of the familiar notion of irony and the kind of meaning which it requires of a text. Now I don't simply want to set up Swift as disproof of what Simpson says about Augustan discourse; he says, after all, that it was "usually" as he describes it. The problem is rather that Swift remains, despite his "romantic" irony quite definitely *not* a Romantic writer. And I can't at the moment see how, with David Simpson's terms, that relationship of difference and similarity is to be described. (A difference and similarity written into the curious conclusion of Leavis' own essay: "We shall not think Swift remarkable for intelligence if we think of Blake.")

David Simpson's historical placing of the Romantic poets raises another problem, though in this case one that he is certainly aware of. In all this talk about "the reader" for instance

> How . . . is the reader of 1798 to be distinguished from the reader of 1978? The answer is another question: 'which reader of 1798, and for which reader of 1978?' (p. xi)

Simpson quite fairly leaves that question to us. And this reader is immediately reminded of Wordsworth in *Simon Lee* addressing

> My gentle reader, I perceive
> How patiently you've waited,
> And I'm afraid that you expect
> Some tale will be related.

Wordsworth, a gentleman writing about "an old huntsman," draws the attention of his readers of 1798 to their status as, in all probability, gentlefolk; and to the doubtful moral claims which that title silently endows them with in its association of gentility with gentleness. Now this is an unsettling of relationships which suggests that Wordsworth is very well aware of the historical context of the crisis of intersubjective verification as Kelvin Everest has described it in *Coleridge's Secret Ministry*. It is instructive to read Simpson in conjunction with Everest, who describes "a shift in the poet's sense of audience, his sense of the authority which his values carry"[3] but who sees it in the context of a general "cultural dislocation that took place in England in the 1790s, a dislocation that issued not only in the clearer manifestation of class conflicts developing with the industrial revolution, but in the separation of the creative intellect from its accustomed audience."[4] So that the poets are "isolated by class from the common people, and by principle from their social and intellectual fellows."[5]

This cultural disclocation may be defined as a disclocation, across the whole range of social life, in the processes of signification. The processes through which identities are constructed became increasingly visible and problematic, and this may of course be cause for both hope and fear. Thus many of the poems with which Simpson deals bear directly upon other discursive activities which are themselves in effect "performative": a child is christened in *Infant Joy*, Martha Ray is gossipped into isolation in *The Thorn*. Tom Paine identifies the reifying tendency of metaphor in a way that closely parallels the positions of Wordsworth and Blake. He identifies Burke's metaphorical language as an integral part of the costume-drama of aristocratic society which works, as theatre works, by the willing suspension of disbelief on the part of the popular audience: "In England the right of war and peace is said to reside in a *metaphor*, shown at the Tower for sixpence or a shilling apiece."[6] And "Titles are like circles drawn by the magician's wand, to contract the sphere of man's felicity. He lives immured within the Bastille of a word, and surveys at a distance the envied life of man."[7] And in this context of naming and what to do about it, the history of the word "Jacobin" in England is very interesting. It was

applied to diverse reformers (including Wordsworth and Coleridge of course) by *anti*-Jacobins so as to reflect the Revolution in France onto English society in a way that suited their own interests; John Thelwall for one felt that the only defence against this naming was to accept it as a badge of honor because "it is fixed upon us, as a stigma, by our enemies."[8]

If the processes of human identification were peculiarly visible and problematic, the task--then or now--of deciding what was *really* going on must be a peculiarly difficult one, must involve from the start questions of metaphor, of narrative, of characterization. The question of whether there was really a promise/threat of Revolution in England is in *some* respects like the question of what really happened to Martha Ray.

David Simpson's reading of Romantic poetry leads out naturally and fruitfully, in my view, into these wider contexts. On the other hand the way in which he himself refers to the social and political context might discourage some readers from going in that direction. For instance:

> . . . I have not given carefully constructed accounts of the reaction to the French Revolution, or a properly documented consideration of the reviews and the reviewers. Let me stress that I do not think these things unimportant; it is simply that one can only write one book at a time. It may well be for example, that the rather esoteric explorations of self-focussing revolutions which these writers offer have much to do with the repressive legislation and draconian censorship introduced during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars. The ethical reservations which they project about their own tendencies towards authority, combined with the high sense of urgency about passing on these reservations, may after all be part of a sophisticated self-protection, producing a version of "revolution" which is permissible precisely because personal, because unorganised in the social sense. (pp. xi-xii)

This is a very interesting speculation, which needs to be followed up. And it is certainly true that, for instance, Paine's critique of metaphor is not insistently self-reflexive; it is linked to a confident commitment to the notion of a literal language of communication and the authority of his own statement. But the way in which Simpson formulates his speculations is open to criticism. His book talks a lot about *The Prelude* but, as he admits, doesn't talk about the French Revolution. And this does seem to involve an assumption that the French Revolution doesn't exist in the poem in quite the same way as, for instance, Mont Blanc does; that "the reaction to the French Revolution" is different in kind, less "personal," than the reaction to Mont Blanc. Therefore, in so far as "self," in the phrase "self-focussing revolutions," refers to the self of the person as well as the self of the revolutions I think that Simpson's distinction between personal and social revolutions is misconceived. The speculative distinction David Simpson draws between Revolution and revolution is subtly prescribed in the circle which his own discourse draws around the practice of writing and reading poetry.

It is important to make these criticisms because of the use to which this book could be put, particularly in the current climate of criticism and theory in North America which seems inhospitable to questions of social and political context. That David Simpson's own readings are not closed in that respect is evident from his recent study of *The Ecchoing Green* in this journal. And his book does at least address itself, as we have seen, to a question that needs to be put to any deconstruction criticism: just how figurative is its own vocabulary of anti-authoritarian subversion? It must also be said, to sceptical *British* readers, that Simpson's book is a splendid vindication of theoretically informed and explicit textual analysis.

[1] P. 30, quoted from *The Complete Works of Shelley*, ed. Ingpen and Peck, (rpt., New York and London: Gordian Press and Ernest Benn Ltd., 1965), VI, 195.

[2] P. 163, quoting *The Complete Works of Shelley*, VII, 131.

[3] Kelvin Everest, *Coleridge's Secret Ministry, the Context of the Conversation Poems, 1795-1798* (Sussex and New York: The Harvester Press and Barnes and Noble, 1979), p. 172.

[4] Everest, p. 108.

[5] Everest, p. 113.

[6] Tom Paine, *The Rights of Man*, ed. Collins (London: Penguin, 1969), p. 99.

[7] Paine, p. 102.

[8] Quoted in Carl B. Cone, *The English Jacobins* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1968), p. iii.

Milton Klonsky. **William Blake: The Seer and His Visions.** New York: Harmony Books, 1977. 142 pp. $12.95 cloth, $7.95 paper.

Reviewed by Gerda S. Norvig

One of the striking ironies of Blake scholarship over the last ten or fifteen years is that so much of it unwittingly contradicts by the example of its own style and method just the values in Blake's vision it claims to honor and expound. Perhaps this is a paradox that cannot be solved, however, since clearly there is something in the very nature of the Blakean enterprise that stubbornly mocks all efforts to write plainly about it, something which seems equally to invite and to resist the sort of rational discourse demanded of critical commentary.

All of us have felt the dilemma. All of us have noted that the moment we try to pin down our responses to the dynamics of Blake's art, we find ourselves falling into one of the postures of limited vision the work we are looking at itself satirizes. No matter what tack we take--whether we opt for interpretation or descriptive analysis, deconstruction or literary historicism, cool objectivity or impressionistic enthusiasm--the critic in us risks becoming a parody of the flexible pilgrim-reader Blake ultimately addresses.

No doubt this is all to the good and should be considered a necessary step in the rite of reading orchestrated by Blake. For both the challenge and the impossibility of finding an unearthly, Archimedian leverage point from which to move the Blakean world is of course testimony to the remarkably vital inclusiveness of this artist's greater aesthetic. Still, it is useful to recognize and beware the fact that like a warring Zoa, a "mistaken Demon of heaven," each of our critical approaches tends to create a fixed and one-sided universe out of the Blakean material, thereby distorting--often obliterating--the truly transformative dimensions that characterize Blake's best work.

In the text accompanying the beautiful reproductions that make up the core of *William Blake: The Seer and his Visions*, Milton Klonsky tries bravely though unsuccessfully to avoid these common pitfalls of the critical act. His strategy is to take many contradictory stances, settling for no one coherent approach as he shifts uneasily among three of the more extreme styles of Blake commentary: personal effusion, pedantic source analysis, and the mechanical cross-referencing of familiar Blakean motifs. He begins his twenty-four page introduction with a gentle poke at the insular reader who has neither particularized nor personalized the message of perceptual renovation that Blake's texts carry. This well-taken caveat, however, turns out to serve not as a way into Blake but as a prelude to a trite and tedious account of Klonsky's own visionary experience while on a one-time LSD trip in the 1960s. Throughout the description of his psychedelic conversion, itself sounding like an unconscious parody of the fall of Tharmas, Klonsky loosely appropriates mottos from *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, "Auguries of Innocence," and *Jerusalem* to substantiate his

touching and naive claim that he has responded to Blake with an affinity of feeling Blake himself would have approved of. And it is true that Klonsky does come to the artist's work in a spirit of congeniality, eager to "Enter into" Blake's symbols and to "make a Friend & Companion" of those "Images of wonder" as Blake recommends.[1] However, like many others affected by the drug culture who have flocked to Blake because of a vague spiritual longing and a taste for hallucinogenic imagery, Klonsky too often ignores the harder part of Blake's advice to the spectator, that we should approach visionary forms not just imagistically and emotionally but also "on the Fiery Chariot of . . . Contemplative Thought" (*VLJ*, E 550).

The key word here is "contemplative." For although Klonsky's text is full of little bypaths into arcane fields of thought, none of these rarefied excurses is sufficiently grounded, contemplated or developed in its own right, and few are demonstrably related to the Blakean themes, purposes, instances they are supposed to illuminate. Instead the author presents a patchwork of allusive lore and occult references from sources outside Blake, while the thread of argument that would tie all these bits of learning together is most often either frayed or forgotten.

