

Blake

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AN ILLUSTRATED QUARTERLY
VOLUME 18 NUMBER 3 WINTER 1984-85

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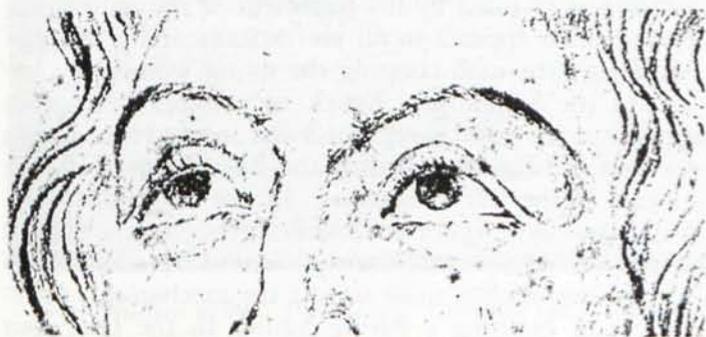
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A Newly Discovered Blake at the Huntington

BY SHELLEY M. BENNETT

A quite unexpected yet welcome discovery was made recently at the Huntington. While preparing the Huntington's enormous print collection for its move into new quarters, a miscellaneous group of drawings emerged from among the prints. One of these (illus. 1) was identified by an attached scrap of paper as follows: "450 Blake . . . The Plague". Although unsigned, this pencil drawing, measuring approximately 24.2 × 29.8 cm., was clearly related to the well-known series of designs by Blake called "The Plague" or "Pestilence."¹

Comparison of this drawing with other works by Blake quickly established its authenticity.² The drawing bears all of the earmarks of Blake's distinctive calligraphic style. In particular, it displays the rather crude, often hesitant line which is associated with his preparatory pencil studies, such as those listed as "Drawings for the Earlier Illuminated Books and Other Similar Sketches" (nos. 215-243A), c. 1789-1795, in Martin Butlin's authoritative work, *The Paintings and Drawings of William Blake*. From these gauche beginnings Blake would develop the flowing, expressive contour lines characteristic of his finished designs.

Although an awkward example of Blake's talents as a draftsman, the newly discovered drawing provides some valuable information about the other five versions of this subject, which occupied Blake from about 1779 to 1805. Because this is the only known preliminary pencil study for the subject of the Plague/Pestilence, it assists in establishing the chronological order of the existing five watercolors. And, in fact, it reconfirms the following arrangement suggested by Butlin:³ (no. 184) "Pestilence, Probably the Great Plague of London," c. 1779-80, pen and watercolor (with a certain amount of scratching out), Steigal Fine Art, Edinburgh (illus. 2); (no. 185) "Pestilence," c. 1780-84, pen and watercolor, Robert N. Essick, Los Angeles (illus. 3); (no. 190) "Pestilence" (recto), c. 1790-95, pen and watercolor, the late Gregory Bateson, Ben Lomond, California (illus. 4); (no. 192) "Pestilence," c. 1795-1800, pen and watercolor, City Art Gallery, Bristol (illus. 5); (no. 193) "Pestilence," pen and watercolor over pencil, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (illus. 6).

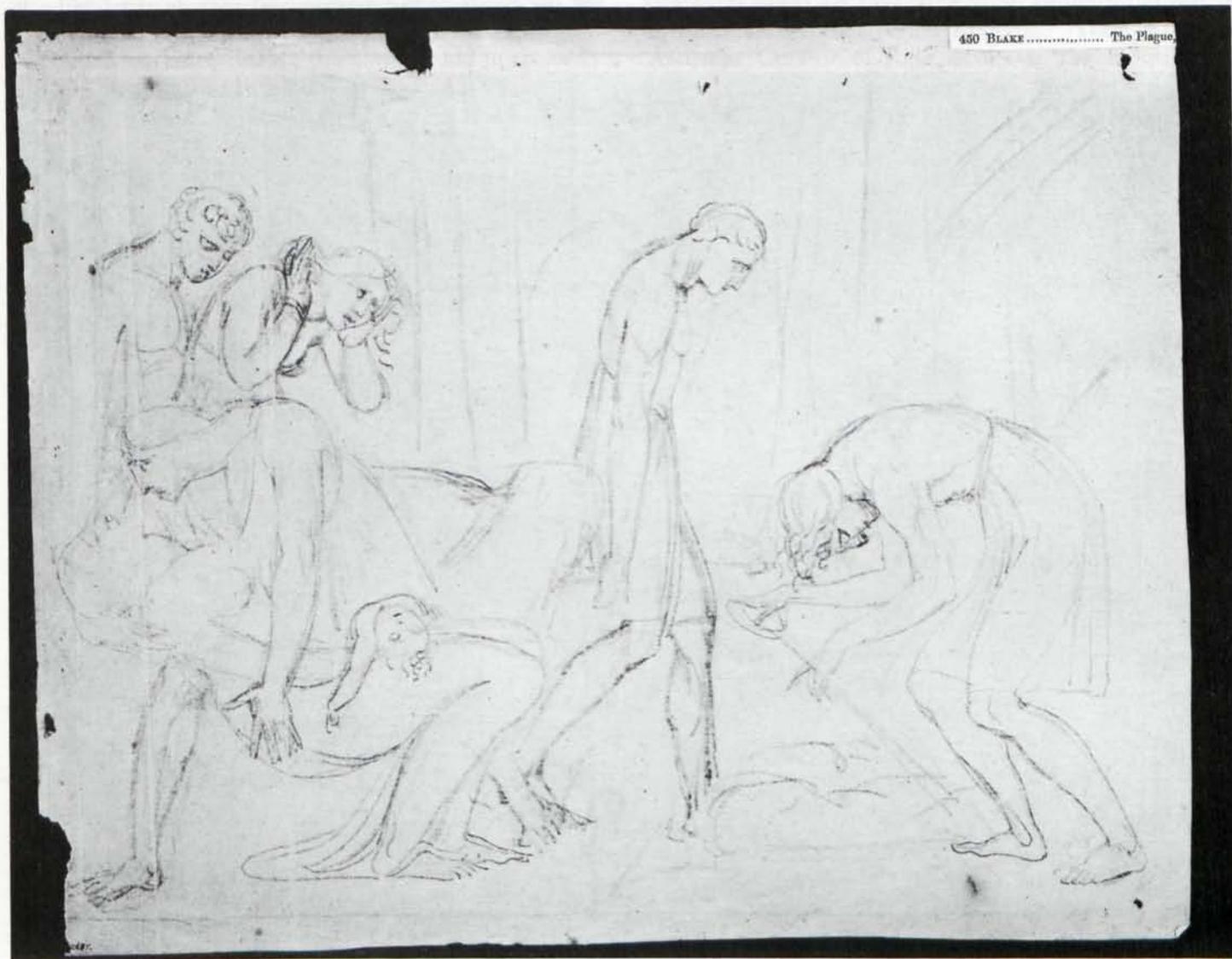
The two earliest versions of this Plague/Pestilence theme, probably dating from 1779-84,⁴ share several features which differentiate them from the three later versions, also linked by common characteristics. Variations in gesture and in arrangement of the figures and general composition indicate that the pencil drawing is most closely associated with the three later watercolors which Butlin dates between about 1790 and 1805.⁵ For example, the Steigal and Essick watercolors both contain a bellman and town square in the background. These and other features have been eliminated in the Huntington pencil drawing and the three later watercolors. Likewise, the general placement of the figure groups are almost identical in the two early watercolors and have been radically modified in the pencil drawing and the three later watercolor versions. The number of figures have been considerably reduced and those remaining have been enlarged and more rigidly confined to the foreground plane. Due to these stylistic adjustments the Huntington drawing and the later watercolors are less congested, with a more emphatic lateral orientation. Concern with spatial effects has been sacrificed for a classicizing, frieze-like composition. The resulting arrangement is more monumental and restrained, providing an effective foil to the exaggerated gestures of despair and anguish.

Once Blake had settled upon this alternate composition, he focused almost exclusively in his later studies on variations in the emotive gestures, making only minor adjustments in the overall composition. For example, an interesting insight into Blake's evolution of a design is revealed by his treatment of the only figure group which appears in all six versions of the Plague/Pestilence, the man clasping the dying woman.

In the Steigal and Essick watercolors this group appears in the right foreground and in the Huntington drawing and Bateson, Bristol and Boston watercolors it appears in the left foreground. In the two earlier versions, the male figure is turned three-quarters toward the viewer. Little emotion is generated by what seems in these watercolors to be simply the mechanical, physical act of catching a falling figure. In the later four

versions the man now hunches over the female figure with gestures, particularly the tensed, splayed fingers of his left hand, which indicate both physical and emotional stress. In the Huntington drawing and the Bateson watercolor his head is turned to a profile view, probably as part of the general reorganization of the composition into a more two-dimensional, frieze-like orientation. In the Bristol and the Boston watercolors, his head has been returned to a three-quarter view to give full play to the representation of his anguished facial features. As in the case of several other modifications and variations, Blake's experiments came to fruition in the splendid Boston watercolor. Although more rudimentary in nature, the Huntington pencil drawing adds to our understanding of Blake's complex creative process.

By comparing similar alterations in gesture and secondary details, it can be demonstrated that the newly discovered pencil drawing is closely related to the Bateson watercolor of about 1790-95. For example, one of the most clear cut examples of Blake's progressive development of an expressive device is in his treatment of the dead baby lying across the lap of the mother. In the Huntington drawing and the Bateson watercolor the baby is placed in a rather relaxed position as if it has just fallen asleep. In the Bristol and the Boston watercolors the baby's left arm has been extended across the mother's legs in a crucifix-like position more clearly and expressively indicating the child's sad condition. Similarly, in the Huntington drawing and the Bateson watercolor the mother's eyes are closed as if she had merely fainted away, while the fixed state of her open eyes in



1. William Blake. "The Plague." Unsigned pencil drawing (24.2 × 29.8 cm.). Courtesy of Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery, San Marino, California.

the Bristol and the Boston works effectively suggests the final stages of death or death itself.

Although linked by many similar details, a minor variation in the background suggests that the pencil drawing may have been executed before the Bateson watercolor as well as the Bristol and Boston versions. A similar architectural backdrop links all four of these later works and differentiates them from the Steigal and Es-sick watercolors; however, there is a clear distinction between the pencil drawing and the Bateson, Bristol and Boston watercolors in the treatment of the doorway behind the central male figure bearing the litter. In both the Bateson and the Bristol watercolors a post and lintel doorway plays off against the curved, sloping back of the figure. This expressive device is repeated in the rectilinear treatment of the architectural structure in the background of the Boston watercolor. The arched portal in the Huntington drawing makes no sense as part of

this artistic progression of the three late versions. Since the Boston watercolor is the most complex and developed of the compositions, the Huntington drawing could not have followed it. The pencil drawing may represent an earlier idea that was modified in the three later variations. The fact that this work is executed in pencil, a medium which Blake, as his contemporaries, used for preliminary studies, also reinforces this arrangement in sequence. It seems likely that Blake would begin his complete reworking of the earlier composition with a pencil study before proceeding to watercolor.

The variation in other expressive details, however, suggests a slightly different chronological ordering with the Huntington drawing directly following the Bateson watercolor. For example, in the Bateson watercolor all of the heads are positioned in strict profile. In the pencil drawing the heads are placed in a profile view except for the heads of the woman and man in the left back-



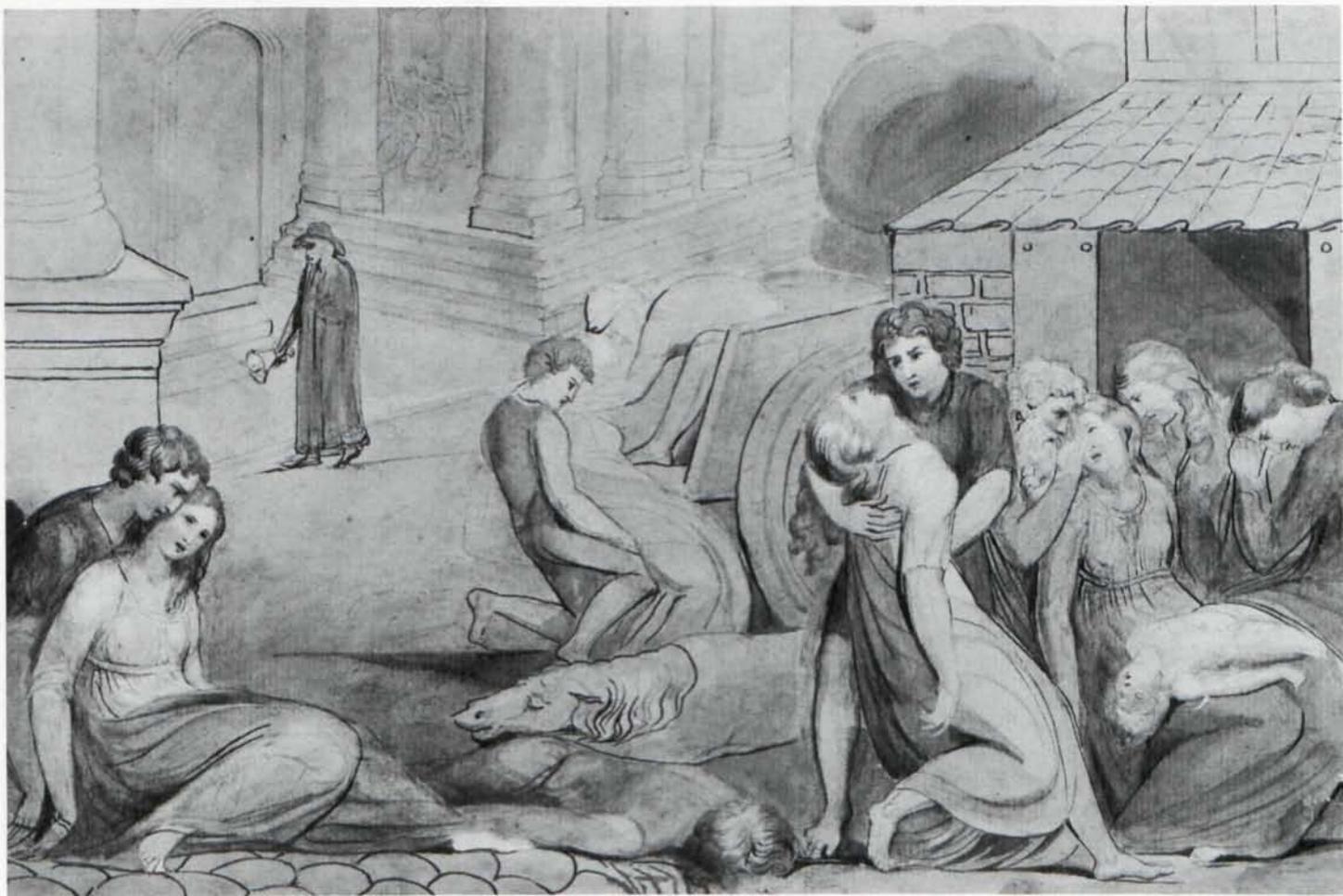
2. William Blake. "Pestilence, probably the Great Plague of London," c. 1779-80. Pen and watercolor (13.8 × 18.6 cm.). Courtesy of Steigal Fine Art, Edinburgh.

ground which are turned to a three-quarter view. This placement of the woman's head is continued in the Bristol and the Boston watercolor, although the litter carrier's head is returned to profile view. If one sees a clear-cut and consistent development in Blake's art during this period from two-dimensional profile views to more three-dimensional renderings,⁶ the three-quarter turn of the female's head in the Huntington drawing and Bristol and Boston watercolors links these works and suggests that they, in turn, follow the Bateson watercolor. Blake does not, however, continue the three-quarter view of the litter carrier which he introduced in the Huntington drawing. In both the Bristol and the Boston watercolors he returns to the profile view. Perhaps he felt that the morose, dejected detachment of this figure was more expressively rendered by the profile view when amplified by the identical pose of the other litter bearer.