An example is Klonsky's skewed and summary disquisition on the esoteric system of the Hebrew *Zohar*, especially its mystical teaching about the seventy "facets" and the six hundred thousand "entrances" of the words of scripture. Here he justifies a paragraph-long aside on Cabbalistic numerology by declaring (without any proven or even claimed basis in fact) that Blake was acquainted "perhaps at first hand" with that "most famous version of the Cabbala." He then hints in a round-about way that there is a causal link between the Zoharian symbolism and Blake's view of significant form--an intriguing notion were it to be either elaborated or substantiated. The entire burden of proof for such a link, however, is made to rest on the shaky ground of a single quotation from *Jerusalem* describing the many angles of the grain of sand hidden from Satan's watchfiends. Evidently these angles, each a "lovely heaven" in Blake's words, are to be seen by us as equivalent to the seventy facets of the holy words of scripture. Yet how so, and if so to what end, is unfortunately not explained. Nevertheless we might accept the analogy of Cabbalistic "facets" to Blakean "angles" if the comparison were offered as a merely curious parallel. But Klonsky, by innuendo and--as is his wont--equivocal phrasing, implies much more. He implies that Blake both intended the reference and expected it to be taken as a criticism of the Jewish source, for Klonsky writes that "in *Jerusalem* the Cabbalistic vision of the multiplicity of possible entrances into the infinite was refracted by Blake and revealed in its 'minute particularity.'"

Here many readers of his book may pause to note that "refracting the infinite" through clear exposition of "minute particularity" is certainly not one of Klonsky's own strong points. Indeed by mixing and matching ideas lifted out of context, Klonsky regularly tries to force untenable connections as he juggles the niceties of both metaphor and fact. His habit is either to cloud the issue by providing an excess of information so that his frequently dubious tenets are virtually lost in a sea of incongruous data, or, when he does hit on a fruitful analogy (for instance the comparison between Blake's fourfold system of vision and the traditional fourfold method of biblical interpretation), he makes the opposite error, generalizing without supplying the descriptive detail or conceptual framework that would lend his notion substance, validity, credence.

But it is not only the content of Klonsky's prose that is affected by this disquieting carelessness and lack of critical proportion. The style, too, often suffers from such idiosyncrasies as a self-indulgent penchant for punning and a cuteness of diction which almost always threatens clarity. For example, when Klonsky speaks of one of Blake's witty rejoinders to Crabb Robinson, he calls it "a neat thrust, most likely inspired by some spirit on the spot--jabbing this pointed detail like a bare bodkin into his solidly planted and down-to-earth metaphysical fundament." Another time Klonsky designates what he asserts is a personfication of an already hypostatized idea, "a hypertrophe of a trope as 'twere." And his trick of playing on words by fragmenting them syllabically ("with-in," "im-mediatively," "into-it-tively," "ir-and/or supra-rational") only adds to the rather jarring, schizophrenic effect of the tone he adopts throughout.

What is at stake here, though, is not just a matter of voice. Fundamentally, Klonsky's commentary gets into trouble because it is the product of a sorely divided outlook, a conflicted allegiance that gratuitously pits intellect against vision and vision against intellect in an unconscious and often underhanded manner destined to misrepresent Blake's own strongly integrated aesthetic. First of all, by misappropriating Blake's anti-rationalism and regarding it as a license for him to eschew the precision of both analytical thought and truth to factual detail, Klonsky commits a shocking array of reportorial sins hard to pass over or forgive in the aggregate. For from the smallest inaccuracies of scholarship and editing (such as crediting Marianne Moore rather than Yeats with the invention of the phrase "literalist of the imagination" as applied to Blake, or giving Morton D. Paley a new middle initial) to the more egregious errors of analysis that plague Klonsky's explications of Blake's key views on cause and effect, on the relationship between artistic execution and imagination, and on the nature of spiritual sensation, this author erects a sort of "allegorical abode where existence hath never come" (*Europe* 6.7) and calls it Blake's world. One of Klonsky's favorite devices for leaping over the evidences of historical research and passing off private surmise as probable fact is his liberal use of phrases like "Blake *must have* known . . . " or "he was *undoubtedly* familiar with . . ." (italics mine). The "must have" construction is the most prevalent: I counted twelve uses of it in the introductory essay alone, five of which are the means of conveying false information, while the rest are simply minor fudgings that only slightly mislead.

But while Klonsky is impatient of both scholarly tact and intellectual rigor in this way, his mistrust of the restraints of academic argument does not represent a considered position. Indeed, he seems just as uncomfortable with the compensatory virtues of his "amateur enthusiasm,"[2] and we therefore often find him curiously witholding the sympathy we might well expect him to show for modes of imagining that dispense with logical structures. He regularly adopts an excessively cynical tone, for example, when speaking of Blake's view of the spirit world, as if embarrassed by the products of Blake's eidetic imagination even though in theory he hotly defends the psychological and perceptual processes such envisionings entail. So of Blake's encounter with psychic images Klonsky says, "he also--or so he claimed--saw visions and spoke face to face with spooks . . . and what can we make of *that*?" Further on he remarks, archly, that "whatever else [Blake's] spirits had going for them, they weren't very good at business." And later still, when Klonsky is ostensibly clearing Blake (yet again) of the old charge of insanity, he writes: "No doubt, among the heterogeneous swarms of spirits attending him he must have had (and who hasn't?) one or two or several spirits, with a bit too much white around the eyeball . . . ." In a similar fashion Klonsky several times attributes to the subtly controlled, allusive method of Blake's expressive technique a wild and woolly mentality more accurately descriptive of Klonsky's own thought process. Thus while analyzing what he evidently believes is the chaotic formal principle of *A Descriptive Catalogue*, Klonsky declares that:

> One idea in *A Descriptive Catalogue* suggests another, sometimes only distantly or even metaphorically related, which immediately raises its voice above it, and then, in turn, may be drowned out by a following idea, before the first can be heard again. Written in the ejaculatory style of his marginalia, but now across the whole page of everything he believes and knows, it is as though the conclamant and sometimes discordant voices of all his attendant spirits were alternately haranguing, explaining, protesting, denouncing, scolding, cajoling, lecturing, pleading and prophesying.

Unhappily many of the problems of the introduction are carried through in the explanations of the splendid visuals which are the main allure of this book. One wants to cry out, after the essay so titled by John E. Grant, "you can't write about Blake's pictures like that!"[3] You cannot, that is, say that the six birds painted in the sky of the title page of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* are five in number simply because you want to identify them with the five senses, nor can you name one of those six birds an "eagle," when it is really a bird of paradise, just to be able to compare it to that other eagle Blake calls "a portion of genius" in one of the proverbs of Hell. Or again, in Blake's tempera "Satan Smiting Job with Sore Boils" you cannot claim that the three darts in the hand of Satan are actually four darts, and you cannot call the substance Satan is emptying out of the vial in that same picture "venereal disease" because you want to interpret Job's affliction as sexual.

But these and other difficulties that crop up in the descriptive commentary do not seriously detract from the special value of the book's 107 pages of illustrations. Considered as an anthology of Blake's pictorial art, the 135 separate pictures exhibited here show a satisfying range of methods, kinds and iconographic concerns, and they are displayed in clear, large-format reproductions, 43 of which are printed in (mostly very good) color. Some of these offerings are familiar favorites, others make available for the first time in an inexpensive edition glossy colored versions of such striking watercolors as "The Arlington Court Picture," "The Ghost of Samuel Appearing to Saul," two of the full-page illustrations for the illuminated *Song of Los*, a pair of lesser known designs from the "L'Allegro" sequence and three well chosen drawings from the second set of Blake's "Comus" illustrations.

Perhaps the best feature of the collection, however, is not the range of pictures but the aesthetically pleasing, gently instructive way designs are juxtaposed on the page to make valuable graphic points about the relationship of significant themes and pictorial ideas in Blake's work. One case in point is the two page spread, pages 72-73, which pairs "The Woman Taken in Adultery" with "The Blasphemer" (commonly called "The Stoning of Achan"). Both paintings illustrate scriptural passages that treat the motif of punishment for sin by stoning, the "Woman Taken in Adultery" representing Christ's New Testament critique, in John 8, of the Old Testament law which is being shown at work on the opposite page in the painting of "The Blasphemer" from Leviticus 24. Another case: on the page-spread just preceding, two more of Blake's biblical illustrations, "Bathsheba" and "Lot and His Daughters," are matched, but this time the connection between them remains primarily compositional. The representation of Bathsheba shows her upright in the center of the canvas, her arms around two young children who stand on either side of her as she is being observed by David, while the design of "Lot and His Daughters" depicts a drunken, half-reclining Lot flanked by *his* two children as they prepare to seduce him. The general plot of illicit eroticism ties the two subjects together, but it is the similarity of the compositions that draws our attention to the vaguely cognate themes.

A final example, more subtle yet possibly even more effective, is the antiphonal facing of a *Night Thoughts* engraving on page 96 with Blake's design for the titlepage of Blair's *The Grave* on page 97. Here the two prints maintain a symmetrical, formal balance largely on the grounds of their topological identity. For both designs feature two figures about to join each other on the vertical axis in an ascending-descending relationship, and both sets of figures are placed on the outer edges of their plates (one on the left, the other on the right) with a middle space reserved for text. We note the visual mirroring, and only secondarily does it occur to us that the *subjects*, also, are related reflexively. For the *Night Thoughts* illustration depicts a young nude woman personifying "sense" (in accord with the appropriate lines of Young's poem) who runs "savagely" to celebrate the powers remaining

to her in the fading daylight while the ghastly figure of descending night is about to smother her with his bell-shaped pall; and the contrary situation is portrayed in the *Grave* design where a beautiful nude man, an angelic messenger, dives downward, blowing his bell-shaped trumpet, to waken the shrouded, ghoulish skeleton below and rouse him from the sleep of corporeal death in the grave. The pictures thus comment upon each other like type and antitype. Thanks to the inventiveness of Gene Conner and Murray Schwartz, layout and production editors, this kind of interplay is a general feature of *William Blake: The Seer and his Visions*, a feature the thoughtful reader cannot help but learn from and enjoy.

Because of such felicities, this handsomely produced book is a valuable volume indeed. It will be accessible to many because of its reasonable price, and so long as its owner or borrower reads the pictures and skims the text, rather than vice versa, it will make an excellent introduction to Blake's art.

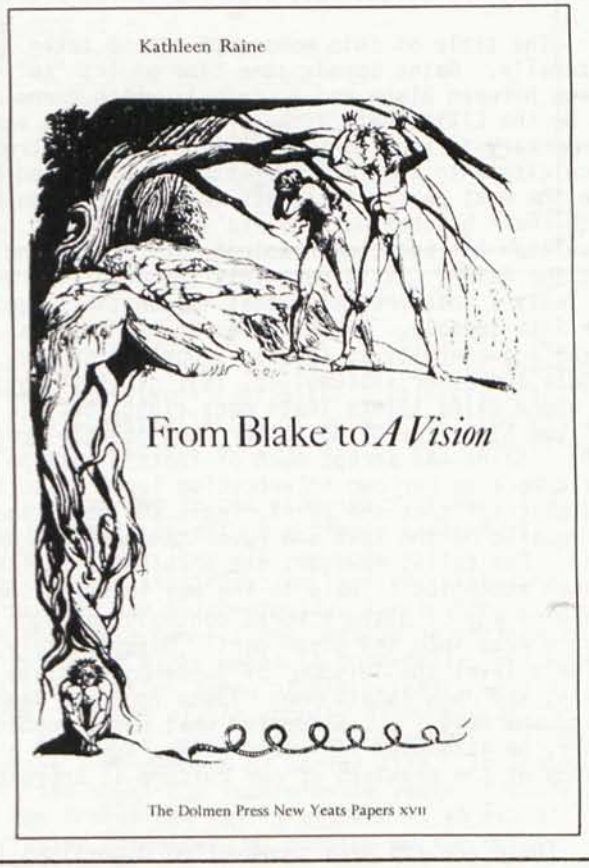
[1] "A Vision of the Last Judgment," *The Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, ed. David V. Erdman (New York, 1970), p. 550.

[2] Cf. John Hollander, "Talkies," *The New York Review of Books*, Dec. 8, 1977, 50-54, p. 51. This is a review of Klonsky's *Speaking Pictures* and D. J. Gordon's *The Renaissance Imagination*.

[3] *Blake Studies*, 1 (Spring 1969), 193-205.

Kathleen Raine. **From Blake to A Vision.** Dublin: The Dolmen Press. Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1979 (New Yeats Papers XVII). 64 pp. £4.50, $11.75 paper.

Reviewed by Hazard Adams



Kathleen Raine's line on Blake is familiar to us: He was an adept of the "Perennial Philosophy," which holds that consciousness is the ground of reality. In this monograph she asserts that Yeats is Blake's "greatest disciple" and "the claims he made, the beliefs he held on the reversal of premises which would characterize the New Age, are the same as Blake's." When I hear this sort of remark I must confess that I am inclined to stop reading; I want immediately to make a list of all the important differences that I am convinced are going to be glossed over in the discourse that follows. But the writer is Kathleen Raine, and like many earlier quirky scholars of Blake, she is usually informative even when she mounts into her particular pulpit and tells us (in the tone I imagine a True Pythoness would use) that we must all now hear occult Truth. This is a Truth that links the speaker in a chain of adepts back to Plato, who of course was himself a neoplatonist.

Raine declares Swedenborg to be a major influence on both Blake and Yeats. This is not news. It would be if Raine were to declare that Blake does not attack Swedenborg. She doesn't, but she also fails to mention that he does and that he tends to use Swedenborg very eccentrically indeed. Raine declares Blake to be a diagrammatist like Yeats and all the diagrams of both to be Jungian mandalas. S. Foster Damon's diagram of Blake's city of Jerusalem is presented, along with Blake's *Vision of the Last Judgment* and the famous plate 36 of *Milton*. But it is *not* said that Damon might better *not* have diagrammed Jerusalem, which as far as I can see is constructed to be a trap for diagrammatists, as is just about all of *A Vision*. Plate 36 stands out as the *only* diagram Blake included in all of his illuminated works and surviving manuscripts. Of course, if one equates every mandala discovered in Blake with a diagram, one finds diagrams everywhere, as does Raine when she declares *A Vision of the Last Judgment* a mandala and claims Blake to have described many mandalas. The nice thing about mandalas is that they are ubiquitous, once one learns alertness.

The title of this monograph can be taken literally. Raine spends some time on its "to" (the space between Blake and *A Vision*), which turns out to be the Ellis-Yeats *Blake* of 1893. In the vast commentary in that work Yeats (and Ellis) introduced occultism into the interpretation of Blake and made for the most part a tasteless mess of it to go along with their butchering of Blake's text. This occultism has been inconvenient for most of us, but not for Raine. It is certainly the occultist aspect of Yeats's interpretation that is constantly getting him into trouble. For example, Yeats "relates Blake's quaternity to the four 'worlds' of the Cabala and other systems" (p. 16). This is typical of where Raine thinks Yeats goes right, but I believe him to be going rather consistently wrong here. Raine can accept much of Yeats's reading of Blake because her own interpretive level is so lofty and abstract that she rarely feels she must stoop to details of the text and never to questions of tone. Basically, however, the problem is that not enough attention is paid to the way in which the whole of any of Blake's works controls how much we should read into any given part. Unfortunately, at Raine's level the "wisdom" of Swedenborg, Blake, Yeats, and Jung is all one. These four are "among those who have . . . attempted what must, sooner or later, be attempted if indeed a 'New Age' and a change of the premises of our culture is approaching."

There are too many unsupported dogmatisms in this monograph. Many years ago I wrote what I think was the first serious American essay on Raine's poetry. It was a quite favorable account (I do not regret it), and I treated her poetic voices as those of enchantress and medium. But neither of these voices is the proper one for criticism. Luckily one can take my complaint, put it to the side, and profit from parts of this text, for there are some good things here though they are presented in a rather disorganized way. Raine sees certain important shifts of emphasis from Blake to Yeats and notices certain of Yeats's misreadings. But must Blake's twenty-seven churches (correctly traced back to Swedenborg) be so simply related to Yeats's twenty-eight lunar phases, without so much as a word that twenty-seven is not twenty-eight? Is Yeats's little dialogue in *Vacillation* really a dialogue with his master Blake? Isn't there, though not a "rotation" of Urizen and Luvah, at least a cyclicity? Yeats got this all wrong because of his astrologizing of Blake. Is Yeats's mask really to be identified with Tharmas quite so easily, as Raine does? Is there no time in Blake's eternity, or is eternity in Blake's time? Or is it better to look rather more closely and consider that there may be more than one time in Blake? The most interesting part of the monograph is toward the end where Raine discusses the influence of "The Mental Traveller" on *A Vision* and various poems. Here, however, not as much as she implies is new. She calls Blake's poem a detailed examination of his symbol of Canaan. That seems promising, but she goes on to utter over several pages the following equation: Canaan = Mundane Shell or Egg = the world of biblical history = space and time = the twenty-seven churches = the covering cherub = the womb = the serpent = the center = the mills = the wheels = dens = Newton's universe = Milton's chaos and ancient night = Dante's Purgatory = "under the hill." This is, of course, roughly so in the way Joyce later also made everybody everybody else. But since all of these things are roughly the fallen world, the revelation that the poem is about Canaan tells us nothing that hasn't been well known to readers of the poem for a long time under some other term in the equation.

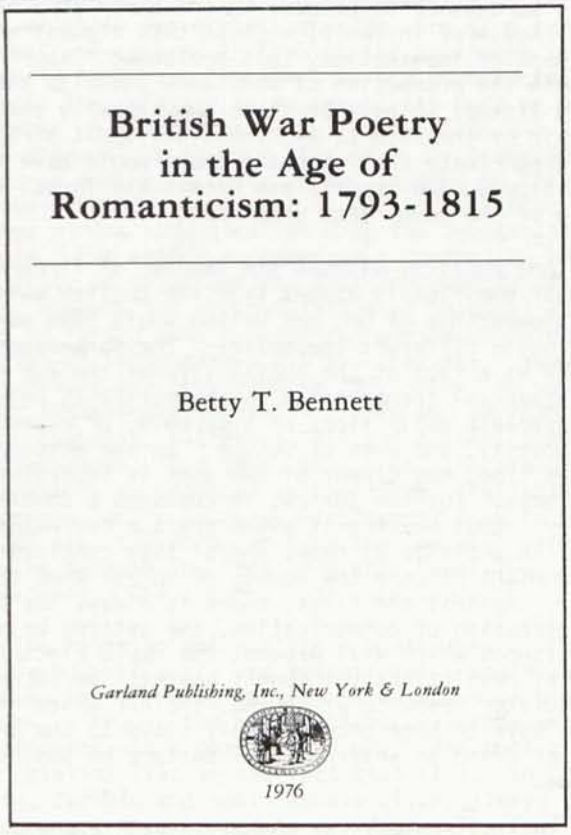
Incidentally, in the process of observing Blake's metaphorical chain, Raine calls Satan the "lost traveller" of one of Blake's late short poems. But if we look at the syntax we discover that Satan is not the traveller but "the lost traveller's dream under the hill." Of course, where everybody is everybody else, this ultimately makes no difference. Or does it? The whole basis of Blake's thought turns on the principle of identity and the paradox in that word. Fully read, it indicates that everything has an identity of its own, but is identical to other things as well. Raine's occultism negates the first meaning and presses for the second. This is the point at issue here. Was Blake an occultist who would suppress individual identity or the "minute particular," which Raine seems to confuse with the conscious ego, or is he a visionary poet who insists on both sides of the paradox at once? For that matter, in the end which was Yeats?

The monograph has numerous illustrations from occult texts, Blake, and *A Vision*. Some are not discussed. That's all right. Most of them are mandalas.

WAR AND THE USES OF MYTH

Betty T. Bennett, ed. **British War Poetry in the Age of Romanticism: 1793-1815.** New York and London: Garland Publishing Inc., 1976 (Romantic Context: Poetry 1789-1830. Series: Vol. I). xii + 528 pp. $47.00 library binding.