Whether the newly discovered pencil drawing directly preceded or followed the Bateson watercolor, it was clearly executed during the same period in the early 1790s. The drawing does, indeed, exhibit the "neo-

classic" stylistic features which characterize Blake's work of this time, such as "Los and Orc," c. 1792-93 (Butlin no. 255), or "Three Falling Figures," c. 1793 (Butlin no. 256) or other designs associated with the illuminated books of the early 1790s. Like the pencil drawing, all of these works display a strong two-dimensional, frieze-like organization of the composition with little concern for spatial effects. Blake does not exploit three-dimensional effects of modeling in these works of the early 1790s, but instead concentrates on flat, linear patterns, typical of much of the work of several of his contemporaries at this time such as John Flaxman and Thomas Stothard. In his later works, such as the Boston version of the Plague/Pestilence dating to about 1805, Blake reintroduces the more rigorous, robust effects of modeling.

In the last few months some new information has come to light which makes it possible to suggest a provenance for this pencil drawing.⁷ Thomas Lange, Assistant Curator of Rare Books at the Huntington, discovered the following notation in the catalogue of



3. William Blake. "Pestilence," c. 1780-84. Pen and watercolor (18.5 × 27.5 cm.). Courtesy of Robert N. Essick, Altadena, California.

William Bixby's sale of books at The Anderson Galleries in New York in 1916:⁸

983. BLAKE (WILLIAM). Illustrations of Dante. Seven plates designed and engraved by William Blake, on India paper. Imp. folio, cloth (plates a little foxed). [Lond. 1824-27]

*Laid in is an ORIGINAL DRAWING OF THE PLAGUE, done by Blake in pencil, one of the compositions given by Palgrave in his article by [sic] Blake in the "Quarterly Review."

A short time later, Lange also ran across the following entry in the catalogue of Frederick Locker-Lampson's Rowfant Library which was published in London in 1886:⁹

—Blake's Illustrations of Dante. Seven Plates designed and engraved by W. Blake, Author of "Illustrations of the Book of Job," &c., &c. [1824-27] India Paper. Large Folio.

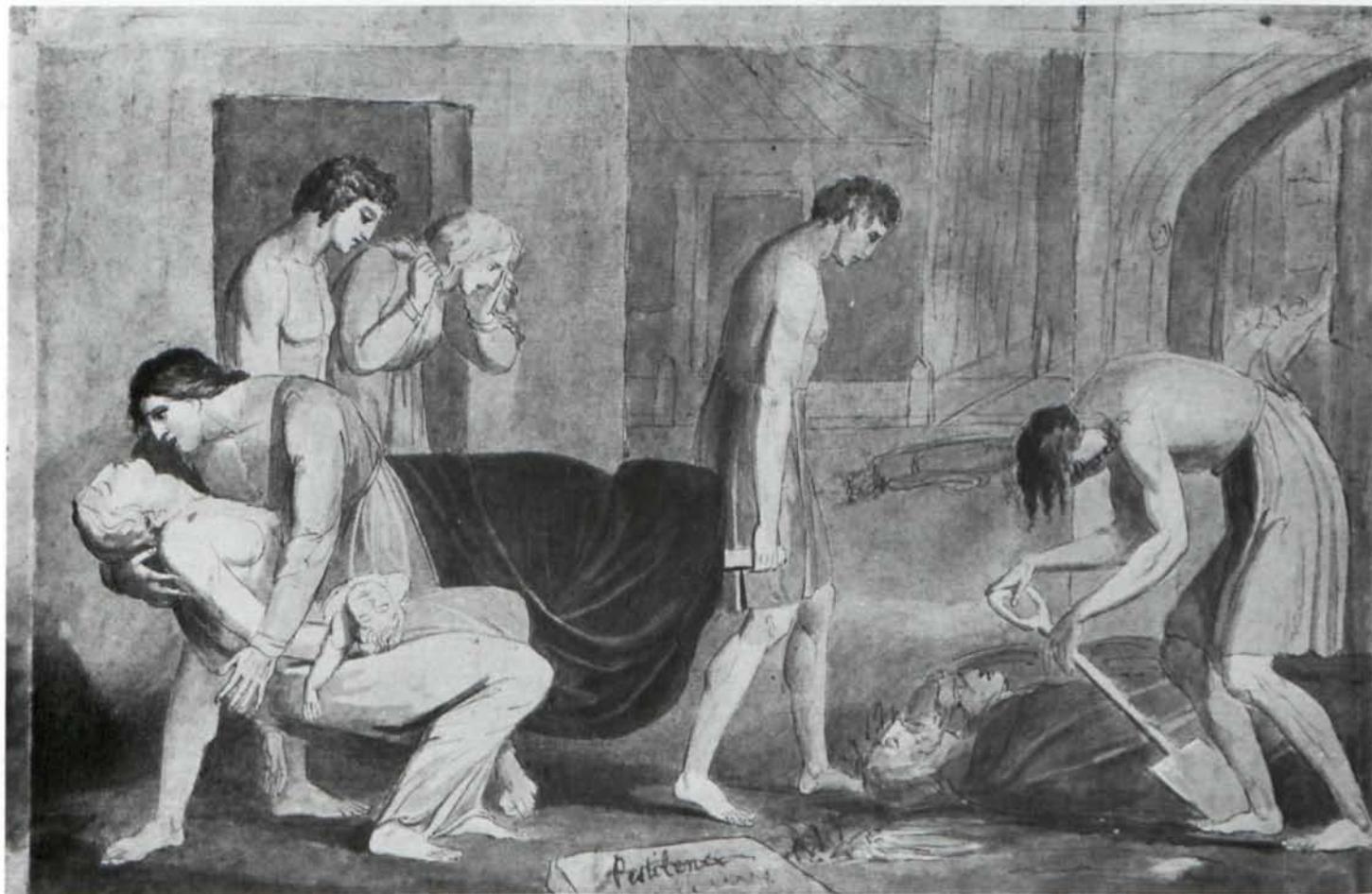
The illustrations are to the following passages of Dante . . . An Original drawing of the Plague, by Blake, one of the compositions given by Mr. F. Palgrave in his article on Blake in the "Quarterly Review," is inserted. Original green cloth boards.

At this point Robert Essick suggested a new interpretation of one of the descriptions of the Plague/Pes-

tilence noted in Gilchrist's 1863 and 1880 editions of *The Life of William Blake*. In the 1880 edition, Rossetti lists in volume 2, under "Uncoloured Works," no. 20, "1805.—Plague. An expressive and reasonably careful sketch for the grand water-colour No. 60, List I, engraved Chap. VII, Vol. I." The 1863 edition contains a similar description in volume 2, under "Uncoloured Works," no. 18, "1805.—Plague. [Mr. Harvey.] An expressive and reasonably careful sketch for the grand water-colour No. 55, List I, engraved facing p. 54. Vol. I." Both entries undoubtedly refer to a pencil drawing rather than as heretofore assumed to the watercolor version in Bristol.¹⁰

The notation that this pencil drawing was in Francis Harvey's collection in 1863 also led to a re-reading of the Blake entry in Harvey's sales catalogue of 1865. Here the Plague/Pestilence subject is described as part of a lot of sixteen "sketches in ink and pencil."¹¹ This entry also probably refers to a pencil version although it too has previously been associated with the watercolour in Bristol.¹²

Thus, it would seem that a Blake pencil drawing



4. William Blake. "Pestilence" (recto), c. 1790-95. Pen and watercolor (31.6 × 48.1 cm.). Courtesy of The Ackland Art Museum, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; loan of Lois Bateson.

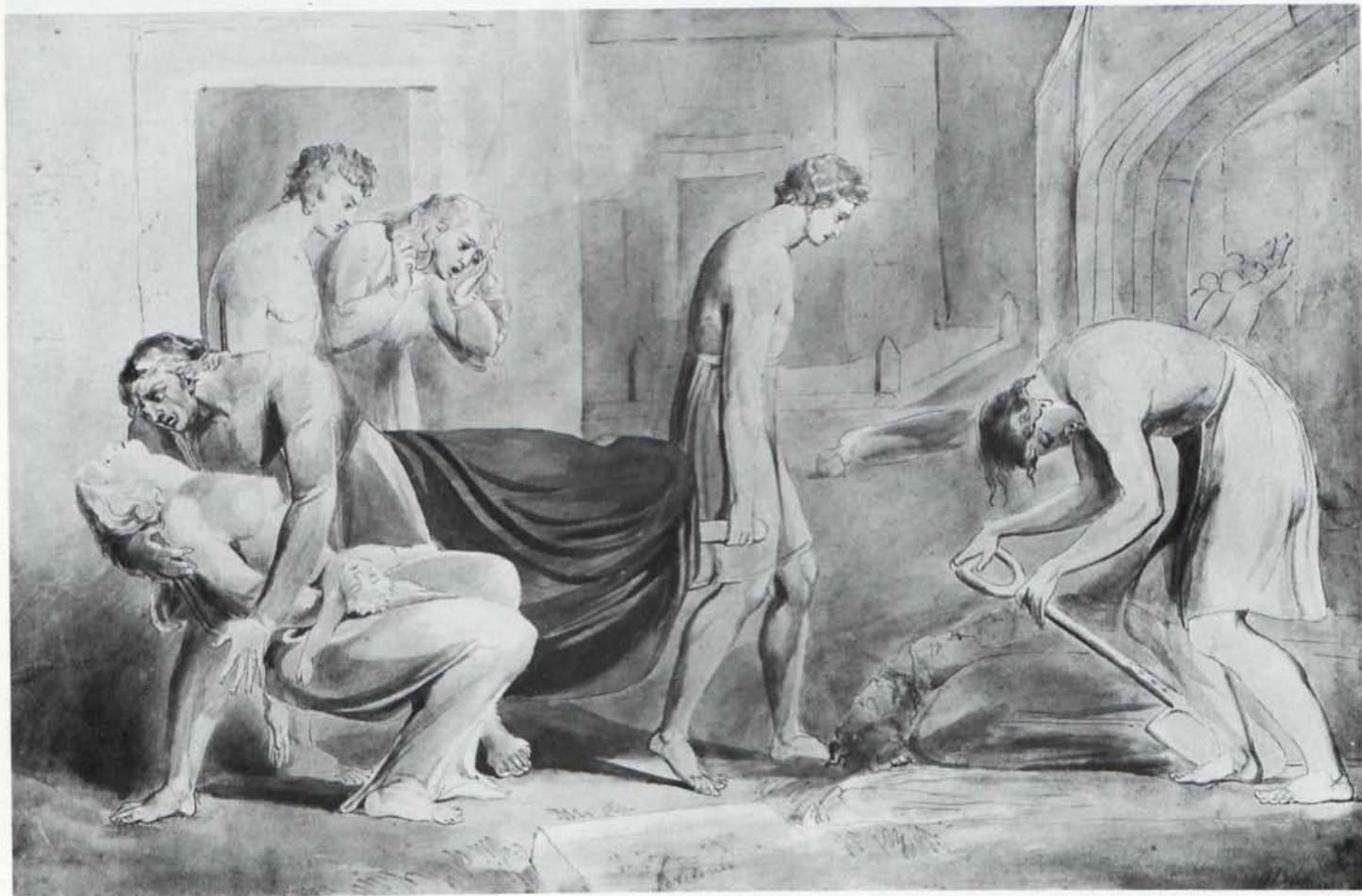
of the Plague/Pestilence passed into Harvey's collection before 1863. The absence of Harvey's name in Rossetti's list in the 1880 edition of Gilchrist indicates that prior to 1880 it already had passed out of Harvey's collection and probably into Locker-Lampson's Rowfant Library. At some point before 1886, Locker-Lampson must have had the drawing laid into an edition of Blake's *Illustrations of Dante*. It probably remained in his collection until 1905 when the Rowfant Library was purchased by E. D. Church of Brooklyn,¹³ who in turn sold most of the Rowfant Library to American collectors through the firm of Dodd, Mead & Co. This is most likely how the drawing, laid into a copy of Blake's *Illustrations of Dante*, entered the collection of the St. Louis book collector, William Bixby.

At this point the history of the pencil drawing becomes very speculative. No further information has thus far been discovered to account for how this pencil drawing (or perhaps yet another, different pencil version of the Plague/Pestilence) entered the Huntington collection after the Bixby sale of 1916. Several hypothetical

explanations can be proposed, although none are entirely convincing.

Since books from Henry Huntington's collection also were sold at the Bixby sale in 1916,¹⁴ perhaps Huntington or one of his agents purchased the copy of Blake's *Illustrations of Dante* including the pencil drawing. The drawing may then have been excerpted and the edition of Dante prints rebound.¹⁵ None, however, of the three copies of Blake's *Illustrations of Dante* now in the Huntington collection fit this description.¹⁶ Perhaps the rebound copy was sold as a duplicate as was Huntington's wont when other editions entered the collection, leaving the excerpted drawing at the Huntington. This does not, however, adequately explain how the drawing was lost among the print collection for such a long time. It bore the label identifying it as a Blake and it seems unlikely that anyone associated with Huntington or his collection would have overlooked its significance.

Another alternative explanation is that the copy of Blake's *Illustrations of Dante* containing the drawing was



5. William Blake. "Pestilence," c. 1795-1800. Pen and watercolor (32.2 × 48.4 cm.). Courtesy of City of Bristol Museum and Art Gallery.

purchased by an as yet unidentified American collector who had the drawing removed and added to his or her collection. The drawing may subsequently have entered the Huntington as part of a cache of prints and miscellaneous material. The drawing, indeed, was discovered housed in the Huntington print collection along with a small batch of miscellaneous British and Continental drawings. The pencil drawing of the Plague/Pestilence was found in close proximity to the Seeberger collection of prints in the Huntington.¹⁷ The drawing does not, however, bear the collector's mark which Charles Seeberger so assiduously applied to all of the objects in his collection.

All further speculation at this point is insupportable. One would like a bit more concrete evidence to securely establish the provenance of this Blake pencil drawing. The label attached to the drawing, "450 Blake . . . The Plague," might provide just this information. The label, which is probably excerpted from a sales or exhibition catalogue, may supply the missing link be-

tween the Bixby and the Huntington collections. Or, to the contrary, it may prove that the Huntington drawing is only one of several pencil studies that Blake made of the Plague/Pestilence. This part of the puzzle remains unsolved.

The following tentative description, however, may be inserted between no. 185 and no. 192 in Butlin's catalogue:

THE PLAGUE c. early 1790s

Pencil approximately $9\frac{1}{2} \times 11\frac{3}{4}$ (24.2 x 29.8)

Label attached to upper right corner reading "450 Blake . . . The Plague"

Exh: "Recent Acquisitions in Context," Huntington Art Gallery, 1983

Coll: ?Mrs. Blake; ?Frederick Tatham, sold Sotheby's 20 April 1862 (in lot 200 or 201) bt. Harvey; Francis Harvey by 1863, offered in *catalogue* c. 1865 (lot 16 "sketches in ink and pencil"); Frederick Locker-Lampson by 1880, offered in sale of the Rowfant Library, London, 1886, laid into a copy of Blake's *Illustrations of Dante*; ?E.D. Church; William Bixby, sold The Anderson Galleries, N.Y., March 29, 1916 (lot 983), laid into a copy of



6. William Blake. "Pestilence," c. 1805. Pen and watercolor over pencil (31.2 x 43 cm.). Courtesy of Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Blake's *Illustrations of Dante*; . . . ; Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery.

¹ Martin Butlin summarizes the history of this subject in Blake's oeuvre in *The Paintings and Drawings of William Blake* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981), p. 70. In keeping with most other Blake scholars, Butlin feels that the subject of "Pestilence" developed out of Blake's early watercolors of English history of c. 1779. The earlier versions may refer, in fact, to the historical Plague of 1665. Some scholars suggest that the later variations on this theme may refer to the *Bible*, Exodus, ix, 10, or to the Litany. Butlin views these interpretations as unlikely due to the origin of the composition as one of the English history subjects. Some of the watercolors bear inscriptions which have led to titles such as "The Plague" (the Steigal watercolor, Butlin no. 184, and the Huntington pencil drawing) or "Pestilence" (the Bateson, Butlin no. 190, and the Bristol, Butlin no. 192, watercolors) or as both "The Plague" and "Pestilence" (the Essick, Butlin no. 185, and the Boston, Butlin no. 193, watercolors). To simplify matters, I shall refer to this subject throughout the article as the *Plague/Pestilence*.