Reviewed by David Punter



It is still so easy, despite the efforts not only of historians but also of literary critics, David Erdman and other Blake scholars in their forefront, to forget the point which Betty Bennett usefully underlines in her introduction to this collection: that for most British people, the major constituent of experience in the years between 1793 and 1815 was war. In fact, such is the regularity with which the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars are treated as experiences peripheral to British culture that behind this blurring of memory there begins to loom the shadow of a more deliberate evasion, and an evasion of greater dimensions than those characteristic of a national criticism which has traditionally preferred its historical context to be presented severely diluted and preferably bent into the service of moral instruction. The reasons for this evasion are complex, and some of them bear a particular relation to the present: this is not an economic or political phase in which inter-European warfare presents itself as a privileged object of attention, nor is it one, indeed, in which military history as such can be happily seen as free from political partiality. But most of the reasons have a longer socio-psychological pedigree than that, and the materials presented in this collection of war poetry can help us towards an understanding of them; it can also help us towards a deepened understanding of Blake's literary practice by providing a constellation of popular writing within which to situate his acts of mysterious demystification.

In referring to the experience of war, I do not mean merely to effect a simple contentual connection. War, certainly, produces its own hierarchies of signification, and it is the wars of the romantic age which provide, for instance, a shape for those connections between aggression and commerce which Blake makes so powerfully, and which, as this collection among others reveals, were a habitual feature of the popular discourse of the time. But those hierarchies are themselves dependent on deeper arrangements of social life. In economic terms, the seemingly interminable years of conflict with the French can fairly be seen as an era of interrupted potential, of hanging on the brink. The exploitation of the colonies, and the steady progress of commercial success attendant on that exploitation, did not cease to proceed, but they progressed under uneasy conditions, constantly dependent on the next phase of commercial sabre-rattling, the next round of Orders in Council; and thus the war effort becomes increasingly seen as something to be undertaken in order for something else to begin, as an increas-

ingly burdensome impediment to the birth of a new age. And, for instance, without this element within the popular imagination, this prolonged "labor" which is both the production of munitions and also the delayed attempt to give birth to a mythically stable Britain of the future, all those difficult births which punctuate the Prophetic Books would have been less bloody, and their place within the formal structures of the poems less prominent.

And equally, without the thunder of firearms, however empirically absent from the English mainland, the thunderings of Orc and Urizen would seem parts of a quite different vocabulary: the foregrounding of war as a fact of the social life of the age is the essential prerequisite for historically relevant and operable definitions of hyperbole, of clarity and opacity, and even of volume. In the discourse of the time, the clamor of the guns is important in many ways. For the Tories, it contains a double danger: that hearing it might spark a corresponding rebellious clamor at home, and/or that continental furor might obscure the sounds of unrest when they occur. Against the first, there is always the weapon of repression of communication, the setting up of resistances which will prevent the rapid electric flow of revolutionary thought; against the second, the quieter resource of spying, the ear which Pitt had always to keep uncomfortably close to the ground, however grand an international posture he sought to assume.

In this context, as Bennett hints, the search for a plainer "language of men" which constitutes one strand of English romanticism becomes perceptibly a part of a wider set of social demands riddled through and through with the political. Some of the major romantics may find their way to pockets of silence, may be able to test subtle tuning-forks on the mountains and the winds, but for the most part this collection (rightly, I believe, eschewing the handful of productions which have come to dominate the literary landscape of the period) shows us not soliloquy or refinement of sensibility but stentorian bellowing, the endless repetition of image and abstraction. The bellowing, the condensation of argument into ritual cries of "liberty," "freedom," "justice," at first appears to come from the mostly anonymous poets themselves and from the newspaper editors; but as Bennett points out in an unashamedly derivative but nonetheless very handy run-down of the politics of the press, even the powerful editors are for the most part puppets, and the voices come from over their shoulders, direct from the politicians. Under these circumstances, freedom of speech is a dangerous risk, and one with which neither Tory nor Whig felt happy. Too much was at stake; from a psychological perspective, what seems to have been in the air was the unpredictable outcome of a massive social ambivalence, itself the product of conflict of allegiance between economic and national groupings. Ambivalence and evasion here go hand in hand, for what the popular poetry reveals is a set of contradictions which cannot be handled except by displacement, by the shifting of historical, geographical, and social contexts.

Yet in some ways this is too simple: certainly the politicians manipulated, and certainly editors were under no misapprehension about their national responsibilities. Yet it would clearly be hopelessly optimistic to argue that therefore some hypothetical variety of "free" or even radical poetry, some poetry which could see through chauvinism to chauvinism's economic and psychological functions, was suppressed, except in the rarest instances. The operations of hegemony are more all-embracing than that; and what is evidenced by the war poetry of 1793-1815, I would suggest, is an intense fear resulting in an equally intense network of collusions. It is a familiar point that those poets of the period who had some claim to be called working-class, here represented especially by Cunningham and Bloomfield, tended towards formal and ideological traditionalism; but it is more generally true that, as Bennett puts it, "poets who supported the war as well as those who opposed it use the same terms." Beneath differences of party politics we see the emergence and consolidation of a unified vocabulary, as if the tension of prolonged outward conflict were too great to permit inner discord. The relation between warfare and national unity is close indeed, and it generates an enormous power to absorb contradiction and produce it as confirmation. When Britain can be referred to, as it is in "Britain's Genius Triumphant" (1807), as "freedom-fost'ring" and "coop'd up" in two successive lines, what we need to wonder about is the power of the individual voice to survive under the pressure of fear, a fear increasingly seen as related to invasion but actually concealing a more deeply-laid fear of change and the destruction of stability. And the strategies by means of which this fear is displaced supply us with keys to the underlying myth against which the collusions are supposed to offer protection: it is a myth of imminent sexual violation, as, clearly, Blake was well aware at the time.

There is of course, and especially in the early years of the war, a terror of chaos, well exemplified in "The Farmer and Labourer" (1794): "confusion whelms all forms, all properties; / And chaos reigns among the sons of men, / Till God's avenging arm restores fair Peace again." The most important shapes for disorder are those we also find in the Gothic, both Gothic fiction and the more immediately relevant nationalistic and military Gothic represented by Macpherson's *Ossian* and, in Bennett's collection, by his many imitators. But this discourse of chaos and order is usually unspecific, lacking in vitality; it is in the imagery of a rousing song like "Stop to a Stride," from *The Gentleman's Magazine* (1803), which has Napoleon raping each European country in turn, that greater concreteness is invested. The political implications of a stance which claims that first France herself, then "poor Switzerland" and so on, have fallen victim to a violent sexual assault are manifold. Primarily, it enables a consensus to be achieved around the difficult issue of how to treat the French as, on the one hand, savage aggressors and, on the other, the victims of a pseudo-egalitarian conspiracy. This is done by separating out masculine and feminine characteristics, often along the lines suggested by Burke's potent image of the French queen. In a 1794 "Ode" from the *Scots Magazine*, the male French are conjured away completely, so that the stalwart British can perform the ideologi-

cally necessary function of protecting French virgins (presumably also virgin minds, free from the taint of Jacobinism) from damage. Frederick Atkinson's "The Emigrée" (1799) is typical of a genre in which French womanhood is conveniently reduced to penury and orphanage, British commerce being therefore her only means of survival. Helen Maria Williams, in her "Ode to Peace" of 1801, appears to entertain hopes that all might come right yet with a marriage between France and England, but for the most part so benign a solution to the quandary seems very distant.

This attempt to depotentiate the French, perhaps to remove an anxiety and an envy that they, the old enemy, have managed to effect by revolution a significant penetration of the historical fabric, becomes the key to the dominant formal device of the collection, which, despite Wordsworth, is personification. Real battles between real people are, subtly and not so subtly, transmuted into battles of the giants, in which "Freedom" and "Terror," "Liberty" and "Slaughter," "Peace" and "Rapine" are made to take on the agential role in relation to historical action. A particularly revealing example occurs in Scott's "Bonaparte" (1811), where, after a first verse in which the poet waxes rude about Napoleon's low birth in a "suburb hovel," and as we are apparently about to close in on the picture, we learn that "before that Leader strode a shadowy form, / Her limbs like mist, her torch like meteor show'd." This shadow turns out, conventionally, to be "Ambition"; what is significant, however, is her function as the "mist" which obscures real historical connection. In "Peace more Desirable than War" (1793), we find another use for personification when "Science," "Justice," "Virtue" and so forth are followed in the same mode by "George," who can thus be conveniently translated to a higher realm by a more than human process, providing a model of "super-natural" sanction.

And there are other devices which we could list, all of which help to obscure agency: transmutation into animals, gods or devils, condensation into heroic figures, and more intricate linguistic processes, mostly to do with passivization and the suppression of the subject. The process which Blake describes in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, where he provides so insightful an account of the social purposes of religion, can be extended--indeed, should be extended--into the formation of social myth, and it is clearly such a formation which is happening here, especially if we accept that a major function of myth is to naturalize contradiction. As a comment on the book, however, this is simply to say that overall it is what it set out to be, a mine of information, and no more. The introduction is a model of decorum, in which the minimal historical and social facts are stated lucidly but without recourse to speculation. The footnotes provide, as well as literary references, a sketchy narrative of the principal events of the wars; indeed, such is the author's zeal that many of them appear twice, a habit which may well have been caught from the emphatic style of the poetry itself.

But perhaps historical narrative cannot really be so simple. The confident celebrations of old English beef and pudding begin eventually to seem thin, slightly desperate, like the skin of a system of ideas and control from which the substance is gradually leaking. Yet the pressure exerted to maintain the carapace is enormous; and here we get a glimpse of the forces of cultural solidarity which drove Blake to such lengths. The principal effort of poetry in these years, judging by this copious evidence, seems not at all to have been to achieve direct communication with the hypothesized "people," but rather to generate a connection between simplicity of structure and abstract opacity of image, whereby the representation of physical action could be turned into schematized mental conflict by a series of increasingly minimal gestures. Vaunting abstractions are permitted to "do things" to each other; individuals generally figure not as actors but as patients, sufferers, sad and distant seamen, weeping widows. And thus, of course, the hierarchy of the State is produced as the formal limitation of poetry: while outwardly professing them to be made of oak, the poets portray the "people" as cowering beneath the feet of mighty, semi-invisible contestants, "Giant Forms" par excellence.

The relation which Blake's poetry bears, then, to this body of work--and Bennett and I would agree, I think, in referring to it *as* a homogeneous body of work, although the nature of our evidence would be different--is a complicated one. The root of that relation lies in the fact that it is, in this poetry, Jacobin and anti-Jacobin alike, always the French who are portrayed as desirous. The English are firm and steadfast; or at least, they are perpetually about to be called upon to be firm and steadfast. Towards the untoward events across the Channel, policy permits a number of attitudes, from noisy cheering on of our troops from the sidelines to averting the eyes and calling on the moral virtues to save us from pollution. It also, on occasion, permits some rather patchy satire. What, however, is inconceivable is that the British could have outward-going desires, except the negative one of stopping the French; and this despite the facts of colonization. The prevalent ideology clearly did not allow connections between French and British imperialism, and thus two separate streams of imagery are generated: the French commit assault, the British protect and nurture their colonies like offspring or, perhaps better, distant nieces. And it is interesting that when Blake tries to put this severed world together, in *America*, *Europe* and *The Song of Los*, he too finds it very difficult. There is plenty of desire in America, and there is a set of economic truths applied to Asia, but Europe remains the most puzzling of geographies, an apparent fairyland where, nonetheless, the displaced sense of threat is a palpable absence. The land fit for Englishmen to live in, a concern dear to the hearts of many of these poets, is one-dimensional: it is a still point, at which change can be forever avoided.

In this particular context, Blake's achievement is to continue to wrestle with the exclusion of desire, and with the function of that exclusion as a political device. There were poems being written in the last decade of the eighteenth century whose professed purpose was to apply a succession of

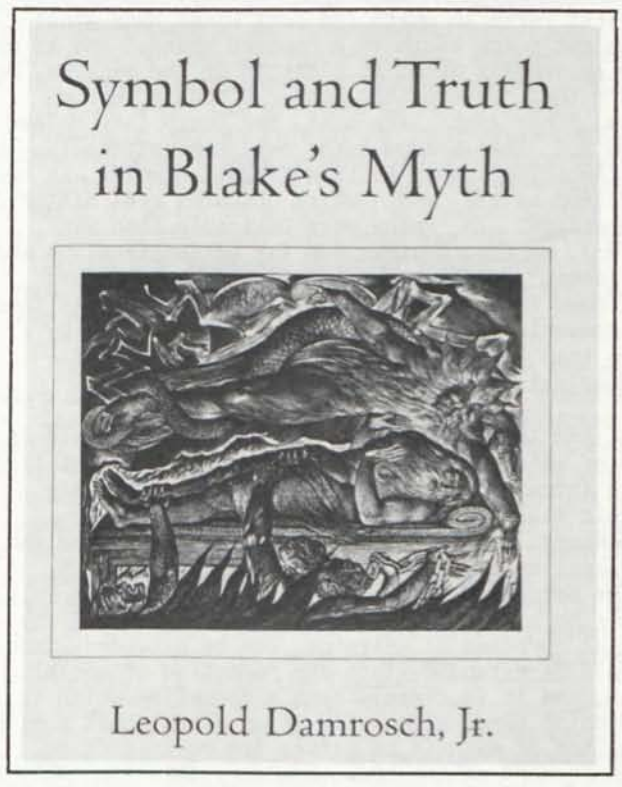
proverbs, neatly and in order, to scenes from the wars; under such circumstances, the "Proverbs of Hell" seem all the more challenging. But, of course, myth is not genuinely susceptible to opposition, nor even can it be destroyed or modified by the construction of counter-myths; since its realm is contradiction, it is capable of remaining unaffected by intellectual weapons, modifying its contours only in a complex and variable relation with changes in the underlying reality. A poem of 1813 entitled "National Discord" is interesting in this context; the poet regrets the contemporary lack of a "Thracian Lyrist . . . gifted with skill / To humble the Tiger to crouch at his will," and bemoans the collapse of the world into discord rather than the harmony which, of course, once prevailed:

> the Genius of bright intuition is fled;
> And harmony passed from the heart to the head;
> No rapt inspiration now succours the brave!
> No sounds of the lyre are effectual to save!
>
> The reign is establish'd of Discord; delight
> Exults in narration of siege and of flight;
> Where losses confuse in the flames spreading-far,
> And distresses in pageants and tumults of war.

This, I believe, well illustrates ambivalence in contemporary attitudes to the war; the assumed preoccupation of poets with the martial is criticized, while at the same time the key terms "delight" and "exults" are attached precisely to this condemned narration. For "condemned narration," we could substitute "Bible of Hell," and we would thus be enriching our sense of the relations between Blakean narrative and history, while at the same time starting to think in quite a Blakean way first about the specific shapes, the particular inclusions and exclusions, which psychic energy can be made to assume by the pressure of historical circumstance and then about the ideological collusions which seek to protect people both from the threat of change and, at the same time and inextricably, from the risk of taking on their own power.

Leopold Damrosch, Jr. **Symbol and Truth in Blake's Myth.** Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton Univ. Press, 1980. xiv + 395 pp. $25.00 cloth, $9.50 paper.

Reviewed by Nelson Hilton



After two books on Samuel Johnson, Leopold Damrosch, Jr. has now burst forward unheralded to present *Symbol and Truth in Blake's Myth*.[1] It is a weighty tome which will be read by every serious student of Blake over the next few years; the observations on "sex," "fatherhood," and the "spectre" if thought before have never been so well expressed. Having stated my belief that the book should be widely read, I hope I may be forgiven for taking the remaining space to wrestle in true friendship with a gloriously Urizenic text. Let me begin with this misreading: "As human beings if not as literary critics, we surely owe [Damrosch] Blake the obligation of testing his [criticism] myth against our experience of [Blake] truth, which is no more than doing what he constantly begs us to do [unsure]. . . . But as critics we must go further and try to understand why [Damrosch's criticism]

Blake's myth takes the unsatisfying form that it does. To do so will reveal his final ambivalence. . ." (239-40).

Return to the title, the awkward indefiniteness of which is immediately apparent as one pauses to run through its equally compelling permutations. The rationale for the second term, "truth," is that "As a prophet Blake claims to announce the truth, and I have entitled this study *Symbol and Truth* because I think it important to consider how his poems might be perceived as true by modern readers" (9). The language is curious only until we realize that it is standard Academese: distancing and subject/self-effacing (how *perhaps* "perceived" not by Damrosch but nameless "modern readers"; reporting, non-judgmentally, Blake's "claims") in the midst of its very self-assertion ("because I think it important"). As it will turn out in the final consideration, "If Blake deliberately cuts himself off from the phenomenology of lived experience, and if the modern reader cannot join him in that exclusion, why should one read him?" (368). Disregarding the two "particularly compelling" academic reasons, I would suggest that the true modern reader does join in that exclusion--the young Blake readers of the new age, who believe as well in imaginary numbers, the genetic code, black holes, and floating keeps in computer programs, are indeed moving ever further from the phenomenology of Damrosch's nostalgic, Wordsworthian "lived experience" (we are told, regretfully, that "There can be no Wordsworthian solitary reaper in Blake . . . and no Michael . . ."; that, "In the end . . . Blake cannot come to terms with [Wordsworth's image of] '. . . the very world which is the world / Of all of us" [366-67, 368]).

The first word of this book's title, "symbol," is its most important and problematic one; significantly (or symbolically?) enough, it never appears in Blake's text in any form. Damrosch, however, is concerned with "the issues" raised by Blake, and central to this focus is Blake's "exposure of the problem of symbolism," "his exploration of the possibilities and limits of the symbol" (7, 368). One is left with the impression that this also is Damrosch's vision of his own achievement. The obvious question, "What is a symbol?", would quickly propel us beyond Damrosch and into the deep space of contemporary poetics; but since the concept of "symbol" appears on nearly every page, it is essential to try to understand what Damrosch means by it. "Symbols are not simple signs"--they are "'dense with meaning'" and so "any simple translation of symbol into 'meaning' reduces it once more to a sign" (67, 68, 65).

Damrosch argues that "The symbol for Blake is more than a magnetic field of emotional charges or a cognitive system within which experience can be organized. It is our best and subtlest means of insight into reality. The sun looks like a disk but is human" (69). "But in Blake's theory," says Damrosch, "owing to his suspicion of the fallen world, symbols are vitiated by their fallen status, for example in the various versions of the sun." "Therefore," this argument continues, the symbols "point to, or participate in a reality which is more vivid and immediate than they are, *so long as* we can achieve an apocalyptic breakthrough and ascend into vision on the fiery chariot of the imagination" (362). Heady stuff.

By "vision," Blake "means a mode of perception that sees through symbols rather than with them" (302).[2] "All thinking," by way of evident contrast to vision, is of a "symbolic character" (256). "We therefore have slippery and ambiguous symbols pointing to a more vivid and organized reality 'within'" (362). This "reality," Damrosch has to argue implicitly, is itself symbolic or hypothetical, since "Blake openly defies the reality principle" by means of his "wish fulfillment on a cosmic scale that . . . chooses to deny essential facts of human experience" (163, 70). This ostensibly meta-symbolic and transcendent Blakean reality depends finally on "an act of faith--which the reader must postulate even if he does not share"--since "Invariably we are brought back to the necessity of the divine" (69, 314). We read Blake, then (now), "to know what it would be like to believe in man's spiritual power" (368). These opinions resonate movingly with the author's most telling statement in the book: "I myself (to speak frankly) have no religious belief" (246). Reading in Damrosch's concluding paragraph that the entire exercise "would have a merely antiquarian function if Blake did not possess the power of a religious vision" (371), one cannot resist wondering, "Did he put on his knowledge with his power?"

Let us return to "the issue" of "unsatifying form" and "final ambivalence": "The purpose of [Damrosch's criticism] Blake's myth is far from being merely descriptive. It is prescriptive . . ." (150). Hence such dicta as "the invention of states represents a decisive change in Blake's myth, and I think an unfortunate one"; "I propose to establish an intellectual context that will show not only what Blake seems to mean, but also why he finds it so hard to mean what he wants"; "his representations of Female Will would have been less tendentious if he had made more of the symbolism of Lilith"; "Blake's real mistake, if I may bluntly call it that, was to give in to the dualist impulse and to dismiss sexuality to Beulah" (154, 176, 219, 234).