² Martin Butlin, Robert Essick, and Robert Wark were consulted regarding the authenticity of this drawing. All three independently concluded that it was, indeed, executed by Blake.

³ Butlin, pp. 70-71, 73-75.

⁴ Butlin, pp. 70-71.

⁵ Butlin, pp. 73-75.

⁶ This chronological ordering has been suggested to me by Robert Essick.

⁷ I would like to thank Thomas Lange and Robert Essick for so graciously turning over to me this new information concerning the provenance of the Huntington drawing. Their generous assistance throughout this project has been much appreciated.

⁸ The title page reads as follows: BEAUTIFUL BINDINGS/ RARE AND FINE BOOKS/ AUTOGRAPH LETTERS/ VALUABLE MANUSCRIPTS/ BEING DUPLICATES AND SELECTIONS/ FROM THE FAMOUS LIBRARIES OF/ MR. HENRY E. HUNTINGTON/ OF NEW YORK/ AND/ MR. WILLIAM K. BIXBY/ OF ST. LOUIS/ WITH AN IMPORTANT ASSIGNMENT OF RARE BOOKS/ ON EARLY LITERATURE FROM THE ESTATE OF/ MR. E. DWIGHT CHURCH/ FORMERLY OF BROOKLYN/ TO BE SOLD/ MARCH 29, 30, AND 31, 1916/ . . . / THE ANDERSON GALLERIES/ MADISON AVENUE AT FORTIETH STREET/ NEW YORK.

⁹ The title page reads as follows: THE ROWFANT LIBRARY:/ A CATALOGUE/ OF THE/ PRINTED BOOKS, MANUSCRIPTS,/ AUTOGRAPH LETTERS,/ DRAWINGS AND PICTURES,/ COLLECTED BY/ FREDERICK LOCKER-LAMPSON,/ BERNARD QUARITCH,/ LONDON, 1886.

¹⁰ Butlin, pp. 74-75.

¹¹ Noted in Butlin, no. 180, p. 68.

¹² Butlin, pp. 74-75.

¹³ Seymour De Ricci, *English Collectors of Books & Manuscripts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1930), pp. 174-176.

¹⁴ See footnote #7.

¹⁵ Geoffrey Keynes mentions that the first twenty-five sets of the original issue of Dante engravings were handled by a printseller, James H. Chance, Linnell's nephew, who had them bound in green hard-grain cloth; see *Blake's Illustrations of Dante*, a facsimile published by The Trianon Press, London, 1978, Introduction. The copy in Locker-Lampson's collection is described as bound in "original green cloth boards." The copy in the Bixby sales catalogue is described simply as "cloth" but also may refer to the original green cloth binding. It is quite easy to imagine that a later owner may

have been dissatisfied with this cloth binding (or it may have fallen into disrepair) and decided to have the copy of engravings rebound and the pencil drawing excerpted.

¹⁶ The original nineteenth century copies in the Huntington Library are as follows:

Dante Alighiere. *Blake's Illustrations of Dante*, [1838].

Bound in half olive morocco. A notation on the Huntington Library catalogue card indicates that this may be the Dorman copy, sold in 1886 (57437).

Idem, [1892?]. Bound in olive morocco, indicating that it was probably bound prior to entering the Huntington (57438).

Idem. Loose in portfolio, with the original cover label. Gift to the Huntington by Mrs. Donald MacIsaac in 1951 (283403).

¹⁷ Seeberger is listed in Lugt as follows: Charles D. Seeberger sembe avoir collectionné des estampes anciennes et modernes, surtout des pointes-sèches. A Chicago où il doit avoir vécu, on n'a trouvé aucune trace de sa personne, ni de sa collection. Même résultat à New-York où il est inconnu au Yale Club, qu'il donnait pourtant d'habitude comme adresse. Première moitié du xx^e siècle;" Frits Lugt, *Les Marques de Collections de Dessins & D'Estampes*, supplément (La Haye: Martinus Nijhoff, 1956), p. 343. No record survives of when or how the prints and the few miscellaneous drawings from the Seeberger collection entered the Huntington. Perhaps the efforts of a former Huntington employee, Roy Vernon Sowers, supposedly the son-in-law of Seeberger, resulted in this generous gift to the Huntington, probably at some point in the 1930s.



MINUTE PARTICULARS

Visual Analogues to Blake's "The Dog"

Nicholas O. Warner

Apart from the poetic text it was meant to illustrate, Blake's frontispiece to one of William Hayley's *Ballads*, "The Dog," appears to have two curious visual analogues in a caricature by James Gillray and an emblem by the sixteenth-century Hungarian emblem writer, Joannes Sambucus. While the primary impetus for the frontispiece comes, of course, from Hayley's poem, its affinities with the emblem and caricature suggest that the earlier works had some influence on Blake's illustration (or perhaps, even on Hayley's ballad itself). The pictures in question deal with vastly different issues: the Blake focuses on a little dog's faithfulness; the emblem, entitled "Sobriè Potandum," or "we must drink soberly," warns against the evils of drunkenness; the caricature, called "The Republican Rattle-Snake Fascinating the Bedford Squirrel," mocks the relationship between two contemporary English politicians, Charles Fox and Francis Russell, fifth Duke of Bedford. Yet all three designs share the basic feature of a reptilian beast laying snares for the unwary, and in the case of Blake and Gillray, of such a beast about to devour an animal falling toward it.

Blake's design takes as its subject the climactic moment in Hayley's sentimental ballad. Here the faithful Fido, as Hayley calls him, seeing his young master about to dive unwittingly into a crocodile's watery lair, saves the youth by deliberately leaping ahead of him into the jaws of the waiting crocodile. The specific lines Blake depicts are as follows:

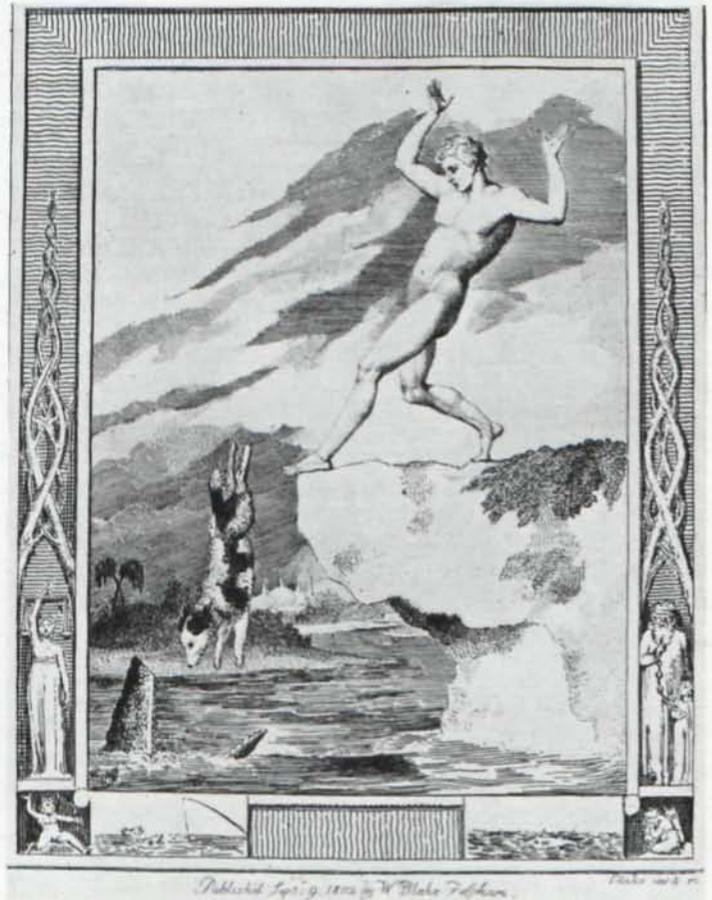
His faithful friend with nobler pace,
And not with silent tongue,
Outstript his master in the race,
And swift before him sprung.

Heaven! How the heart of Edward swell'd
Upon the river's brink,
When his Brave guardian he beheld
A glorious victim sink!

(William Hayley, "The Dog," 11.65-72)

(The lines given are those of the 1802 version; in 1805, lines 65-66 were slightly altered: "nobler" was changed to "quicker," while "not" was changed to "now.") Blake's illustrations for these verses in both the 1802 and 1805 editions of the *Ballads*¹ take essentially the same form—we see the canine hero spreadeagled in the air, as he hurtles kamikaze-fashion toward the crocodile's cavern-

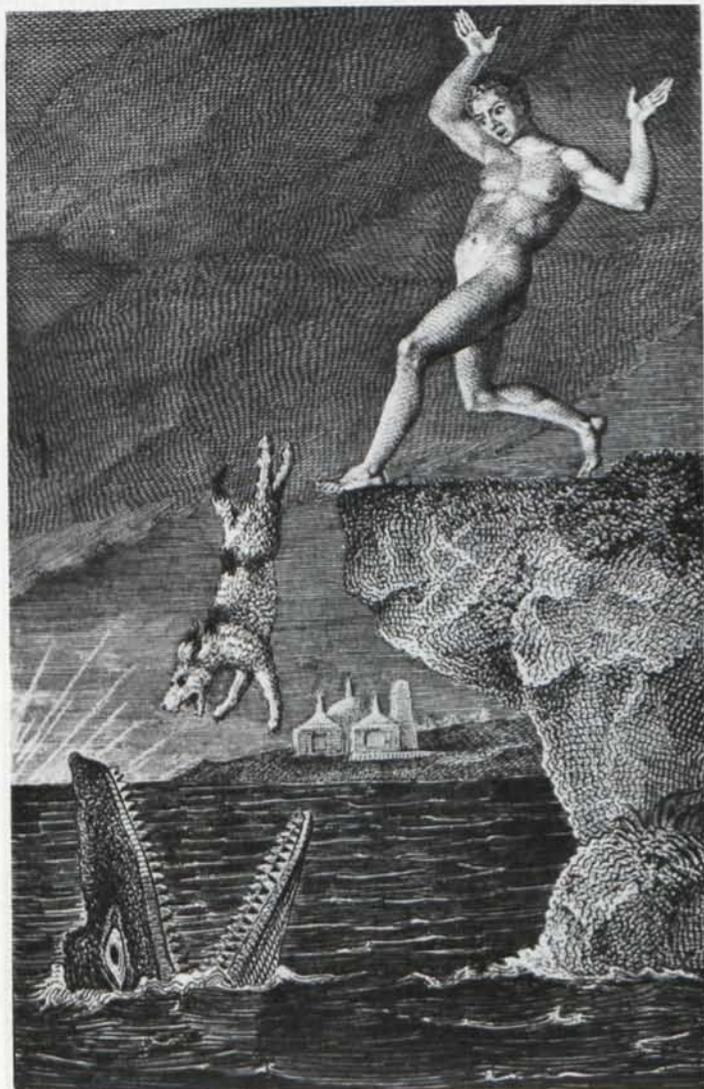
ous maw; meanwhile his startled master, seeming to brake himself just in time, looks down from the safety of the cliff on the dismaying scene below (illus. 1 and 2). For the 1805 edition, Blake engraved a smaller version of the 1802 picture, eliminating the fanciful border of the earlier engraving, adding the title, "The Dog," and changing various details in the background as well as in the positions and expressions of the dog, crocodile and youth. Some of these changes render the 1805 version more dramatic than the earlier design. In 1805, the fierceness of the confrontation between dog and crocodile is intensified by their jaws being more bared—Fido is shown barking (or at least snarling), while the crocodile is less submerged, thus revealing more of his fearsome teeth.² In the later design, the increased height of the cliff makes Fido's leap seem all the more courageous. We also see more of Edward's face in 1805, and Blake has endowed his features with greater anguish. Uninspired as the designs remain, these alterations not only increase the drama of the scene, but also accompany a general improvement in the quality of the *Ballads* illustrations. As Robert N. Essick observes, "The five



1. William Blake. "The Dog," from William Hayley's *Ballads* (1802). Courtesy of Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery, San Marino, California.

plates for a new, octavo edition of Hayley's *Ballads*, published in 1805, show Blake's renewed power, at least on the purely technical level of copy engraving. His abilities as a designer still seem shackled to a literary context unable to call forth the Blakean sublime, but the tonal and textural variety of the linear patterns are superior to those of any of the intaglio plates executed in Felpham."³

If we turn from the Blake line-engravings to the emblem by Sambucus (number 41 in Sambucus' *Emblemata*, Antwerp, 1564, reproduced exactly as number 125 in Geoffrey Whitney's *A Choice of Emblemes*, Leyden, 1586), we may be surprised to find the same cast of characters as in Blake and Hayley—a nude young man, a dog, and a threatening crocodile (illus. 3). Sambucus'



2. William Blake. "The Dog," from William Hayley's *Ballads* (1805). Courtesy of Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery, San Marino, California.

composition is, however, different from Blake's. In the emblem, a youth lies on a river bank, drinking from a bowl; near him, a dog laps gingerly at the water, eyeing a menacing crocodile in the stream. (Sambucus' text informs us that the dog represents the careful drinker, wary of the poisons of inebriation as imaged by the crocodile, while the youth signifies the heedless bacchanal who, presumably, will fall prey to the crocodile's snares. The water, conveniently enough, represents both the Nile as well as liquids of a more fermented nature.) For all of their compositional differences, the emblem and Blake's frontispiece share several notable details, in addition to having the same characters. In both instances, the crocodile and man are separated by a body of water in which the beast already finds itself; the dog is closer to the crocodile than is the man; the crocodile is on the left, the man on the right, with the dog more or less between them; vague indications of buildings appear in the pictures' backgrounds; the crocodile is clearly associated with hidden danger and entrapment. In both cases, moreover, we find a sharp juxtaposition between the levels of awareness of man and dog—while the youth is carelessly oblivious to danger, the dog is markedly superior to him in being vigilant and perceptive.

Given these parallels, it is not unreasonable to suppose that Blake was familiar with Sambucus' emblem, either through Sambucus' own *Emblemata*, or what is more likely for a late eighteenth/early nineteenth-century British artist, through the famous anthology, *A Choice of Emblemes*, compiled by the Englishman Geoffrey



3. Joannes Sambucus. "Sobriè Potandum," from Geoffrey Whitney's *A Choice of Emblemes* (1586). Courtesy of Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery, San Marino, California.

Whitney. In fact, a Blake-Whitney connection has been persuasively suggested by several scholars⁴ (though not with regard to the *Ballads* designs). First published in 1586, Whitney's collection reproduced numerous Continental emblems with Englished versions of the original texts; the work also contained twenty-three of Whitney's own designs and poems.⁵ *A Choice of Emblems* established

its editor as the earliest English emblemist, and "it was to Whitney that the first English emblem writers turned for their model."⁶ Thus it is highly conceivable that Blake, "steeped in the emblem tradition"⁷ as he was, and almost certainly familiar with other devices from Whitney, would have known the "Sobriè Potandum" design.



The Republican Rattle-Snake fascinating the Bedford Squirrel.
The Rattle Snake is a Creature of the greatest subtilty: when it is desirous of preying upon any Animal which is in a situation above itself, it fixes its Eye upon the unsuspecting Object, & by the noise of its Rattle fascinates the unfortunate Victim. All seeing all Sensing & discerning, it falls a prey into the Mouth of the horrid Monster. Parry & Hall? & al. 1788...

4. James Gillray, "The Republican Rattle-Snake Fascinating the Bedford Squirrel." Courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum.

Less strikingly similar to the Blake but still suggestive of it in composition is Gillray's colored engraving, "The Republican Rattle-Snake Fascinating the Bedford Squirrel." Published 16 November 1795, Gillray's caricature depicts the Whig leader Charles Fox as a huge rattlesnake coiled around an oak tree. Falling out of the tree in a pose quite like that of Blake's self-sacrificing Fido, and heading directly toward the snake's open mouth, is a squirrel with a human head—that of the Duke of Bedford (illus. 4). The picture, on a topic dear to Gillray, satirizes "the political influence by Fox over Francis, Duke of Bedford, who had become one of the most zealous of the popular party."⁸ Despite obvious differences, the genuine similarities between Gillray's engraving and Blake's design (the small animal in mid-flight falling into a reptile's mouth, the reptile with open jaws, gazing upwards) lend support to the view that Blake was sufficiently well acquainted with Gillray's work to echo certain of the caricaturist's motifs in his own art.⁹ While in some instances such echoes seem intentional (as demonstrated by Nancy Bogen—see note 9), there is no evidence of a conscious imitation of Gillray in "The Dog." Yet perhaps the similarities are not purely coincidental. Indeed, the parallels between Blake's illustration and the Gillray cartoon could partly stem from Blake's unconscious absorption of Gillray's composition long before Blake ever knew he was going to illustrate a poem about a dog and a crocodile.

The analogues we have explored here provide further evidence of Blake's links to Gillray and to the emblem tradition. Continued investigation of popular art forms such as emblem books and caricatures will doubtless tell us still more about the breadth of material assimilated by Blake and recast in his own designs, even when those designs exist primarily to illustrate the words of others.

¹ William Hayley, *Designs to a Series of Ballads* (Chichester: J. Seagrave, 1802); and William Hayley, *Ballads . . . Founded on Anecdotes Relating to Animals* (Chichester: J. Seagrave, 1805). For detailed physical descriptions of the designs, see David Bindman, *The Complete Graphic Works of William Blake* (New York: G.B. Putnam's & Sons, 1978), pp. 479–80, and Roger R. Easson and Robert N. Essick, *William Blake, Book Illustrator* (Normal, Illinois: American Blake Foundation, 1972), I, 31–35, 41–44. For a full account of the entire Blake-Hayley *Ballads* project, see G.E. Bentley, Jr., "William Blake as Private Publisher," *Bulletin of the New York Public Library*, 61 (1957), 539–60; G.E. Bentley, Jr., *Blake Records* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), pp. 88, 92–98, 100–02, 157–62; and Robert N. Essick, *William Blake, Printmaker* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), pp. 169–73.

² Curiously, Blake's 1802 illustration of a non-barking Fido fits Hayley's 1805 text more closely than it does the earlier text, for in 1805 Fido is described as leaping "now with silent tongue"; the 1805 design, however, shows Fido as he was described three years before, "not with silent tongue."

³ Essick, *William Blake, Printmaker*, p. 172. Blake himself

understandably says little about these timid designs, though in a letter to Hayley dated 22–25 March 1805, Blake remarks that "The Subjects I cannot do better than those already chosen, as they are the most eminent among Animals Viz. The Lion, The Eagle, The Horse, The Dog. Of the Dog Species the Two Ballads are so pre-eminent & my Designs for them please me so well that I have chosen that design in our Last Number of the Dog & Crocodile, & that of the Dog defending his dead Master from the Vultures." *The Letters of William Blake*, ed. Geoffrey Keynes, 3rd ed. rev. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), p. 111.

⁴ Pilo Nanavutty first suggested a parallel between Blake and Whitney in "A Title-Page in Blake's Illustrated Genesis Manuscript," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 10 (1947), 115; in a later article, Nanavutty pointed to evidence of Whitney as a definite source for some of Blake's work (e.g. "The Sick Rose")—see "Blake and Emblem Literature," *JWCI*, 15 (1952), 258–61. For other connections between Blake and Whitney, see Mary Lynn Johnson, "Emblem and Symbol in Blake," *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 37 (1974), 151, 153; Judith Wardle, "For Hatching Ripe: Blake and the Educational Uses of Emblem and Illustrated Literature," *Bulletin of Research in the Humanities*, 81 (1978), 337, 346; and Joseph S. Salemi, "Emblematic Tradition in Blake's *The Gates of Paradise*," *Blake/An Illustrated Quarterly*, 15 (1981–82), 108–24. Mentioning Johnson's comparison of Blake's first illustration to the *Gates of Paradise* with Whitney's emblem of a "skull-gathering woman," Wardle goes on to note that "one might also suggest the original of this in Johannes Sambucus' *Emblemata*" (Wardle, 346); as far as I know, this is the first reference to a link between Blake and Sambucus. In 1952, Nanavutty listed Sambucus among those emblematisers who did not seem to have influenced Blake (Nanavutty, "Blake and Emblem Literature," p. 261).

⁵ Geoffrey Whitney, *A Choice of Emblems*, ed. Henry Green (London, 1866, reprinted New York: Benjamin Blom, Inc., 1967, with an introduction by Frank B. Fieler), p. 252. Fieler's introduction has some useful bibliographical information both on Whitney and on the history of English emblem books. The "Sobriè Potandum" emblem, incidentally, is reproduced not only in this modern facsimile (number 125, as in Whitney's original edition), but also in Arthur Henkel and Albrecht Schöne, *Emblemata: Handbuch zur Sinnbildkunst des XVI. und XVII. Jahrhunderts* (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzlersche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1967), p. 565. While Henkel and Schöne, as well as Mario Praz, in his *Studies in Seventeenth-Century Imagery*, 2nd ed. rev. (Roma: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1964), both cite instances of crocodiles and dogs throughout Renaissance emblem literature, neither of these sources indicates any emblem where the two animals appear together, except, as noted only by Henkel and Schöne, in Sambucus' (and Whitney's) "Sobriè Potandum." Green's edition, moreover, though it supplies notes for many of Whitney's emblems, silently passes over number 125, that of the dog and crocodile.

⁶ Rosemary Freeman, *English Emblem Books* (New York: Octagon Books, 1948), p. 56.

⁷ Jean Hagstrum, *William Blake: Poet and Painter* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), p. 53.

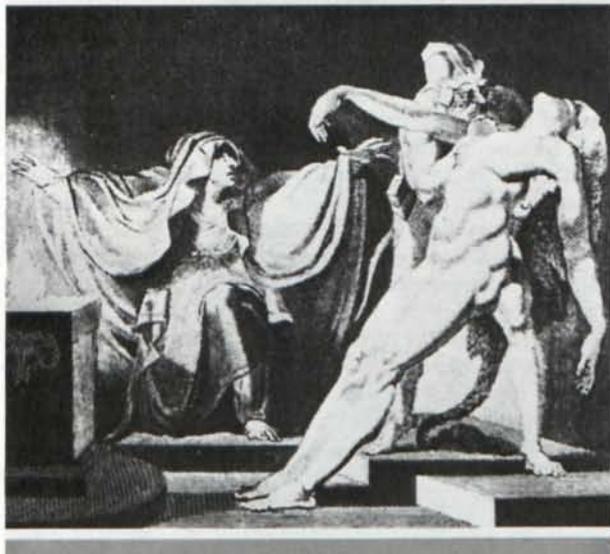
⁸ Thomas Wright and R.H. Evans, *Historical and Descriptive Account of the Caricatures of James Gillray* (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1851), p. 70; see also M. Dorothy George, *Catalogue of Political and Personal Satires* (London: British Museum Publications, Ltd., 1978), 7, 198.

⁹ Intriguing connections between Blake and Gillray have been convincingly presented by David V. Erdman in his *Blake: Prophet Against Empire*, 2nd ed. rev. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), pp. 203–05, 218–19, and by Nancy Bogen in her "Blake's Debt to Gillray," *American Notes & Queries*, 6 (Nov. 1967), 35–38. For an earlier version of Erdman's discussion, see "William Blake's Debt to Gillray," *Art Quarterly*, 12 (1949), 165–70.

REVIEWS

The Holy and the Daemonic from Sir Thomas Browne to William Blake

R. D. STOCK



R. D. Stock. *The Holy and the Daemonic from Sir Thomas Browne to William Blake*. Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1982. 395 pp., illustrated. \$27.50.

Reviewed by Christopher Fox

Stock's argument is partly negative. Simply put, the nonrational, religious element in late seventeenth- and eighteenth-century literature has been ignored. It has been ignored by those who follow the old, Marjorie Nicolson analysis of the impact of science on seventeenth-century thought *and* by students of the later period who, like Peter Gay, see Voltaire and Hume (rather than Samuel Johnson) as the true heroes of the time.

Stock thus assails those modern critics who look at an older text like Donne's *First Anniversary* and read their own doubts into it. In announcing that the "new philosophy calls all in doubt," Donne is not some "Jacobean Yeats," proclaiming the death of an old era and the birth of a new; he is instead giving us yet another example of human degeneration, resulting from the Fall. The fear and trembling we find there is our own. Similarly, our modern skeptical tendencies have led us to downplay or even dismiss the religious strain in the later period and "lay stress to the rationalist side of the eighteenth century." (These points, it should be said, are largely true, though not new. They have already been made in a number of recent studies, many of which here, for some reason, go unnoted or ignored.) Stock's positive argument entails an exploration of some selected writers from Browne to Blake, using Rudolf Otto's *Idea of the Holy* (1923) as a paradigm. Otto's study attempts to account for the development of moral conceptions of the holy; and one questions how his conclusions, detailing a process presumably completed long before the seventeenth-century, can be applied to a more modern age, without theoretical difficulties. This criticism might be sidestepped by recalling that Otto's book is phenomenological rather than strictly historical in scope; this approach, then, might apply equally to any age. I do not find a similar escape for other problems in Stock's study which make it—frankly—a poor job. That is sad to say. But this is a sad book.

The author here often tells us that he is "reluctant to impose highly theoretical paradigms on the age." He also rightly questions "the value of terms . . . such as 'the age of this' or 'the spirit of that'" (pp. 381, 203). Despite such claims, the work itself, riddled with catchwords and time-worn tags, is a veritable cookbook for label-soup. Terms like "Rationalism," "Deism," "Fideism," "Pelagianism," "Benevolism," "Jesuitism," "Empiricism," "Skepticism," "Materialism," "Pantheism," "Vitalism," "Hobbism," "Whiggism," "Cartesianism" (or variants like "implicit Cartesianism" or "furtive Cartesianism") are stamped, often with little or no definition, throughout nearly two centuries of literature and thought. At one point, for example, we are told that in Joseph Glanvill's attack on Descartes, "Cartesianism" manages to become a "skulking Hobbism"—though we are never really told how. Descartes and Hobbes had fundamental differences in thought; here as elsewhere, "isms" replace specific persons and precise ideas. A favorite phrase is "rationalist"- "ism"- "istic," which recurs, annoyingly, throughout. Another is "orthodox," which produces such judgments as: Thomson "was more than a Deist; indeed, he was probably more orthodox than Pope"; or in the poetry of Smart, there is nothing "technically unorthodox." Often two labels are mixed together, as in "Akenside is the most rationalistic, Young

the most orthodox." Aside from telling us little about individual authors, such labels also produce confusion. On one page, for example, we hear that Thomas Woolston was an "eccentric Deist" (p. 99); on the next, that "one wonders if he can be properly pigeon-holed—as he commonly is in standard texts—a Deist" (p. 100). Which is it?

If labels don't work, try epithets and namecalling. Compare David Hume to Swift's modest proposer (pp. 212, 215). Or, tell the reader about Hume's "puerile diatribes" or about Pope's "smug scorn" or that Shaftesbury is "gauzy and insufferably genteel." If one doesn't call names, one can get the names wrong, as in a sentence mentioning those eminent eighteenth-century theologians "Joseph Clarke" and "Samuel Butler" (p. 222). If names can be imposed on the past, they can also be applied to the present. The late Ernst Cassirer might be surprised to learn that he is accused, here, of "Whiggery." Other contemporary scholars become "Modern, secular humanists" or "nimble-witted critics" or simply "critics and mere readers." The author continually complains about the "misreadings of older works perpetrated by modern critics" and attests that this study will not judge writers by standards alien to their time. At one point, he congratulates himself for reading an entire book—Scot's *Discoverie of Witchcraft* (1584)—which "I daresay few scholars have more than glanced at" (p. 68).

Let's take the challenge and look at some books. The author tells us, for example, that Richard Burthogge's *Essay Upon Reason and the Nature of Spirits* (1694) is "a curious fiasco: an arid and abstruse exposition of Locke" (p. 91). If the critic or mere reader would, however, glance at this work, he would find not an exposition of Locke but a carefully argued tract that reflects key differences from Locke's position. (In Burthogge's own age, the March 1694 issue of the *Compleat Library* characterized it as an "extraordinary Book," a "fine and Compleat System of thoughts and the product of a long time and great experience in the World"). The author's link with Locke, however, is instructive at least; for as John Yolton has shown in *Locke and the Way of Ideas* (1956), Burthogge in fact anticipated Locke's psychology and his rejection of innate ideas, in an earlier work titled *Organum Vetus & Novum. Or, A Discourse of Reason and Truth* (1678).

If he does not wish to glance at Burthogge, the reader can pick up a copy, say, of Blake, Johnson, or Pope. The author's discussion of Blake's three major prophecies is at some points naive and at others, simply embarrassing. Though it is true that *The Four Zoas* contains the clearest exposition of Blake's mythology, it is silly to say that "Blake's two later prophetic works, *Milton* and *Jerusalem*, are but supplementary" (p. 370)—especially since Blake abandoned *The Four Zoas* without completing it, and engraved and published the other

two. The author does not appear to have noticed that Blake's myth evolved and changed in the 1790s, or to have a clear idea of the nature of the zoas and their emanations. At one point, he even says (p. 367) that "Vala . . . in her purified state is called Luvah" (!) Though not as weak, the book's treatment of *The Songs of Innocence and of Experience* is equally undistinguished; the analysis of "The Tyger," for example, shows no awareness of the critical consensus that the line "When the stars threw down their spears" refers to the creation of the fallen world and alludes to *Paradise Lost*. Blake, we are told, "remains one of the ablest poets in delineating spiritual dread and awe" (p. 349). Accordingly, the Blake section ends with a series of passages, most taken out of context, showing horror and fear. This is a distortion. Blake consistently asserted the ultimate triumph of hope and joy. His frequent pictures of darkness, horror, and suffering are all of the nightmare of the fallen world, which he always believed could be transcended by the imagination.

Similar problems occur in other analyses. The author informs us, for instance, that the characters in *Rasselas* "return at the end to the Happy Valley whence they fled to see the world" (p. 250). The text tells us that the group returned not necessarily to the Happy Valley but to the country, Abissinia—a point that makes Johnson's "Conclusion, In Which Nothing Is Concluded" richly open-ended and ambiguous, "modern" if you will. In considering Pope, the author likes to speak of "the tone" of *An Essay On Man*, a poem that, for all its faults, shows an incredible tonal range—from the formal to the familiar. The treatment of this work also gets stuck in labels, as when we hear that Pope "would scorn the rationalist without actually disowning the very rationalism often imputed to *An Essay On Man*" (p. 141). The text, however, shows that reason comes out in the *Essay* as far less forceful than the passions in affecting human conduct, that it is a "weak Queen" attempting to master an unruly kingdom or a mere "card" (a compass indicator or navigational device) that may somehow serve to guide us through a "gale." Indeed, as Donald Greene and others have recently pointed out, Pope here, far from supporting the so-called "rationalist" position, is actually closer to Hume's pronouncement a few years later that "Reason is, and ought to be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them." (See Greene's "Study of Eighteenth-Century Literature: Past, Present, and Future," in *New Approaches to Eighteenth-Century Literature*, edited by Phillip Harth). To judge by Steven Shankman's new book, *Pope's Illiad: Homer in the Age of Passion* (1983), other Pope scholars have taken such statements to heart. In his delimiting of reason, Pope was not alone. Swift, who had a healthy sense of the irrational, loves to show how we can be brutalized as well by our rational faculties

as by our passions. (Think of the Houyhnhnms' rational plan to exterminate the Yahoos, which gives us a taste of what was to come, in Hitler's death camps). It may even be said that it is precisely Gulliver's desire to be a *purely* rational being that leads him into the madness of that stable, in which he enjoys the fumes of his groom—while unable to tolerate the smell of his own family—and from which he writes a book to turn the rest of us into rational creatures. Earlier in the period, Rochester wrote *A Satyr against Reason and Mankind*. And the most famous book of the greatest philosopher of the time, John Locke, might well have been titled *An Essay on the Lack of Human Understanding*. "What is striking about the *Essay*," Richard Ashcraft noted in an important essay in 1969, "is not the claims it advances on behalf of human reason, but rather, its assertion of the meagreness of human knowledge." This statement, in *John Locke: Problems and Perspectives* (1969), would not shock those following recent scholarship. Nor would George Rosen's comment, in Harold Pagliaro's *Irrationalism In The Eighteenth Century* (1972), that the period "was as much the critic of reason as its apostle" (p. 255). For a number of major writers in the late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-centuries, reason was held in little repute.