Let me make clear what I think is going on. To talk about "symbols" is to posit the existence of "another" text, of latent meanings, and thus the concomitant necessity (since "A symbolic language has to be interpreted" [116]) of an interpreter, a wise guardian of the text and context. *Cui bono*? Recognizing that "To say what a given symbol means in Blake's work is impossible except in an extended essay on its various specific meanings" (107), Damrosch has projected instead a royal road of interpreting the nature of Blakean symbolization. His book is "a study in philosophical interpretation" which is, anyway, "logically prior to commentary"; it is, indeed, a "metacommentary" (4, 5). Like its title, the book's chapters offer abstract categories such as "The Truth of Symbols," "God and Man." Early on, Damrosch cites Blake's reported remark, "'I can look at a knot in a piece of wood till I am frightened at it,'" and finds the implication that "a fixity of gaze would compel the object to yield up its hidden

meaning" (42). Perhaps we hear an abstracted echo of this when we read, later, that our author "will explore some philosophical reasons for the knottiest problems in Blake's myth," the meanings that "baffle interpretation," that "give trouble because they cannot be coherently reconciled" (113-14). Appropriately enough, he fixes his gaze longest--for over a fifth of the book--on "The Problem of Dualism" (every Blakean symbol "has a dual significance" [290]) and there, most "compellingly," on "Sex." One hopes that these fine discussions were as therapeutic for Damrosch as he holds Blake's myth to have been for its creator (152, 311).

Damrosch's concern "with contexts rather than sources" (6) is at times misguided. Context, again, is something the (meta-)commentator decides[3]--but it is time that we start discovering "intertext" rather than projecting context, which is to say, it is time we started producing the text rather than abstracting its "meaning." For example, Damrosch quotes Blake's description that "the Plowman of Chaucer is Hercules in his supreme eternal state, divested of his spectrous shadow, which is the Miller . . . ," and observes that "In mythological terms, [the two] combine to make up Hercules, whom the ancient mythographers failed to recognize as a divided being." They "did not understand that their Hercules was a composite being. Blake's myth exists not to confirm traditional intuitions but to make new sense of them" (82). Well and good--but a little more concern for source/intertext would not be amiss. In the underworld of the *Odyssey* we see Hercules, in the translation of Pope that Blake was possibly reading with Hayley at the time, "A tow'ring spectre of gigantic mold, / A shadowy form" (11.742-43). One fascinating aspect of Hercules is that "high in heav'n's abodes / Himself resides, a God among the Gods," whereas "here" ghosts surround "his shade" (743-44, 747). Pope observes in a note to the passage that it offers "full evidence of the partition of the human composition into three parts: The body is buried in the earth; the image or ειδολον descends into the regions of the departed; and the soul, or the divine part of man, is receiv'd into heaven." Needless to say this conception of a divided or composite being suggests *Milton* as well.

Again, Damrosch's emphasis on analogous context can distract us from a more interesting textuality. He relates that, according to Hans Jonas, in the "Gnostic philosophy of Valentinus, 'matter would appear to be a function rather than a substance on its own, a state of the "affection" of the absolute being, and the solidified external expression of that state. . . . This substance, then, psychical as well as material, is nothing else than a self-estranged and sunken form of the Spirit solidified . . .'" (168). Damrosch adds, "Every word of this description can be applied to Blake, not because he 'was' a Gnostic but because the Gnostic form of Neoplatonism arrived at similar answers by an analogous route." But perhaps Blake's is not an arbitrary dualism severing the spiritual and the material, "defining one half of the duality out of existence." Perhaps it represents, in part, an attempt to incorporate contemporary "scientific reality." As Blake would have read in the *Principia*, "The vapors which arise from the sun . . . may meet at last with, and fall into, the atmospheres of the planets by their gravity, and there be condensed and turned into water and humid spirits; and from thence, by a slow heat, pass gradually into the form of salts, and sulphurs, and tinctures, and mud, and clay, and sand, and stones, and coral, and other terrestrial substances."[4]

The importance of science or "scientific myth" as a context/intertext persists throughout Blake's work. "The final vision of the Zoas," notes Damrosch, "conversing in visionary forms dramatic, represents them as 'going forward irresistable from Eternity to Eternity' [*J* 98.27], a phrase which we have seen in Boehme and which probably derives from biblical locutions like 'from everlasting to everlasting'" (341). But again, this is in part Blake's revision of Newton's "living, intelligent, and powerful Being" whose duration reaches "from eternity to eternity."[5]

"In his positive vein," writes Damrosch, "Blake describes art as organized vision that transforms appearances." He cites the beautiful passage in *Milton*, "'Thou seest the gorgeous clothd flies that dance & sport in summer,'" and finds that "their random swarming [becomes] an intricate dance." But, he would remind us, "the vision of the dancing flies is Los's conceit, a work of imagination which is only a temporary transformation of the fallen world." The dance-message of bees is a world of delight closed to this critic.[6] So too, for him, "The lark [in *Milton*] is not significant in itself, as an actual bird, but as a symbol of prophetic inspiration, which is made clear a little later in the image of a relay of larks as heavenly messengers. 'To Immortals, the Lark is a mighty Angel'" (86). Are we not Immortals, for a lark? Remarkable symbol, to lead "the Choir of Day! trill, trill, trill, trill" (*M* 31.31).

For me, the most difficult aspect of this book concerns the author's conception of Blake's language. A practitioner of "philosophical interpretation," Damrosch approvingly cites Wittegenstein: "'Philosophy is a battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language.' So is Blake's poetry," he adds (358). To which I answer, forgetting who said it, "Poetry is too important to be left to philosophers!" The crucial term here, even more difficult than Damrosch's "symbol," is *word*. While recognizing that "Blake exhibits an almost Joycean awareness of the manipulability of words," Damrosch knows that "behind the words he sees a divine vision to which they point, and has little interest in words for their own sake" (73). Words are opake bricks in "'the stubborn structure' of the Language"--a quotation to which Damrosch continually returns. Language is one more of those "barriers to vision" (like images, phenomena, symbols [42, 69, 302]), that we must learn to see through (73, 328): "how could the structure not be stubborn? Syntax is tyrannical, forcing us to think along its lines, and every individual word is haunted by associations that the user cannot escape" (326). Blake's liberties with syntax and normal association are for Damrosch only further indications of Blake's "determination to make us break through language" (326).

Discussing *Adam Naming the Beasts*, Damrosch proposes that "in the very act of *naming*, in choosing human symbols with which to represent experience, man has committed himself to the Fall" (90). But is the word, in its practical and conceptual reality, a human symbol? Damrosch neglects to acknowledge that both *Milton* and *Jerusalem* end with *onomastic* "visions" ("I heard it namd," "I heard the Name," *M* 42.15, *J* 99.5). Perceiving that there is something particular about Blake's relation to the word, Damrosch admits that "in Eternity . . . words become truly creative as in the symbolism of the first chapter of John's gospel . . . rather than a stubborn structure" (327). So, "When Albion awakens he is heard 'speaking the Words of Eternity in Human Forms,'" and these "Words are not signs but living beings. . . . And conversation must therefore be more than language as we know it, the stubborn structure of Los" (346). Curiously enough, these living words which Damrosch would confine to Blake's Eternity have escaped to his own text twelve pages on: "Blake's words will not stay on the page as objects of aesthetic contemplation; they invade the reader's mind and attempt to transform his world" (358).[7] These are indeed the agents of a *stubborn* structure (let us consult the OED): "refusing obedience, unyielding, untameable, difficult to subdue."[8] Blake's genius is that he recognizes this divine, transcendental, Orcian energy in the word. Where Damrosch sees his "slippery and ambiguous symbols pointing to a more vivid and organized reality 'within,'" one might instead see definite and polysemous words pointing to the vivid and organized reality within their structure: a vision of telos we could call imagination/the word/Jesus. Why, after all, does language exist? Why do we yield up the question of its origins? And here also I must dissent from the author's view that "Blake's dream of visionary truth is fundamentally incompatible with modern theories of intertextuality, indeterminacy, and deconstructive license" (355). The Book of Revelation is indeed "a very different model from the speculations of Jacques Derrida," but such contemporary explorations show us in words and texts the vortex long foretold.[9] Barthes' "galaxy of signifiers" adjoins Blake's Eternity.

Consider another example of "Blakean symbolism, which continually disturbs our imaginations with its aggressive strangeness. After Satan seizes the harrow of Palamabron and reduces his servants to drunken confusion, 'Los took off his left sandal placing it on his head, / Signal of solemn mourning.' This is a symbolic action that demands a gloss, not a 'natural representation'" (94). Damrosch does not offer that gloss (this being a metacommentary, one supposes), but goes on to ask, typically, "Would an exemplar of the poet in Wordsworth put a sandal on his head?" I suggest that this is not so much a symbolic act as a linguistic one--an act whose "symbolism" is its praxis, which is "more than language as we know it, the stubborn structure of Los."

We need first to remember the surrounding text: the servants of the mill riot

> With ecchoing confusion, tho' the Sun was
> risen on high.
> Then Los took off his left sandal placing it on
> his head,
> Signal of solemn mourning
> (*M* 8.10-12)

"Ecchoing confusion" here indicates the manner in which the words that follow are to be understood. Thus "Sun" becomes the "sandal" which is in turn the "signal of solemn mourning." This is another version of what appears in *Jerusalem* as "that Signal of the Morning which was told us in the Beginning" (*J* 93. 26),[10] the beginning in which was the living word, the *logon zooas* (λογον ζωης) of Golgonooza. As the Sun was risen "*on hi*gh," so Los places the sandal "*on hi*s head." The sandal is the signal which the servants behold, and its rising initiates the mourning, the awareness of loss. What will later be the sandal of the vegetable world, the vehicle, the signifier, is here seen as the intellectual sun-head, the sign itself. The passage discloses a mode of productivity distinct from the odd picture ("symbol") offered by the narrative; indeed, the description seems to be intentionally "unfortunate" (Stevenson's annotation) in order to draw attention to the process of literal transformation at work. Thus in this passage *sun* becomes *risen*, becomes Los or sol anagrammatically, and then becomes *sandal* becomes *signal* becomes *sol/emn*--and all ending with mourning. The underlying theme, in word and letter (*o*'s occur here at twice Blake's average rate, as randomly sampled), is the sun; this should not surprise Damrosch, who offers a section on "Symbolic Knowing: The Example of the Sun." This theme may be called the "hypogram," the term introduced by Saussure in his strange investigation of Latin verse to characterize "the inducing word": the word or small group of words which he supposed "led, by way of phonetic paraphrase, to the elaboration of the poem" (Starobinski). Saussure hoped to discover a law of poetic composition, and while such a conception is incredible, it does seem that in the passage at hand the Poetic Genius (not to be identified with the conscious poet) writes from a pre-text concerning the sun. The effect of such literal play parallels that which Maureen Quilligan posits for wordplay in allegory: it makes the reader "self-conscious of reading by indicating the primary importance of the verbal surface rather than the imagined action." Such expanded considerations make the reader more conscious of the various paths to the production of meaning: the simple but serious realization that there is more at work than meets the everyday sleepy eye (or ear) is enough: the glimmering indication that there are worlds of delight closed by our common sense, our expectation, our symbolic projections,[11] awakens another sense for that delight, the sense that "Reason or the ratio of all we have already known is not the same that it shall be when we know more" (*NNR*b): a sense of process, of our passing presence in the exfoliation of the word. S-u-n perhaps serves in such a generating position in the passage since--to use a Swedenborgian intertext--the Lord is the Word, which is the spiritual sun, which is the only real existence and the conjunction between man and itself: the Poetic Genius centers on the word "sun" as another name for the word and for itself.