This leads to a last point. At the beginning of the book, Stock tells us that "Basil Willey's opinion of the [eighteenth] century remains the model"—"a period," Willey argued, "in which the dry light of reason was free to penetrate the furthest limits of the universe" (p. 5). For whom, we might ask, does this remain "the model"? Certainly not to informed students of the century. Indeed, ever since Butterfield's *The Whig Interpretation of History* (1931), one of the central tasks of contemporary scholarship has been to extricate the age from such linsey-woolsey tags, many invented by later periods. (The term "neo-classical," for instance, also employed in Stock's book, has been traced back to William Rushton's *Afternoon Lectures on English Literature* in 1863. No earlier occurrences are known.) The author seems vaguely aware that these old tags have been recently challenged and that "Whig theories of progressivism have come increasingly under attack" (p. 21). From his comments, one would expect this study of religious yearnings and fears to be part of that larger reassessment. It is therefore disconcerting to be asked early on "when in fact *does* an age of rationalism begin" (p. 6)?—and then to later find a chapter with the words "Rationalism . . . in Pope and Swift" or hear about the "rise of rationalism" (p. 70). The book, in short, assumes the very teleology it attacks. It also shows little awareness of recent work. It is remarkable to discover that it "is now customary" to value Thomson's *Seasons* "for his descriptions of nature, of which his actual ideas are merely the dispensable underpinnings" (p. 178). (Ralph Cohen's *The Unfolding of the Seasons*, cited by the author on the

very same page, buried that view back in 1970). The author likes to speak of the "leading authority" on this or that writer; but these authorities—Havens on Young in 1922 or Tompkins on Monk Lewis in 1927—often turn out to be long dead and usually superseded. Equally surprising are the omissions. Richard Westfall's *Science and Religion in Seventeenth-Century England* (1958) would have helped the author, particularly in his chapter discussing the debate over miracles in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Here and elsewhere, however, one searches the notes in vain for a reference to Westfall's book, or to David Morris's major study, *The Religious Sublime* (1972), or to Jacob Viner's *Role of Providence in the Social Order* (1972), or to Martin Battestin's *The Providence of Wit* (1974), or to Horton Davies's superb books on *Worship and Theology in England* (1961-1975), to name a few. Blake scholarship has blossomed in the last twenty years, when most of the important work has been done; yet Stock cites only one book—Altizer's—published since 1963.

There may be a place for an overarching survey of religious yearnings in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century literature. For the time being, however, other studies will have to suffice. This, I suspect, isn't it.

James King and Charles Ryskamp, eds.
The Letters and Prose Writings of William Cowper. Vol. III: Letters, 1787-1791. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982. xxiv + 630 pp. \$79.00.

Reviewed by Donald H. Reiman

When I received this third volume of William Cowper's *Letters* for review, I hoped to be able to relate the ideals of Cowper to those of the Romantics by centering my essay on how Cowper confronted the French Revolution. I soon discovered, however, that he successfully *avoided* confronting it. Although the letters contain a handful of remarks on events in France (so few that I shall be able to quote the bulk of them in this review), his persistent concerns were more local and parochial. In

this insularity, he probably mirrors the general attitudes of older liberals ("Whig[s] on the old plan," as he describes himself on pp. 245 and 354-55) toward social and political change within Britain and across the Channel.

In these letters, Cowper strongly supports the Parliamentary battle of 1788 against the slave trade (now almost forgotten) and even contributes his mite by writing some propagandistic poems to be set to music, in an effort to influence public opinion (see pp. 89, 103, 106-07, 172, 177-78). He opposes cruel field sports, describing in disgusting detail the only fox hunt that he ever witnessed (pp. 117-19). On 19 April 1790, he explains "thank heav'n!" that "the Bastile [is] now no more" but he does so in parentheses, while alluding to his own passage in *The Task* (V, 379-445) that describes the plight of a prisoner in the Bastille (p. 369). He supports religious toleration and particularly a bill put forward by his Catholic friends the Throckmortons to ease the Catholic disabilities (pp. 295, 301, 354 f.), and at the end of the volume he even refuses to translate four of Milton's Latin poems on the Gunpowder Plot because he thinks that "they are written with an asperity, which, however it might be warranted in Milton's Day, would be extremely unseasonable now": "I should think . . . that the dying embers of antient animosity had better not be troubled" (p. 583 and fn.). Like all right thinking people of his day, he honored the humanitarian prison reformer John Howard and wrote a (prose) epitaph for a proposed monument to be erected at the site of Howard's death in the Crimea (p. 411).

Though Cowper's actual comments on the French struggles for self-government are not numerous, they are friendly and relatively sanguine at first. Apart from the earlier aside on the fall of the Bastille, Cowper's first such comment comes on 1 December 1789 in a letter to John Newton, in which he also alludes to his central interest throughout this volume—his translation of *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*:

In my next, perhaps, I shall find leisure to bestow a few lines on what is doing in France and in the Austrian Netherlands; though to say the truth I am much better qualified to write an essay on the siege of Troy, than to descant on any of these modern revolutions. I question if in either of the countries just mention'd, full of bustle and tumult as they are, there be a single character whom Homer were he living, would deign to make his hero. The populace are the heroes now, and the stuff of which gentlemen heroes are made, seems to be all expended. (p. 321)

In a letter to his cousin Lady Hesketh on 7 July 1790, Cowper shows his system of values to be in direct conflict with the course of events in France:

The French who like all lively folks, are extreme in every thing, are such in their zeal for Freedom, and if it were possible to make so noble a cause ridiculous, their manner of promoting it could not fail to do so. Princes and peers reduced to plain gentlemanship, and gentles reduced to a level with their own lacqueys, are excesses of which they will repent hereafter. Difference of rank and sub-

ordination, are, I believe of God's appointment, and consequently essential to the well being of society: but what we mean by fanaticism in [religion] is exactly that which animates their politics, and unless time should sober the[m], they will, after all, be an unhappy people. Perhaps it deserves not much to be wondered at, that at their first escape from tyrannic shackles, they should act extravagantly, and treat their kings, as they have sometimes treated their idols. (pp. 396-97)

A comparison of these sentiments with such Romantic reflections on the Revolution as "France: An Ode" and the Preface to *The Revolt of Islam* shows that the Romantics shared more of Cowper's prejudices and values than might at first seem likely, while a backward glance confirms that the chief article on which they differed—the divine ordinance of a social hierarchy—was a preconception that Cowper shared with Milton, among many others.

On 26 February 1791, at a time when Lafayette and his allies were still very much in control in France and the most notable events in recent memory were the Festival of the Federation of the previous July and the passage of laws designed to commit the loyalty of the clergy to the civil constitution (nothing to frighten a loyal Anglican), Cowper defended the French against the scorn of his friend Walter Bagot:

I think your Latin quotations very applicable to the present state of France. But France is in a situation new and untried before. When she is a little more accustom'd to it and has time to digest coolly and arrange the chaos of business before her, she will acquit herself better. At least, I think, she will never be enslaved again. (p. 470)

Cowper was now optimistic enough, partly because of the changes he had seen wrought by the French on an entrenched tyranny, to assert "Le bon tems viendra" (p. 260), the exact sentiment that (in Italian, rather than French) would adorn Shelley's ring thirty years later.

Finally, however, in a letter to Lady Hesketh, 11 July 1791, Cowper shows that he pities the plumage more than he remembers the dying bird:

You judge right in supposing that I pitied the King and Queen of France. I can truly say that, except the late melancholy circumstances of our own (when our Sov'reign had lost his sense, and his wife was almost worried out of hers) no Royal distresses have ever moved me so much. And still I pity them, prisoners as they are now for life, and since their late unsuccessful attempt, likely to be treated more scurvily than ever. Heaven help them, for in their case, all other help seems vain! (p. 543)

This passage points us back to Cowper's concern for the madness of King George III (partly because, like the Romantics, he despised and feared the self-seeking politics of the Prince of Wales), and to his affirmation on 25 February 1789, when the King had recovered from his first attack:

The King's recovery is with us a subject of daily conversation and of continual joy. It is so providentially timed, that no man who believes a providence at all, can say less of it than that *This is the finger of God!* Never was a hungry faction so mortally disap-

pointed. . . . It is a wonderful æra in the history of this country; and posterity will envy us the happiness of having lived at such a period (pp. 263-64).

Let me set beside this pæon to the recovery of George III (and to the confusion of the Prince and of Charles James Fox, his crony of that period) Shelley's sentiments at the end of "A Defence of Poetry": "our own will be a memorable age in intellectual achievements, and we live among such philosophers and poets as surpass beyond comparison any who have appeared since the last national struggle for civil and religious liberty." Whereas Cowper places his faith in the governance of historical process by Providential forces, Shelley celebrates the powers of the human intellect and spirit that are stirred up in times of political crisis. Both set their faith in a causal relationship between times of stress and extraordinary achievements, but whereas for Shelley the activating force is (probably) imminent, for Cowper, He is transcendent. Blake's position, I believe, is more ambiguous than either of these. Certainly his rhetoric and the structures of his works often suggest that he is as much of Cowper's party as Shelley's.

William Cowper represents many of the best features of the world that was about to dissolve in the acid of acrimonious conflicts between ideologies that took form or gained adherents in the wake of the French Revolution. His reactions to the early development of those ideologies and parties, from which he kept totally aloof, enable us to mark the extent of their growth and dissemination throughout the society. They also help to remind us that morality and humanity were not novel concomitants of the modern ideologues, as some superficial partisans of the Romantics occasionally try to imply. Indeed, though Cowper was in every way unfit to provide a model for surviving in the rough and tumble world of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, he can (as I suggested in an earlier review) remind us of qualities and virtues we have lost and might well seek to foster, as a safety check upon and as a complement to Romantic freedom and individuality.

Cowper's central subject, in these lengthy letters, as in those of the earlier volumes, is himself and his own simple life and desires. But he has changed his orientation. He is no longer a religious enthusiast, as in volume I, or simply the man of rural retirement and quiet observation and commentary, sometimes in occasional poetry, that we encountered in volume II. Now he is the Poet—or even "An Author by profession . . ." (p. 311). In this shift, he would seem to be moving in the direction that the Romantics were to adopt as their central identities. But Cowper does not succumb to the tendency of even the great Romantics sometimes to place their egos at the center of their value-systems. Cowper, indeed, refuses to make his imagination or consciousness either a source or the center of values. He accepts himself as a limited being, neither a paragon in himself nor a

model for most other men and women.

When others called Blake and Shelley mad, they and their admirers retorted that the real madmen were those running the asylum. Cowper, on the other hand, was very much aware that his grasp upon sanity was precarious and that he had to struggle to mediate between his desires and ideals and unpleasant realities that surrounded him. He therefore withdrew to a defensive position that enabled him to control a portion of his environment, without totally withdrawing from society. Even when he was not under any particular emotional stress, Cowper (like the late William Ellery Leonard) had a strong phobia about traveling. When Mrs. King, a correspondent with whom he had developed a strong epistolary friendship but whom he had never seen, asks him to visit her and her husband, he obliquely tells her that such a trip would be impossible for him: "I am a strange creature, who am less able than any man living to project any thing out of the common course with a reasonable prospect of performance. . . . Almost twenty years have I been thus unhappily circumscribed, and the remedy is in the hand of God only" (p. 400). About two weeks later, he is slightly more explicit with his old friend and benefactor Joseph Hill: "you must understand that I have not slept from home these 19 years and that I despair of being ever able to do it more" (p. 403). These remarks help to explicate a more offhand remark to his cousin Lady Hesketh (to whom he had obviously revealed his secret fear) as he prepared to journey by chaise to visit his friend Charles [Bagot] Chester at nearby Chicheley:

when I saw this moment a poor old woman coming up the lane, opposite my window, I could not help sighing and saying to myself—"Poor, but happy old woman! Thou art exempted by thy situation in life from riding in chaises, and making thyself fine in a morning, happier therefore in my account than I, who am under the cruel necessity of doing both." (p. 389)

Feeling as he did his own limitations, Cowper spent much time in these letters advising two young university men who came to him during the years covered by this volume and became his admiring friends to follow practical pursuits and to resist any shyness and fear of novelty or of travel. One of these men, Samuel Rose, wrote to him as an admirer in 1787 and sent him a copy of Burns's *Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect*. This unexpected stimulation helped Cowper to break out of six months of depression. Rose became almost a son to Cowper for a time, to a certain extent comforting him for the loss of William Unwin, whose death on 29 November 1786 may have precipitated that period of depression. (Cowper mentions Unwin only three times in this volume.) By the time that Rose's London legal career—in which Cowper had aided him by judiciously introducing him to influential friends—and his marriage had left Rose less time to visit Cowper and to act as amanuensis for the Homeric translations, Cowper had met and taken a

warm liking to his young maternal cousin John Johnson, then a student at Cambridge. Johnny, Cowper wrote to Johnson's aunt, "I love as if he were my son, and . . . I believe is not unwilling to serve me in that capacity since I am likely never to have any other" (24 November 1790; p. 431).

Samuel Rose, the lawyer whom William Hayley hired to defend Blake against the charge of sedition in January 1804, was not, it seems, a blood relation of John Johnson, as Geoffrey Keynes was led to believe (see Blake, *Letters*, ed. Keynes [3rd edition, 1980], pp. xxi, 75-80, and *passim*). Rather, he was related to John Johnson and Cowper by more significant intellectual, moral, and humane affinities. When Blake imagined Rose's death (late in 1804) and saw "Sweet Rose" entering "into the Celestial City," with bells ringing and trumpets sounding to mark his "arrival among Cowper's Glorified Band of Spirits of Just Men made Perfect" (Blake, *Letters*, p. 106), Blake was also linking himself to the same "great society" of noble men. Significantly, however, Hayley, who formed the strongest link between Cowper's circle and Blake, also saw a negative affinity between the two greater poets. Hayley wrote to Lady Hesketh:

I have also ever wished to befriend Him [Blake] from a motive, that, I know, our dear angelic Cowper *would approve*, because this poor man with an admirable quickness of apprehension & with uncommon powers of mind, has *often appeared to me on the verge of Insanity*. . . . (Blake, *Letters*, p. 118)

Blake, to avoid being relegated to the level of a weak-spirited valetudinarian, whose wife (Haley thought) was his strongest prop, had to reject the condescending "pity" of this most helpful of his patrons and so distance himself from Cowper's memory.

Even when Cowper identified himself as a "Poet" or "Author," he kept "art" in perspective. He had begun to write poetry—just as he had earlier gardened and made furniture—to occupy his mind and keep it from morbid thoughts. He also enjoyed writing letters to his few friends for the same reason, and in order to make sure that his correspondents did not forget him, he had always answered his mail promptly with letters as entertaining as possible. In this volume, having committed himself to translating *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* for a large group of subscribers and finding that most of his time was occupied in constant revision in order to approach the quality that he demanded of himself (as well as to satisfy the critics to whom he and his publisher sent the early drafts for review), Cowper necessarily modified his habits by writing all his letters before breakfast, apologizing to his growing list of correspondents when he had to delay or curtail his replies. And, though he blamed his occupation of translating for this falling off in his epistolography, he always assumed that he should apologize (e.g., "You must know, my dear Rowley, that a man having two great volumes in the Press, is no

more master of his time than the greatest man in the Kingdom . . .," p. 458). He never pretended that his correspondents were imposing upon his valuable time, thereby impeding literary history. Unlike Joyce or other more recent authors, he did not believe that authorship, of whatever character or quality, licensed a person to use or abuse his friends and acquaintances.

In my review of volume II of Cowper's *Letters* (Blake, 17 [#65, Summer 1983], 26-29), I discussed how poets of Cowper's social class (which included Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, and Shelley of the later period) began with a gentlemanly ideal of authorship that was opposed to the commercial attitudes of "authors by trade." Eventually the great financial success enjoyed by the poetry of Scott, Byron, Moore, and others forced even Wordsworth and Shelley to deal with the question of commercial success, if only in a negative sense (by saying that the public taste was debased and predicting their own vindication by posterity). Cowper, whose small patrimony was being eaten away by daily expenses, even with the largess of Lady Hesketh, Joseph Hill, and other friends, finally came to count on a monetary reward for his translations from Homer. He worked hard—and encouraged his friends to work—to secure subscribers for the edition. And he engaged in what for him was a difficult negotiation with Joseph Johnson, who bought the rights to the first printing of the edition, leaving Cowper with the copyright (see particularly pp. 537-40, 542-43, 544-45, and 569). But Cowper retained the basic attitudes of the gentleman author, in the sense that he devoted extraordinary time and care to every word he published, abjuring the quick, easy way to make extra money by hurrying through his translations or even through the few reviews he wrote for Joseph Johnson's *Analytical Review*, beginning in 1789 (see pp. 239, 259-61, 277, etc.).

One very practical result of Cowper's concern for his reputation was the meticulous care he took, not only in composing and correcting his poems, but even in transcribing them for his personal friends. In two letters of August and September 1788, Cowper transcribes the eleven quatrains of his poem "The Dog and the Water-lily" (pp. 200-02 and 212-13), and a collation shows that, not only did Cowper make no verbal changes in the text when he transcribed it three weeks later, but he made very few variations even in orthography and punctuation. The first text, copied for Lady Hesketh, has no abbreviations, whereas in copying for his young admirer Samuel Rose, he indulges himself by using the ampersand in place of "and" five times and by using the alternative form "tho'" in place of "though" once. The only other changes alter five capital letters to lower-case and one lower-case initial letter to a capital (in the title, "Water-lily" becomes "Water-Lily"), omit one hyphen ("newly-blown" to "newly blown"), and change a period at the end of the tenth stanza to a semicolon. All other

capitalizations and every apostrophe used to indicate that a syllable ought not to be pronounced (e.g., "mark'd" and "consid'rate" in the sixth stanza) are identical in the two versions. Editors of Cowper's poetry, at least, need not change "accidentals" on the theory that he did not care or failed to give time to such minutiae. (I am amused at those textual editors—and copy editors—who seem to believe that their knowledge and concern with the form of a work are automatically greater than those of its author.)

James King and Charles Ryskamp deserve our gratitude for their care and faithfulness in presenting Cowper's letters just as he wrote them. Because the editors have not interfered with the form of presentation, we can make such judgments on Cowper's attitude toward the form of his poetry without having to consult the original manuscripts each time. Only such diplomatic editions begin to fulfill the needs of the serious scholar (and who besides large libraries and serious specialist scholars can afford to purchase editions at these prices?). Naturally, if even Homer sometimes nods, the editors of his translator's letters also do. But though my function as a reviewer requires me to mention a few minor problems, I will say again that the edition has an overall high quality of textual accuracy that is rare even in our age of massive, cooperative editorial enterprises.

In collating the texts of a number of letters with the manuscripts in the Carl H. Pforzheimer Library, I found a few discrepancies that deserve mention, but I found more frequently that the editors had captured perfectly Cowper's idiosyncrasies of idiom and orthography where I was at first misled by superficial appearances. Among the minor oversights I encountered were these: First, the editors give Cowper the benefit of the doubt occasionally by adding apostrophes where they are appropriate but do not appear in the manuscript (e.g., in "Book's" at p. 145, line 26). Second, they sometimes fill in syllables actually missing from an abbreviated or stylized word (e.g., the "ment" in "Compliments" on p. 497, bottom). Third, they occasionally print without brackets letters and even short words that are actually illegible because marred by seal tears or covered by the seal (e.g., "in" at p. 184, line 22); sometimes they also record without brackets dates and other information from postmarks that are, in fact, totally illegible (e.g., the date on the London morning duty stamp on p. 144, where their inference of "13" may well be an error). Finally, there are a few minor omissions, mistranscriptions, and palpable typographical errors. In one manuscript Cowper interlined very faintly, with an almost dry pen, the clause, "were I to send you verse," (p. 86, line 5, caret between "you" and "which"); those words apparently did not appear on the photocopy and were omitted from the transcription. On page 497 (line 10), "above" has been mistranscribed as "about" (but since the whole issue is whether Cowper has "not about"

or "not above" two ounces of cheese left, no great harm results). I have also noted what seem to be typos—omissions, transpositions, or substitutions of one or two letters of a word—on pages 30, 266, 283, 339, 343, 396, and 573; none of these interferes with Cowper's clear meaning. In the mass of Cowper's words crowded into 600 pages of closely printed text, there must be a few dozen more such minor oversights, but unless they are of greater moment than any I discovered, they would have no effect on any use I can imagine for Cowper's correspondence. More remarkable than these signs of human fallibility is the minute fidelity with which Cowper's characteristic capitalizations, spellings, abbreviations, and idioms have been reproduced throughout the first three volumes.

The quality of the annotation in this volume, however, does not seem to me to be quite as high as in the previous two volumes of *Letters*. In general, the notes become less pertinent and precise as the subject matter widens from Cowper's immediate circle to events in the larger political and social worlds and as the need for biographical reference works yields to the need for comprehension of historical events and Cowper's reaction to them. For example, Cowper comments several times on the Birmingham Riots of 14–17 July 1791 (see pp. 547, 548, 550, and 568), in each case expressing his contempt for the hoodlums who burned and destroyed in the name of King, Church, and Country. Yet the footnotes at pp. 547 and 568 seem to imply that Cowper considered the riots to be as much the fault of the Nonconformist sympathizers with the French Revolution as of the Loyalist mob. The sentiments of Mrs. Carter quoted in the latter note were obviously not what Lady Hesketh had conveyed to Cowper in the letter he was answering, for in the other three comments, he does not hold the liberals at all to blame for the disturbance. Or, to take a subtler problem of annotation, on page 275, when Cowper mentions that his friend Mrs. Throckmorton was to be present "at the Ball at Brooks's," we find a long note giving the location and founding date of the famous London club, but no indication of the real significance of Cowper's gossip to Lady Hesketh: the Throckmortons were in the circle of the Prince of Wales and Charles James Fox, who held forth at Brookes's during this period. As a rule, Cowper's letters do not require extensive historical annotation, but his few political and historical allusions are, therefore, like Jane Austen's, even more significant than in the case of a writer who can be assumed to be vitally interested in such things. I have a short list of other examples of incomplete or erroneous annotations that need not occupy space here, but which I shall send to the editors.

Readers of *Blake/An Illustrated Quarterly* will, however, be interested in a valuable supplement to the story of Cowper's translation of Homer, as it unfolds through-

out this volume. Professor James King has published an essay entitled "An Unlikely Alliance: Fuseli as Revisor of Cowper's Homer" in *Neophilologus*, 67 (1983), 468-79, that adds to Cowper's few comments on Henry Fuseli's involvement some quotations from Fuseli's manuscript letters about his reading and suggestions for improvements in the translation. This article, together with Cowper's remarks to and about Joseph Johnson's way of sending him manuscripts to read for possible publication, casts light on the way Johnson—and presumably other bookseller-publishers—conducted business in the 1780's and 1790's. The attentive reader of Cowper's *Letters* will learn many other things about authorship and publication in the period, but let me leave students of Blake with two in the area of technology: Cowper asked for—and seems to have received—in December 1787 "a new invention, called an everlasting pencil," which seems to have been very similar to mechanical pencils of more recent vintage (see pp. 72 and 76). And unless I am much mistaken, Cowper's remark to John Johnson on 18 December 1790, "I address you with a new pen, a great rarity with me, and for which I am indebted to my Lady Cousin" (p. 443), must mean that he wrote with a steel pen point, rather than a quill—something I would not have thought likely for a person in Cowper's rural retirement at that date. (According to the article on "Pen" in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, "Metallic pens, although known since the days of Pompeii, were little used until the 19th century and did not become common until near the middle of that century." The article goes on to mention that Joseph Priestley had such a pen handmade for him in 1780 and to describe "Steel pens made and sold in London by a man named Wise in 1803. . . .") Neither of these innovations in writing equipment struck me as being as novel, however, as some of Cowper's idiomatic phrases, as when he (addicted to the use of playful pet names, such as the "Frogs" for the Throckmortons and "Cuzzy-Wuzzy" for Lady Hesketh) addressed Lady Hesketh, in a term of endearment, as a "gentle Yahoo" (p. 76).

The copy that Oxford University Press sent for review this time seems to be more sturdily bound and more physically durable than the copies of volumes I and II about which I complained in the earlier reviews. Though a reviewer's single copy remains too small a sample for purposes of valid generalization, I am delighted to testify to my pleasure in finding improvement in an area that posed a serious problem in the copies of the two previous volumes that I saw. A British colleague once suggested to me that the reason that the food in English restaurants remained so abominable, in comparison with the very fine cooking in British homes of my acquaintance, was simply that the British are too polite to complain about the shoddy goods and service. Rather than allow major publishers or other institutions in our area of professional interest and competence to

degenerate into the equivalent of Fawlty Towers, it is our individual and collective responsibility to call their attention to inadequacies that are within their power to correct, assured that they will consider such advice a favor because those in positions of responsibility really strive to gain the respect and gratitude of the profession they serve. To find that a problem I pointed out in reviewing previous volumes (they almost fell apart in one's hand) has, apparently, been remedied gives me renewed hope for the return of the World's Great Age.

John Beer. *William Blake*. Windsor, Berkshire, England: Profile Books, 1982. 52 pp. £1.50.

Reviewed by James Bogan

The concept is admirable: a fifty-page booklet on Blake and his works, something more than a textbook introduction and less than a major study. John Beer's *William Blake* fits the outward description but does not provide the essential information needed by the newcomer to Blake. He does chart Blake's intellectual life well, making clear the links to Swedenborg and Thomas Taylor. His perceptive reading of "London" is enhanced by the contrast to an Isaac Watts poem for children which begins: "Whene'er I take my Walks abroad, / How many Poor I see?" Other comparisons to Watts are interesting but inappropriate for a general reader.

After a generation of warnings that Blake's poems cannot be experienced fully without the illustrations, I have often felt that the *words* are now being overlooked in favor of the pictures, but Beer totally ignores Blake as an artist-engraver. No mention is made of the designs that are fused to the poems. Perhaps the author was restricted by the format of a "Writers and Their Work" series, which shows once again that Blake does not submit to categorization without a severe distortion of his work.

Attempting to describe *The Four Zoas*, *Milton*, and *Jerusalem* briefly is a challenge Blake himself never took up—with good reason. In a book such as this, the task should be to intrigue the reader and provide a few land-

marks by which to explore the *terra incognita* of the epics. Although Urizen is characterized deftly, everyone else gets short shrift. All that is said about Los is that in *Jerusalem*, "Los is now the hero." The balance of creative and destructive forces in Blake's works needs fuller exposition.

The bibliography is problematic since Blake's works are given without indication of the number of editions he printed or the variation in plate arrangement, a fact that should not be left out even for a neophyte. The list of critical works is fairly complete but indifferently annotated.

In 1799 the Reverend Dr. Trusler insulted Blake by suggesting that the artist needed someone to "elucidate" his ideas. Blake rejoined: "That which can be

made Explicit to the Idiot is not worth my care." As teachers of Blake we are on perilous ground unless our own instruction is calculated to "rouze the faculties [of our students] to act." In bringing a class beyond *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (and back again) it does help to set up some guideposts and do some unabashed elucidating, but I do not believe the day should be spent in endless distinctions between shadows and spectres. Blake's picture-poems work magic if they are experienced visually and aurally. For those who need explanation without oversimplification I still recommend Albert Roe's chapter on "Blake's Symbolism" in *The Illustrations to the Divine Comedy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953). After that, as they say on the shores of Lake Udan Adan, you are on your own.

Jerome J. McGann. *The Romantic Ideology: A Critical Investigation*. Chicago and London: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1983. x + 172 pp. \$15.00.

Reviewed by Michael Fischer

Jerome J. McGann's *The Romantic Ideology* is an important, if sometimes disappointing, book. Concentrating on recent academic discussions of Romanticism, McGann finds the present scholarly approach to Romanticism "so ignorant or forgetful of its subject, so intent upon its own productive process, that it seems capable of any sort of nonsense" (18). In place of the "loose critical thinking" (29) that presumably governs our current understanding of Romanticism, McGann proposes a "critical" or "historical" investigation indebted to Heine's *The Romantic School* and Marx's *The German Ideology* as well as to work of Raymond Williams, Louis Althusser, Pierre Machery, Terry Eagleton, and Galvano Della Volpe. Though incomplete and, in places, vague, McGann's argument is nonetheless forceful and deserves the atten-

tion of anyone interested in English Romanticism and the institutional underpinnings of academic criticism.

According to McGann, "the Romantic ideology" is that poetry can rise above the material circumstances that occasion it. Romantic poetry, as McGann sees it, is marked by various acts of "displacement," "idealization," "evasion," "erasure," "attenuation," and "occlusion," all aimed at "disguising" the historical realities that the poet wants to transcend. In a provocative reading of "The Ruined Cottage" and "Tintern Abbey," two of McGann's many examples, he argues that Wordsworth characteristically grounds his work in historical fact. "The Ruined Cottage," as Wordsworth indicated in his Fenwick note, deals with the depression of the weaving industry in southwest England in 1793, and "Tintern Abbey," as the title states, revisits on 13 July 1798 a ruined abbey first visited in the summer of 1793. In each case, the setting involves strife and contradiction, the abbey, for example, serving in the 1790s as "a favorite haunt of transients and displaced persons" (86). In "Tintern Abbey," the juxtaposition of the "pastoral farms" with the "vagrant dwellers in the houseless woods" illustrates what McGann calls "an ominous social and economic fact of the period: that in 1793 no great distance separated the houseless vagrant from the happy cottager, as 'The Ruined Cottage' made so painfully clear" (86). Wordsworth, however, evokes these troubled settings only to replace them with permanent "forms of beauty" visible to the imaginative eye that sees through transitory appearances (here, the ruined abbey) into the timeless "life of things." By the end of the poem, "the mind," in short, "has triumphed over its times," leaving us "only with the initial scene's simplest natural forms: 'these steep woods and lofty cliffs, And this green pastoral landscape' [158-9]. Everything else has been erased—the abbey, the beggars and displaced vagrants, all that

civilized culture creates and destroys, gets and spends. We are not permitted to remember 1793 and the turmoil of the French Revolution, neither its 1793 hopes nor—what is more to the point for Wordsworth—the subsequent ruin of these hopes” (88).

In McGann's opinion, this apparent victory of poetry over history is an illusion, in Marxist terms an example of “ideology” or “false consciousness,” that Romantic poetry itself exposes. The unmasking of the Romantic ideology takes place, first, in the oeuvre of each poet (with the possible exception of Blake, a point to which I will return). The destruction elided in “Tintern Abbey,” for example, reappears in “Peele Castle,” making the latter poem a “palinode” to Wordsworth's earlier poetic faith” (99). Similarly, “Constancy to an Ideal Object,” in McGann's view, “passes a most devastating judgment upon Coleridge's cherished belief that the realm of ideas provides a ground for reality” (107). And in the final movement of *Don Juan*, Byron's poetry, too, “discovers what all Romantic poems repeatedly discover: that there is no place of refuge, not in desire, not in the mind, not in imagination” (145).