Damrosch "must reject Frye's suggestion that the key to Blake's thought is the synonymity of

'form' and 'image.'" Projecting unbindable duality everywhere, he explains, "On the contrary, form belongs to the eternal realm and image to the sensory"; and from this "We see how profoundly Blake needed a religious assurance of union with the one central Form" (44). But Frye's "synonymity" is precisely the energy or space embodied in the word, which joins form and image and is discontinuous with the world. At the beginning of *The Four Zoas* Blake directs us to John 1:14, quoting the last part in Greek: "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." And the reason, according to the other reference to John, is "That they all may be one. . . . " Albion, if one will. It is language, the medium of communication and communion, in which we are one; it is the word which is the true subject. As Los "built" the stubborn structure, so "*the words* of man to man. . . . build the Universe stupendous: Mental forms Creating" (*M* 30.18-20, my italics). Where Damrosch sees us "confined to a world in which the word is woven into the garment of the Shadowy Female" (328), we can change the metaphysics and see the word weaving textuality, hear "the voice of the shuttle."[12] The rich ambiguity Damrosch is wont to find in Blake appears revealingly in his own comment on a quotation from Eliade: "'The myth is supposed to happen . . . in a non-temporal time, in an instant without duration, as certain mystics and philosophers conceived of eternity.' In a word, as Blake conceived of it" (353).

This book, like all of its sort but more than some, is an exercise in academic power. It does not wear its learning lightly--a footnote to Pascal detains us with the information that "Pascal's term *jetée* is strikingly anticipatory of Heidegger's *geworfen*" (233); a note on *The Recluse* tells that "Both the thought and the meditative music--filled with anticipatory echoes of Stevens' *Sunday Morning*--are radically un-Blakean" (87). We are told with astonishment that "the Blakean phrase 'prolific energy' appears--of all places!--in Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France*" (148), when there is no such phrase in Blake; the *Merkabah* is introduced without any explanation for the unlearned (240); "an electrical circuit plugged in to itself" appears as the impossible image of "an internal economy of perpetual stability" (239); we learn that "the problem of the divine is ubiquitous," but also that "Cruelty is ubiquitous" (244, 252). We hear too often that "It has been said . . . ," "In other words . . . ," "It is easy to see . . . ," "No doubt . . ." (e.g. 96, 97, 103, 252), and also, usually with a negative tone, what "Blakeans" think. "A true acceptance of opposites demands a skeptical temperament and a commitment to things as they are" (242), says the same author who warns against dangers in "The zeal to domesticate [Blake] for English Literature" (308). We see Damrosch's zeal for things as they are in his "denial" of opposing flights of fancy (see 105, 239).

Symbol and Truth in Blake's Myth is, then, a forceful and at times seductive attempt to inscribe Blake with the traditional issues of subject-oriented philosophy. I would rather wish, "loving the greatest men best," our continual effort to subject ourselves to Blake. For myself, I deny that "In learning Blake's grammar we learn how to use his vocabulary; when we fail, it is either because we have not understood imaginatively enough or because he has not shown us what he means" (81). We fail because we do not pay due attention to the "Litteral Expression": "Mark well my words . . ."

[1] In the most recent of the preceding books, *The Uses of Johnson's Criticism* (1976), Damrosch still held to the vision of "Blake, the champion of minute particulars."

[2] To assert the reality of vision, Damrosch cites several mescaline experiences (none his own) and concludes, "I have thought this documentation important--and it could be multiplied many times over--because it should compel [!] a recognition that Blake's visions were actual experiences, not merely poetic metaphors" (49).

[3] Or decides can't be decided: "the visionary episodes . . . are the ultimate context of his myth" (44).

[4] Florian Cajori, ed. *Sir Isaac Newton's Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy and His System of the World*, trans. Andrew Motte [1729] (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1934), p. 542; see also *Blake* 12.2, p. 84.

[5] Cajori, p. 545; this is from the "General Scholium," *essential* reading for any student of Blake; note that Newton's God "constitutes duration and space," while the Zoas are "Creating Space, Creating Time" (*J* 98.13).

[6] Cf. "With what sense does the bee form cells?" (*VDA* 3.4); on "bee" as one usual signified of "fly," see OED. This example is generated retrospectively, but then, "What is now proved was once, only imagin'd."

[7] Perhaps he didn't mean this, or perhaps it's just one of those Blakean incoherences, for we read a few pages later that "It is crucially significant that the words are engraved . . . so that instead of allowing them to pass into our minds as if they spoke themselves inside our heads, we are forced--or would be if we used Blake's original texts--to see them as objects put there by a human artist" (363).

[8] Damrosch seemingly prefers the judgment of Johnson's *Dictionary* that "In all its uses it commonly implies something of bad quality." Considering the description in the preceding verse, "English, the rough basement," "stubborn" may be pointing toward a stylistic description of the mother tongue as "Harsh; rough; rugged" (Johnson). Yet the terms "basement" and "structure"--appearing only here in Blake's poetry--certainly suggest something like Heidegger's vision that "Language is the house of Being. Man dwells in this house. Those who think [*die Denkenden*] and those who create poetry [*die Dichtenden*] are the custodians of the dwelling."

[9] Cf. the description of *Beatrice Addressing Dante from the Car*: "a deadening book of memory or law . . . emerges in smoke from the vortex" (186).

[10] This points to the important Blakean homonym morning/mourning which I will not discuss except to observe that it helps to explain the contradiction in seeing that "every morning *is* a completed desire" even though "the recurrence of spring, even in the gladness of its songs, is a symptom of the cyclical prison of the fallen world" (53, 86).

[11] "'The Eye altering alters all' occurs in a poem that describes the imprisoning cycle of the fallen world," says Damrosch (27)--but it doesn't so much describe as *inscribe*: do we naively believe that "all is done as *I* have told"?

[12] "Los answerd swift as the shuttle of gold" (*J* 92.13).

Margaret Bottrall. "A Lecture on William Blake's **Songs of Innocence and Experience**" (sic), The Critical Forum. London: Norwich Tapes, Ltd., 1978.

Reviewed by Paul Mann

It is hard for me to believe that this could be an idea whose time has come. In two taped lectures of about forty-five minutes each, a British schoolmarm with a good BBC Third Programme accent leads us on a docent tour of the *Songs Of Innocence and Of Experience*. Along the way she offers us a little history, a little biography, some judicious glosses from other works by Blake, and a glimpse of the Major Themes: Energy, Imagination, Contraries, Apocalypse, Revolution, Rationality, Priestcraft--all described clearly, succinctly and soberly. The tape is, in effect, a kind of low-tech *Cliff Notes*.

This is not to say that it is without merit. As an introduction, one can hardly fault it. Professor Bottrall is an epitome of Anglo-American critical common-sense, and she covers an impressive amount of territory. She sees Blake's work in his career and his career in his century. She deals fairly effectively with relationships between text and illustrations. She knows about textual alterations in copies of the *Songs*. She is skeptical of reading Blake as a doctrinal mystic. She keeps it simple, but not at the expense of irony and enigma. And she only occasionally lapses into sententiousness, as when she claims that "Blake restores to us our lost innocence. . . . Art can make good that loss, but life cannot"; or when she gently dismisses the later work because Blake's "schemes are too arbitrary, his nomenclature too individualistic, ever to commend his reading of superhuman nature to the generality of men." One wishes, at such moments, that she were on hand, so that one could ask a pointed question about generality, or remind her that Blake was not interested in that which could be made explicit to an idiot.

The problem is not really with Professor Bottrall's interpretations, which are good enough for an introduction. Indeed, the perspectives she maps out are probably much the same as those with which many of Blake's most sophisticated readers began. The problem is rather one of medium, of appropriate form, of pedagogical viability. How are students to listen to this? With their hands folded on their desks? Certainly, slides of the relevant plates could be shown with the lecture, but would that be enough? The tape is designed to be heard by high school and beginning college students, but it is really *for teachers* who have to teach Blake but feel they know little or nothing about him. Professor Bottrall serves *them*, as a guest lecturer or substitute teacher.

If teachers believe they need this tape, they should listen to it at home and work out some positions on the *Songs* for themselves. But no student should be forced to endure it. Professor Bottrall wants to interest students in Blake, but to do that you need to involve them in an active encounter with the texts, to interrogate them and be prepared for their questions. You should not just point out and explain details, but show a slide and get the students to discover for themselves significant pictorial and textual details. You should not tell them that the language of the *Songs* is simple and musical, but get them to recite the *Songs* until they experience at least something of their simplicity and music. You should not tell them that the nomenclature of the later work is complex and formidable, but encourage them to explore, say, "Tirzah," in a kind of paranomastic free association until at least some of the name's allusions are clearly experienced. I find it hard to believe that, in a tape-and-slide show of the *Songs*, students would be likely to profit from or retain much of Professor Bottrall's short course; it would, I suspect, be the fiery images of the plates themselves into which the students would be drawn. And it is that attraction which should be encouraged and developed.

MINUTE PARTICULARS

BLAKE AND THE NOVELISTS

Christopher Heppner

A recurring fascination in the reading of Blake is to wonder how some of his statements and exhortations would feel if lived out in a real life--one's own, for example. Many of the novelists who have used Blake have explored this question, from a variety of perspectives. Joyce Cary in *The Horse's Mouth* gave us one version of the artist as hero, living out his own interpretation of Blake. Colin Wilson's *The Glass Cage* made its hero a Blake critic, but an oddly reclusive one, who appears a little ambivalent in his lived responses to the poet, and is now writing about Whitehead.

Both these novels are well known, but readers of *Blake* may not know the next two novels, which sparked this note. The first is R. F. Nelson's *Blake's Progress* (Toronto: Laser Books, 1975), which starts as a rather engaging biography of Blake, beginning with his marriage. It reveals that Kate remained a virgin for many years, was responsible for most of Blake's successful commercial engravings, and was generally invaluable. It also tells us that Blake's poetry is not really poetic fiction at all, but that the prophecies are full of names and images "taken from William's adventures as a time-voyageur through the alternate worlds, used to comment on the current political and social scene" (pp. 108-09). The book is fun, up to a point, but very literal at heart; Blake becomes a hero, but at the expense of his poetry, which becomes simply a fancy kind of space travel reporting.

The second book is very different. It is by a writer often labeled as a writer of science fiction, but in this case he bypasses science and technology completely. J. G. Ballard's *The Unlimited Dream Company* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1979) is a tale about a young man called, simply, Blake. He is a not very successful creature of the twentieth century, and no explicit attempt is made to relate him to our William, except the name--and the story. One might begin a description by suggesting that it explores what it would be like to experience some of Blake's central metaphors, or that it is a kind of narrative version of "Auguries of Innocence" and "To my Friend Butts I write." In its progress, it almost convinces the reader that "vices in this world may well be metaphors for virtues in the next," offers vivid intuitions of what the vortices described in Plate 15 of *Milton* might feel like, and puts into narrative play Blake's musings about identity and identification. By omitting all reference to Blake's life and writings, Ballard has written a *tour de force* that in some ways gets closer to the heart of Blake's vision than the more explicitly Blakean novels. [*My thanks to Roberto Cucci and Barbara Heppner for drawing my attention to the last two novels.*]

ANOTHER SOURCE FOR BLAKE'S ORC

Randel Helms

William Blake derived the name and characteristics of his figure Orc from a variety of sources, combining them to produce the various aspects of the character in such poems as *America*, *The Four Zoas* and *The Song of Los*. The hellish aspects of Orc probably come from the Latin *Orcus*, the abode of the dead in Roman mythology and an alternate name for Dis, the god of the underworld. In *Tiriel*, Ijim describes Tiriel's house, after his sons have expelled him, as "dark as vacant Orcus."[1] The libidinous aspect of Orc may well come, as David Erdman has suggested, from the Greek ὄρχεις, "testicles."[2] "Orcs," from the Latin *orca*, "whale," appear in *Paradise Lost*, a poem much read by Blake, and in *America* Orc appears symbolically as "sometimes a whale."[3] Finally, in Hoole's version of *Orlando Furioso*, for which Blake prepared an engraving in 1783, the poet would have noted that "the word *orca* . . . is applied to any monster or creature of the imagination [and] occurs in Milton."[4] But Orc also appears as a fiery figure in association with Mount Atlas; these aspects of the figure derive from Jacob Bryant's *New System, Or, an Analysis of Ancient Mythology* (first published in 1774), which Blake as a young apprentice may have had a hand in illustrating.[5] We know that the poet thought highly of the work, as his remark in the *Descriptive Catalogue* makes clear: "The antiquities of every Nation under Heaven, is no less sacred than that of the Jews. They are the same thing, as Jacob Bryant and all antiquaries have proved."[6]

In Bryant's chapter entitled "Of Ancient Worship, and of Etymological Truths Thence Deducible," Blake would have found the theory that the Hercynian Forest in Germany gets its name from the Greek δρυμὸς Ὀρχύνιος, "the forest of Orcun."[7] Bryant goes on to note that at the edge of this forest stands a mountain, the name of which, Pyrene, "signifies a fountain of fire," because the "mountain had once flamed. . . . The country therefore and the forest may have been called Orcunian upon this account. For as the worship of the Sun, the Deity of fire, prevailed greatly at places of this nature, I make no doubt Hercynia, which Ptolemy expresses Ὀρχυνια, was so named from Or-cun, the God of that element."[8] Bryant goes on to theorize that one of the "Puratheia, or open temples, for the celebration of the rites of fire," may have stood on Mount Atlas: "This Atlas (of which I have been speaking) is a mountain with a cavity, and of a tolerable height, which the natives esteem both as a temple, and a

Deity."[9] These passages in Bryant stand as another source of the name of Orc, and may in part lie behind Blake's assertions that "The cave of Orc stood to the South, a furnace of dire flames," and that "Orc on Mount Atlas howld, chain'd down with the Chain of Jealousy."[10]

[1] *The Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, ed. David V. Erdman (New York: Doubleday, 1970), p. 278.

[2] David V. Erdman, *Blake: Prophet Against Empire* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 3rd ed., 1977), p. 26.

[3] See *Paradise Lost*, XI, 835, and *America* 1:14.

[4] Erdman, *Prophet Against Empire*, p. 25.

[5] See Geoffrey Keynes, *Blake Studies* (London: R. Hart-Davis, 1949), pp. 42-49.

[6] *Blake: Complete Writings*, ed. Geoffrey Keynes (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1966), p. 578.

[7] Jacob Bryant, *A New System, Or, an Analysis of Ancient Mythology* (London: T. Payne, 1776), I, 210.

[8] Bryant, I, 211.

[9] Bryant, I, 221.

[10] Erdman, *Poetry and Prose*, pp. 344, 66.

NEWSLETTER

HAPPY 95th to SIR GEOFFREY

Birthday greetings to Geoffrey Keynes, who turned 95 years old on 25 March. Lest anyone suspect us of favoritism, we promise to wish happy birthday to all our subscribers who are 95 and over.

YALE CENTER/TORONTO EXHIBITION

15 September–14 November 1982

This major loan exhibition will demonstrate the imaginative scope of Blake's interests, the high quality of his graphic art, and the technical inventiveness into which he combined verse and illustration. It will also explore new interpretations of his work in the light of the intellectual and aesthetic currents of his times.

David Bindman is the organizer of the exhibition and the author of its illustrated catalogue. He has selected approximately two hundred works, including a substantial number of the watercolor and tempera illustrations to the Bible and the works of Milton, Gray and Dante. One significant feature of the exhibition will be the unique colored copy of *Jerusalem*. The most important of the "illuminated" books and individual color prints will be represented by several copies in order to demonstrate the development of Blake's ideas throughout his working life.

William Blake: His Art and Times will be the most comprehensive exhibition of Blake's work in North America in recent years. It draws upon the extensive Blake holdings at Yale and in the collection of Mr. Paul Mellon. The Tate Gallery and the British Museum are foremost among foreign lenders. From Yale the exhibition will travel to the Art Gallery of Ontario in Toronto.

ROSENWALD MEMORIAL EXHIBITION

Ruth Fine, formerly curator of Lessing J. Rosenwald's Alverthorpe Gallery and now curator in the Department of Graphic Arts at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C., has organized an exhibition in honor of Rosenwald. *Lessing J. Rosenwald: Tribute to a Collector* opens at the National Gallery 21 February and runs through 9 May 1982.

With 100 works selected from the 22,000 pieces that Rosenwald collected during his lifetime, the exhibition will represent the range of Rosenwald's interests in medieval manuscript illumination, fifteenth-century woodcuts and engravings, Blake, the impressionists, post-impressionists, and German expressionists, among others. Among the Blakes in the exhibition is *The Vision of Queen Katherine* (Butlin 549). A fully illustrated catalogue of the exhibition is available.

MLA SPECIAL SESSION 1981:

"Blake and the Art of His Time"

Perhaps because they are by nature or inclination themselves extremists, Blake people seem equally undeterred by the earliness or lateness of their appointed hour, as this past year's two MLA Special Sessions demonstrated. The Sunrise Semester Special, "Blake and the Art of His Time," attracted a good crowd, whose members were treated to four slide-illustrated presentations: Dennis Read on Blake's "Death's Door," Alexander Gourlay and John Grant on a possible Blake-Reynolds connection involving the latter's portrait of Anne Dashwood, Kevin Lewis on the apocalyptic and millennial in the art of Blake's contemporaries, and John Wright on Blake's stereoptic art and its relations to the popular art of the period. The Gourlay/Grant paper, incidentally, has now been accepted for publication in the *Bulletin of Research in the Humanities*. All the presentations, as well as the discussion that ensued, stressed the clear need for further exploration of Blake's ties with the visual milieu of his times, a need that is at last being seriously addressed, as recent publications on Blake's work attest.

STEPHEN C. BEHRENDT
UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA

EDMONTON ART GALLERY EXHIBITION

"William Hayley and His Circle"

17 September–30 October 1982

To accompany the meeting of the Canadian Society for Eighteenth Century Studies in Edmonton, there will be an exhibition of art works related to the activities of William Hayley. The exhibition is organized by Victor Chan of the Univ. of Alberta and will include approximately 150 paintings, drawings, prints and books. These works--by William Blake, John Flaxman, George Romney, Benjamin West, Henry Fuseli, Thomas Stothard, George Morland, James Barry and John Mortimer--are drawn from Canadian and American collectors. A comprehensive catalogue will accompany the exhibition. In addition, a workshop at the beginning of the Edmonton conference on "Art in the Age of Sensibility and Revolution" will serve as an introduction to the exhibition. For more information about the Edmonton conference (14-16 October 1982) and participation in the workshop, contact Victor Chan, Coordinator of Art History, Department of Art and Design, Univ. of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada T6G 2C9, or call (403) 432-2543.

SANTA CRUZ CONFERENCE ON BLAKE AND CRITICISM:

REGISTRATION

Anyone wishing to register for the conference (20-22 May, at the Univ. of California, Santa Cruz) is reminded that it will be structured around an informal textbook consisting of twelve solicited papers. The papers themselves will not be presented; rather, this textbook will serve as the point of reference for summary, response, and discussion. While there is no registration fee, anyone planning to attend is requested to send in his or her address, together with a check for $8 (this sum to partially defray the cost of duplication and postage), so that the organizers will know how many copies to prepare and where to mail them when they become available in mid-April. Checks should be made out to T. A. Vogler, Blake & Criticism; address: Blake & Criticism, Literature Board, UCSC, Santa Cruz, CA 95064 (telephone 408-429-4591).