In a useful discussion of the phases of English Romanticism, McGann further suggests that progressive disillusionment informs the Romantic movement as a whole. Written before the Reign of Terror and the oppressive English reaction to the Revolution, early Romantic works such as Blake's *Songs* and *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* did not have to “bring their own dialectical stance into question” (108). That stance, qualified but apparently never abandoned in later works like *Milton* and *Jerusalem*, remains “allied to a polemic on behalf of the special privilege of poetry and art,” ascribing to them “a special insight and power over the truth” (70). In the second phase of Romanticism, from 1789–1808, confidence in the transcendental powers of poetry began to ebb in “Peele Castle,” “Limbo,” and other works “already laden with self-critical and revisionist elements” (109). In the years of reaction that characterize the third phase of Romanticism, “Blake fell silent, Wordsworth fell asleep, and Coleridge fell into his late Christian *contemptus*. The second generation of Romantics, however, fashioned from these evil times a new set of poetic opportunities” (116). Dominated by Byron, third-phase Romanticism is “so deeply self-critical and revisionist that its ideology—in contrast to Blake, Wordsworth, and the early Coleridge—has to be defined in negative terms: nihilism, cynicism, anarchism” (110). The illusion that poetry can free us from history and culture—again, for McGann, the “Romantic ideology,” or “the grand illusion of every Romantic poet” (137)—is thus questioned by the very poetry that wishes to affirm it.

Even though later Romantic poets are accordingly more disillusioned than their predecessors, in McGann's

view they are not for that reason better poets. Each phase of Romanticism seems to him an honest response—perhaps the only possible “critical” response—to the historical conditions that inspire it. The failure of the French Revolution, in other words—not poetic ability—separates Byron from Blake. Shelley's “idealism,” Byron's “sensationalism,” and Keats's “aestheticism”—all variants of the Romantic ideology that these same writers go on to criticize—remain “displaced yet fundamental vehicles of cultural analysis and critique: a poetry of extremity and escapism which is the reflex of the circumstances in which their work, their lives, and their culture were all forced to develop” (117). If McGann, then, is not urging us to dismiss these poets as purveyors of false consciousness, neither does he want us to emulate them. He hopes that we will see their work as a “human,” “concrete,” and “unique” reaction to special circumstances. Dating Romantic poetry in this way, he argues, does not leave it dated, or irrelevant to present concerns. In fact, the differences between past and present can remind us that our own ideologies are also “time and place specific” (2), not immutable truths grounded in nature or some other ostensibly transhistorical order. In McGann's words,

We do not contribute to the improvement of social conditions or even to the advancement of learning—insofar as scholars improve or advance anything outside the field of scholarship—by seeking to erase this difference [between past and present], but rather by seeking to clarify and promote it. When critics perpetuate and maintain older ideas and attitudes in continuities and processive traditions they typically serve only the most reactionary purposes of their societies, though they may not be aware of this; for the cooptive powers of a vigorous culture like our own are very great. (2)

In chastising critics who preserve “older ideas,” McGann presumably has in mind writers like M.H. Abrams (in *Natural Supernaturalism*), Anne Mellor (in *English Romantic Irony*), and L.J. Swingle (in “On Reading Romantic Poetry”), all of whom, in McGann's opinion, take the Romantic ideology at face value. (Strangely enough, McGann does not mention Northrop Frye, surely the most influential twentieth-century literary critic indebted to English Romanticism.) Each of these critics protects the Romantic ideology mainly by dismissing criticism of it as “non-Romantic.” Abrams, for example, goes so far as to exclude Byron's “ironic counter-voice” from *Natural Supernaturalism*, an excision that Mellor laments but does not to McGann's satisfaction repair. Ignoring the Romantics' self-criticism, these critics think that Romantic poetry achieves the transcendence of history that it desires. In McGann's view, these scholars therefore neglect not only the historical limits of Romanticism but also the transitory status of the “Ideological State Apparatuses” that their scholarship unwittingly serves. Deploring the “reactionary” and “uncritical” consequences of such criticism, McGann con-

cludes that "to generate a polemic for Romantic poetry on its own ideological terms" (as Abrams and Mellor supposedly do) "at this point in time is to vitiate criticism and to court mere intellectual sentiment. . . . Today no criticism of the Romantic Movement can seek to be 'free of non-Romantic notions' if it means to be taken seriously as criticism" (37-38). By "non-Romantic notions," McGann means, among other things, the time-bound character of art, the cornerstone of the historical/critical method that he is advocating.

I will leave to others the task of disputing the minute particulars of the argument that I have been summarizing. (I suspect that McGann's unruffled portrait of Blake will nettle many readers of *Blake/An Illustrated Quarterly*, especially those readers influenced by deconstruction, a theory I will turn to momentarily.) I am more concerned here with the vagueness of the connections that McGann is trying to make. He fails to explain why "the Romantic ideology" continues to dominate academic criticism and what "reactionary purposes" academic critics consequently serve. Put differently, he never tells us what academic critics get in exchange for espousing the "illusion" that art is timeless.

A more persuasive account would not only spell out the class interests that motivate the "ideology" that McGann is criticizing. Such an account would also specify the historical developments that have allowed McGann to see further into Romanticism than Abrams, say, or Mellor. McGann repeatedly argues that just as Romantic poetry reflects "the determinate limits of specific social structures" (157), "the theory and practise of criticism reflect the authority of the university's complex ideological structures" (158). The question arises, then, what "social structures" permit McGann's liberation from the delusions that grip his contemporaries? Put bluntly, how can the Doris and Henry Dreyfuss Professor of Humanities at the California Institute of Technology be exempt from the Romantic illusions that, by his own admission, not only distorted his own early work on Byron but continue to mislead the academic profession?

Instead of answering these questions, McGann tries to disarm them by suggesting that his point of view is not as privileged as I am making it out to be. "Needless to say," he writes at one point, "I am not suggesting here that the ideological polemic of criticism should be sacrificed to a (spurious) critical objectivity, or vice versa" (30). I take McGann to be saying here that he is not writing from some supra-ideological (i.e. objective) vantage point: he therefore cannot be touched by the accusation that he escapes his own premises, in particular his assumption that all thought takes place "within concrete and specific Ideological State Apparatuses" that constrain it. This disclaimer, however, seems to me disingenuous, or, at the very least, seemingly at odds with statements he makes elsewhere, when he claims,

for example, that the historical investigation of poetry "permits us a brief objective glimpse at our world and our selves" (66), or that Byron's "poetry triumphs in its hedonism . . . whereas the objective world which it mirrors merely suffers and inflicts" (130). Far from being a charade, objectivity in these statements seems to characterize the discoveries of the historical method that McGann is championing.

As Marx saw, the very definition of ideology or false consciousness presupposes a norm, namely, true consciousness. Marx usually called this norm "science"; he also, I should add, identified the historical preconditions of his own "scientific" viewpoint: "The theoretical conclusions of the Communists," he wrote with Engels in *The Communist Manifesto*, "are in no way based on ideas or principles that have been invented, or discovered, by this or that would-be universal reformer. They merely express, in general terms, actual relations springing from an existing class struggle, from a historical movement going on under our very eyes," that movement of course being the division of society into "two great hostile camps," the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. I am not arguing that Marx correctly interpreted his age. My point is that the comprehensiveness of his project depended on his giving it a suitable "material basis," to borrow another one of his favorite terms. Similarly, McGann, like Marx, needs not only to identify the social structures that distort his adversaries' conclusions but also the State Apparatus that enables his own.

McGann's book is incomplete in yet another way: he says nothing about such works as J. Hillis Miller's review of *Natural Supernaturalism* ("Tradition and Difference," *Diacritics*, 2 [1972], Tilottama Rajan's *Dark Interpreter: The Discourse of Romanticism*, Paul de Man's "Shelley Disfigured" and "Intentional Structure of the Romantic Image," Geoffrey Hartman's *Criticism in the Wilderness*, and Jonathan Culler's "The Mirror Stage," a deconstruction of *The Mirror and the Lamp*. Influenced by the ideas of Jacques Derrida, all of these works, like McGann's *The Romantic Ideology*, aim in part at opening up academic discourse and challenging received notions of Romanticism.¹ In addition, Miller and the other critics I have mentioned also raise serious questions about the very possibility of historical criticism, McGann's alternative to the scholarship that he criticizes. It should not be necessary here to review these by now familiar questions or to defend their importance. I will only say that a book like McGann's, conceived in light of "the post-New Critical academic situation" (153), ought to confront these questions if only, it may be, to defuse them.

In his preface McGann notes that *The Romantic Ideology*, along with his concurrently published *A Critique of Modern Textual Criticism* and a recently written sequence of essays, "comprises the initial parts of a com-

prehensive project which seeks to explain and restore an historical methodology to literary studies" (ix). Much of *The Romantic Ideology*, in fact, reads like an introduction reliant on generalizations that one hopes the author will substantiate and perhaps qualify. I say this not to dismiss the book, only to indicate its limits. I sympathize with McGann's desire to restore historical self-consciousness to Romantic scholarship and, more generally, to academic criticism. *The Romantic Ideology* affirms this goal

but does not, however, achieve it.

¹ All of these critics, like McGann, regard *Natural Supernaturalism* as a canonical text. In "Rationality and Imagination in Cultural History," *Critical Inquiry*, 2 (Spring, 1976), 447-64—a discussion of *Natural Supernaturalism* that McGann should acknowledge—Abrams answers some of these critics and defends his omission of Byron.

DISCUSSION

with intellectual spears & long winged arrows of thought

A Re-View of Some Problems in Understanding Blake's *Night Thoughts*

John E. Grant

I. On the Reproductions in the Clarendon Edition

Like other scholars, the editors of the Clarendon edition of Blake's water colors and engravings for *Night Thoughts* were disappointed with the overall quality of the 800 reproductions in our massive two-volume edition published in 1980. Neither the color nor the black and white reproductions are, on average, commendable, though neither their shortcomings nor those of the lengthy, mostly factual Introduction should be seriously misleading, particularly for readers who are aware that in most art books the reproductions are untrustworthy. Our edition has been fortunate to have received some of the most detailed reviews ever devoted to an edition of Blake's pictures. My aim in this response is not to defend the Clarendon edition where it is indeed deficient but to clarify standards and deviations from them.

I believe the broader descriptive and interpretive issues I shall discuss should be aired now, before our projected commentary is completed. I shall first examine instances—some critiques of the reproductions, others of the editorial matter—in which the edition is not, in fact, deficient in the ways or to the extent alleged. In the second part of this essay, I shall discuss some key pictures in the *Night Thoughts* series that require more thorough exposition than they have received heretofore. The commentary, when it finally appears, will not be

the proper forum for detailed discussion of several points I shall raise. Furthermore, some of the issues I shall address extend beyond the specific problems of the Clarendon edition of *Night Thoughts* to larger questions of how Blake's visual works can be presented and understood. This re-view of the Clarendon edition should make it easier for readers to use the edition in ways that will advance scholarship on Blake's most extensive project of pictorial criticism.

For two reasons I have not attempted to develop a committee defense of the Clarendon edition. First, despite our numbers, the Clarendon editors—E.J. Rose, M.J. Tolley, D.V. Erdman, and I—do not constitute a party. Though my fellow editors are aware of my thinking, they have not endorsed this text as a joint position paper. Second, it is easier from a single point of view to establish the necessary distinctions between the *kinds* of problems in the edition and specific allegations of inadequacy that have erroneously been made by reviewers. I shall freely acknowledge many shortcomings in the edition which I had much responsibility for designing—some of which seem to have escaped the notice of reviewers.

The Clarendon edition has been reviewed at length by distinguished Blake scholars, and these reviews have greatly expanded the volume of significant commentary on the *Night Thoughts* designs. Detlef Dörrbecker's exceptionally specific negative review in *Blake* (1982) offers a detailed set of assertions as to where the reproductions went wrong and judges that the Introduction suffers as a result of too great a fondness for Blake's work. Dörrbecker's concluding quotation—of some severe thoughts on scholarly procedures I had written years ago in the first volume of this journal—suggests that he intended to stimulate corrective debate about matters of fact and interpretation. Other especially noteworthy critiques include Morton D. Paley's detailed, somewhat less unfavorable review (1982) and W.J.T. Mitchell's decidedly unfavorable review (1982), which addresses some interpretive problems. These may be weighed against such favorable reviews as those by Jean H. Hagstrum (1982) and Karen Mulhallen (1981). In the aggregate, the re-

views which I have duly listed in my Bibliography offer a fair indication of the capacities of the present Blake community to deal with Blake's most extensive project in visionary criticism.

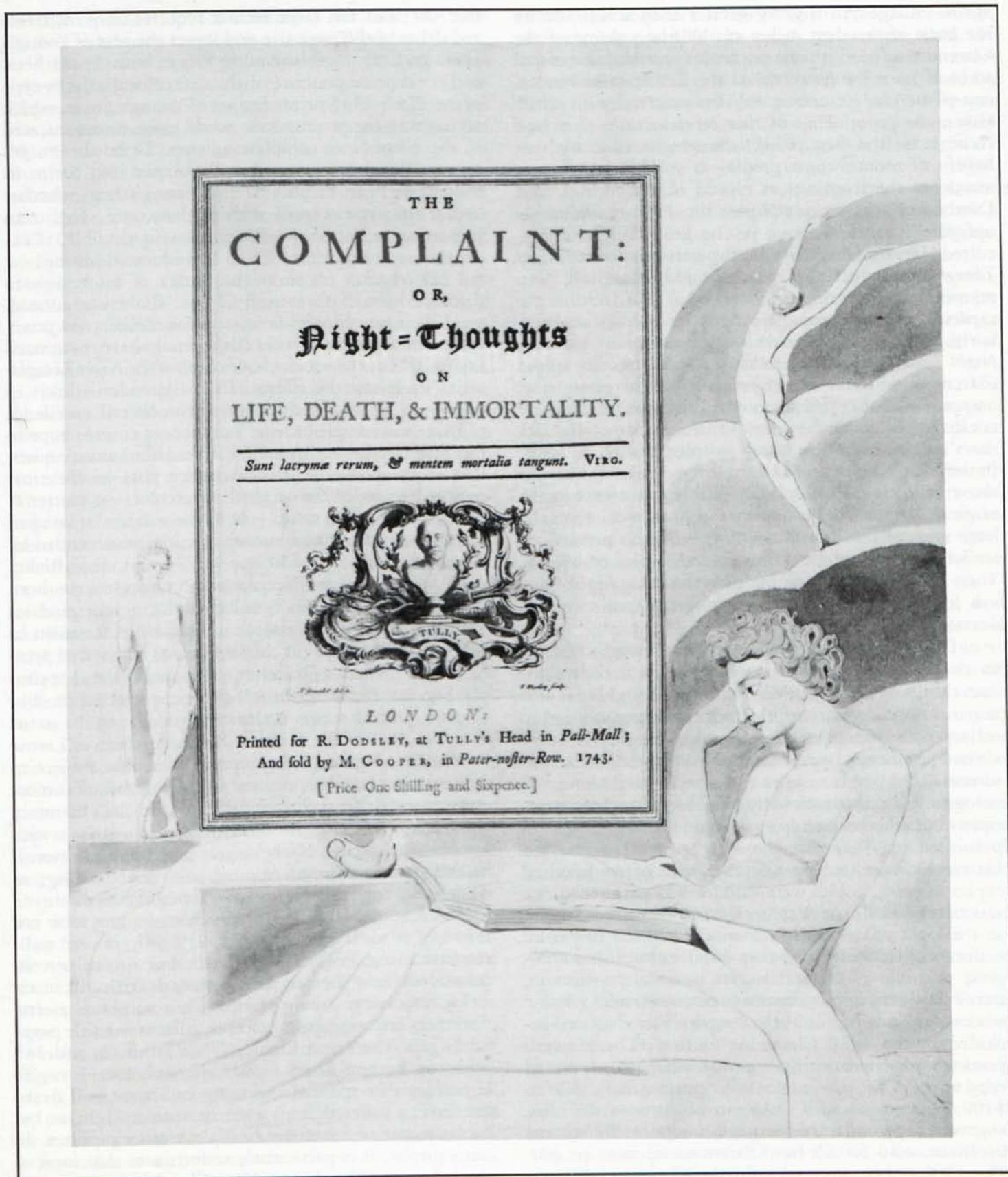
For most purposes all reproductions, especially of water colors—even when they can be given a clean bill of health—are valuable chiefly to jog the memories of those who already know what the actual pictures look like. I have checked all the complaints made by Dörrbecker and Paley against the reproductions in the Clarendon edition. But since it is unlikely that the *Night Thoughts* plates will ever be redone by Clarendon, and since it is certain that exhaustive disputes about many of such data could only concern Blake scholars engaged in a project involving essentially all the pictures, I shall not attempt to chart each of the alleged shortcomings and my evaluations of them. Dörrbecker's diligence in commenting on the quality of sixty-nine reproductions in the *Night Thoughts* edition has not resulted in a large enough percentage of valid objections and corrections to be trustworthy or generally useful. Due to such procedural errors as color-averaging, he is wrong from one-third to two-thirds of the time. Often when the reproduction in question is not satisfactory, the problem lies less with a single color that may be in some degree defective in a number of reproductions than with an inadequate color balance in individual reproductions that are comparable in only the most general way to others that show much the same color. Even if a green, say, that is similar in two original pictures is badly rendered in the reproductions, this error may make much more difference in one case than another because of such factors as the size and position of the color area or the quality of the other colors. Paley, who follows a similar method of reporting individual colors, is not much more successful than Dörrbecker in presenting a reliable analysis of the real problems in the reproductions. The basic question for the reproduction of a Blake picture is whether the viewer can construe enough to recognize what it is supposed to be about. Normally the Clarendon edition provides at least that much. Judged as a reference volume, it is adequate for most purposes. For example, commentary in the 1972 and 1976 theses by Hill and Mulhallen, both of which I have been able to read only recently, would have been more effective if the authors had been able to consult the 1980 Clarendon edition.

In order to evaluate the quality of Dörrbecker's opinions about the adequacy of reproductions, it is necessary to consider the standards he seems to have in mind. Unlike Paley, who declares that he checked the Clarendon reproductions against the originals, Dörrbecker admits that he is judging by other criteria. Naturally, comparing the reproductions with the originals should help in evaluating their quality, but, perhaps surprisingly, such checking may not be either necessary

nor sufficient for a reliable report. Though I have not laid eyes on the actual *Night Thoughts* watercolors since 1978, I am confident that I can judge well enough from slides, photographs, and notes for the project whether the qualities of at least most of the reproductions sufficiently resemble those of the originals to pass muster. There is no point in asking (as we would of the Trianon facsimiles of the Gray designs) whether a well-informed viewer could easily distinguish between the original and the facsimile if these were placed side by side. The basic question is whether the reproduction resembles the original enough to indicate all the details of the picture in monochrome shades or in colors as much like those of the original as possible. And that the qualities be not misrepresented—as when washes are rendered opaque—or that the color balance not be rendered repugnant with ugly hues.

While it is always best to vet reproductions in the presence of the originals, much reporting of such a multifarious set of pictures breaks down either because it is based on a bewildered vision or results from an erroneous translation into words. Clear evidence of this kind of error occurs in the chief specific criticism by Welch and Viscomi (1981)—the latter of whom checked the originals. They discuss the color reproduction of *Night Thoughts* 81 (III, 6), a design made familiar as engraved NT 25E (p. 46): it depicts a beautiful woman among bleak hills pursued by the pall of Death, probably at sundown. Welch and Viscomi prescribed these corrections: "the greens should be bright, the rose wash of the hills should be glowing, the yellow streaks should be bright lime, the body white, and the sky lighter" (p. 539). The first and last two stipulations are roughly correct, but the second and third are simply wrong: there is no "rose wash" on the *bills* though this wash is indeed missing in the reproduction of the sunset sky. And the only real yellow in the picture occurs in the sunset streaks in the sky, where "lime" naturally has no place. Such descriptive errors abound in other reviews that also purport to be specific.

It is easy to set an impossibly high standard of expectation, as Dörrbecker often does in complaining when the pictures are only a little off. At times he is just plain wrong by any standard, as when he laments that "the brilliance and intensity of the varied hues of green . . . are lost almost completely in the color reproduction from *Night Thoughts* 30" (I, 25) (p. 132). In fact, there is no green whatever in Blake's water color and probably never was. In about half the cases Dörrbecker complains about, however, there is indeed something seriously amiss in the reproduction. He rightly objects (p. 137, n. 8) to the monochrome reproduction of *Night Thoughts* 264 (illus. 2), the frontispiece for the second volume in which the designs were originally bound. Both as it appears in its place in the series and



1. *Night Thoughts* 1, Frontispiece, Volume I, by permission of the Trustees of the British Museum.

again, enlarged to slightly greater than actual size on the back of the dust jacket of the first volume of the Clarendon edition, the monochrome reproduction of this scene of Jesus the Awakener at the Resurrection renders one of the two recumbent soldiers practically invisible. Given the prominence of this reproduction—I myself chose it for the dust jacket, though, as usual without benefit of monochrome proofs—it would seem fair to attack its shortcomings as typical of the edition. But Dörrbecker goes on to compare the 1980 reproduction unfavorably with the one in the great 1927 Keynes-edited Harvard University Press portfolio of thirty *Night Thoughts* reproductions, which he judges to have been reproduced “to perfection.” Indeed it was, within the capacity of monochrome reproduction. Oddly and unfairly, however, Dörrbecker neglects to point out that *Night Thoughts* 264 is clearly reproduced in color in the Clarendon edition—as the forty-first color plate (alas, uncaptioned but cross-referenced). Paley, who also rightly criticized the monochrome, did take notice of the fact that “it came out much better in color” (1982, p. 680). In the color reproduction all three figures and the clouds above and below are as plainly visible as they are in the original. It should be understood, however, that the large areas of black or dark gray in Blake’s picture are rendered in the reproduction as dark violet or brown. These non-corresponding hues are the best pidgin English for black achieved in much modern color reproduction.

Dörrbecker cannot resist remarking how much better the 1927 Harvard edition reproduced Blake’s work than the 1980 Clarendon edition, even though he is also at pains to point out that the former was reproduced in collotype, “a printing technique which progress has now almost put beyond price for publishers and their consumers.” The real issue is not what may have been technologically or institutionally possible fifty-three years earlier but whether better work could actually have been published in 1980. For the forty years that Harvard University Press kept the Keynes edition of five-hundred copies in print, copies were sold for \$35 each (the price was never raised). At 1927 prices, in other words, and at the ratio of twenty-five monochromes to five color collotypes, it would have cost \$630 to publish a complete portfolio of *Night Thoughts* watercolors—leaving out of consideration the extensive presentation of graphic works and drawings (and the lengthy Introduction) included in the 1980 Clarendon edition. The Harvard portfolio appeared during a period when an uncolored copy of the 1797 edition could be purchased for \$20 to \$100; also when—as a fluke, to be sure—a defective engraved copy, with sixteen pages undoubtedly colored by Blake, sold for £5 (see Clarendon edition, p. 69). The 1980 publication price for the Clarendon edition, £150 or \$365, does not therefore seem entirely out of

line. At least the large format requires only moderate reduction of the page size and leaves the text of Young’s poem perfectly legible. And an idea of both the aesthetic and conceptual presence of the exceptionally large type of the 1742–1745 printed pages of Young’s poem, which accompany the watercolors, needs to be communicated to the viewer in a complete edition. To be able to get out of Blake’s pictures what Blake put into them, in short, you must be able to read Young’s text, whether or not the verse accords with modern taste. This is an important aspect of the designs that is possible, if expensive, to communicate in a large-format edition.

Dörrbecker chose at the outset of his review to distance himself rhetorically from “Blake enthusiasts” and “their worshipped hero” and his remarks are punctuated throughout by what Blake would have recognized as similar “Grecian mocks,” both against the *Night Thoughts* series itself and the efforts of the Clarendon editors to convey in writing something of the overall excellence of Blake’s accomplishment. I cannot, of course, hope to improve Dörrbecker’s taste for Blake, but I am confident that if the properly attuned reader puts in the time required to study the original watercolors—a matter of months rather than weeks—he or she will not be satisfied with Bindman’s commonsense opinion, commended by Dörrbecker (see pp. 130 and 137, n. 3), that Blake, while on the *Night Thoughts* project, must have been frequently off his form because producing the pictures was such a vast and toilsome undertaking. Remarks in this vein, particularly as they operate as half-stated principles in Reynolds’s *Discourses*, infuriated Blake, not simply because Blake was a self-professed enthusiast, but because, *faute de mieux*, it elevates Prudence to the status of the mother of the Muses. Of course, there is a sense in which any grand artistic project is more subject to failure than a humble one, and large-scale failure is more embarrassing. Yet rightly considered, as I shall maintain elsewhere, Blake has no need to fear comparison with his artistic masters, Michelangelo and Raphael, even if he did not attempt to improve on their drawing, as Andrea del Sarto is said to have thought he could.

A few of Blake’s *Night Thoughts* designs were not seriously worked up, e.g., NT 219 (VI, iv), or well-conceived, e.g., NT 259 (VI, 38), but ninety percent are at least fine pictures and convey a critically interesting response to Young’s frequently amorphous poetry. And there are some great pictures, such as the title pages for Nights Three and Eight, NT 78 (illus. 3) and 345 (illus. 6); both of which I shall discuss below. It is also important that most of the water colors are still fresh, not having suffered from overexposure to light as has been the fate of too many of Blake’s other pictures. In consequence, it is particularly unfortunate that most of the color reproductions in the Clarendon edition are dead, lacking the vibrancy that it is possible to convey

in color reproduction, for example in Butlin's 1978 Tate Gallery exhibition catalogue of *Night Thoughts* 78.

Dörrbecker interestingly attributes the lack of vitality in the Clarendon color reproductions to the choice of cream-colored paper for printing. Quite possibly this was a contributing factor, but it is apparent that the Yale University Press choice of a much whiter paper for Butlin's 1981 catalogue was not sufficient to have resulted in satisfactory color reproductions. The worst of the Clarendon color reproductions, say *Night Thoughts* 117 (IV, 8), despite its wretched pinks, is no worse than and probably not as bad as the entire run of twenty-six designs (now in the Huntington Art Gallery and forbidden by the terms of the bequest from ever traveling) for *Comus*, *Paradise Lost*, and *On the Morning of Christ's Nativity*, as they are reproduced in color in the Yale catalogue (pls. 616-23; 632-43; 666-71). Essick (1982, p. 24) has also noted the inadequate rendering of the Huntington Milton pictures. The ambient blues that distort these reproductions bear no relation whatever to the present condition of the Huntington pictures, which is, of course, all a modern edition aims to reproduce. They are not, we should understand, attempts at photographic restoration of the blues that have probably been lost through overexposure to light of the original pictures; they are simply accidents of the sort that occur in most art books. One who compares the reproduction of Huntington *Paradise Lost* 5, *Satan Watching the Endearments of Adam and Eve* in Butlin 1981, pl. 636 (cat. 529.5) with its counterpart in Behrendt 1983 (plate 9) might be forgiven for supposing that they represent two different Blake pictures. Could there be two opinions as to which is adequate, which not?

Dörrbecker makes a number of appreciative comments about the utility and design of the Clarendon edition which may, from a user's rather than an editor's point of view, be amplified. The inconvenience of working with this large number of atlas-scale water colors—to say nothing of the widely dispersed books of colored engravings—has retarded the development of scholarship on the series. It is fair to say that the water colors are now more accessible in the Clarendon edition than they have ever been before, especially since 1970, when (for justifiable reasons), the British Museum enclosed each of the 269 sheets—all but three of which bear water colors on both sides—in rigid, heavy envelopes of Perspex, a plastic similar to Lucite. Even if one is permitted into the gallery of the Department of Prints and Drawings to handle the thirty-one heavy storage boxes directly, without dependency on having them delivered by one of the ever-attentive assistants, often what should be a simple matter of checking one design against another becomes a time-consuming research project that has to be carried on in too little space. Understandably, the twenty-odd laminated sheets in each box are some-

times out of sequence or otherwise misplaced. Moreover, research was probably not much easier even when the sixteen-inch designs were in the original pair of enormous leather volumes to which they were attached by being inlaid in nineteen-inch paper. Probably the pages had been incorrectly sequenced for Edwards when they were placed in the original bindings—as they certainly were when Shields described many of them in 1880. But the separation of the mounting leaves when the designs entered the British Museum in 1928 was not a satisfactory solution either, for reasons not wholly apparent until one tries to work with them.

The problem of accessibility, which is closely connected with the problem of comprehension of the intended arrangement, has been partly solved by the large format of the Clarendon edition. On the whole I do not regret the decision to publish such a ponderous book, which one reviewer has weighed as twenty pounds. The 14½-inch Clarendon page is indeed cumbersome, particularly in the second volume, which contains all the color plates and graphic works and thus weighs twice as much as the first volume. One needs an inordinately large work area to have both volumes and Butlin's catalogue and other reference books, together with slides and notes, open and ready to consult at the same time. Some of the editors wished to include the proofs for the engravings at the end of the first volume, both to facilitate comparison and to balance the volumes, and would have preferred to enlarge the pictures to extend to the edge of the paper—as Blake did in the water colors after *Night the First* and intended to do in all the engravings. But since publishers and editorial teams must work together by compromising, with cost and feasibility always at issue, this was not to be. Dörrbecker finds "those beautiful wide margins" (p. 136) one of the features of the Clarendon edition that he can wholeheartedly praise. I consider the margins an aesthetic and scholarly nuisance, a barrier against free access to a major critical and artistic accomplishment. They are useful only for taking notes—for those who can afford to write in such an expensive edition.

Yet even if the Clarendon edition had been altered in every possible way, it could not have provided convenient access to all important aspects of Blake's designs; other study devices are necessary as well. The poor-quality Microform transparencies from the E.P. Group of Companies can be used as reminders of what the color looks like. But slides are too small to be seen clearly when they are displayed on a light tray; the new kinds of magnifying slide viewers, however, can be quite helpful. The scholar also needs to have photographs small enough to arrange and rearrange in order to discover the sequences or "chapters" of from two to a dozen designs that Blake arranged as sub-structures in each of the nine *Nights*. At present I am developing a computer-indexed



2. *Night Thoughts* 264, Frontispiece, Volume II, by permission of the Trustees of the British Museum.

videodisc that will allow immediate access to all the *Night Thoughts* designs, in any order desired. This new technology should help considerably in solving the old problem of access which has certainly limited the effective critical attention devoted to this great series.

II. Interpretation

Let us turn from problems of adequate reproduction and access to Blake's pictures of *Night Thoughts* to the question of interpretation, of understanding what Blake intended to convey about Young and the ways of imagination. I am well aware that some readers will doubt whether such a formulation of the interpretive question has much value or interest. To refer to "intention" may appear to bespeak preoccupation with what is, either in a short run or a long run, indeterminate. Or if perhaps determinate, of little more significance than some alternate scheme that may occur to an active mind that takes a number of Blake's pictures together with some lines from Young as an occasion for reverie or as illustrations of a thesis about Neoclassic or Romantic art. While this is not a comprehensive or fair account of the theoretical alternatives, I believe that some discourse about Blake and Young has been animated by such insouciant premises.

Those committed to ascertaining Blake's intentions must be concerned with matching words and pictures with pictures in order to decide who is who and what Blake made of pictorial resemblances that confirm or contradict what Young seems to have been saying. The best evidence is usually to be found among the *Night Thoughts* pictures considered as a coordinated program of visual commentary rather than somewhere else in the Blakean oeuvre, though we normally expect that implications in accord with "Blake's philosophy" will probably be the ones intended. After long study I have concluded that the 537 water colors for *Night Thoughts* were arranged or organized in a significant sequence of pictorial units or visual chapters within each of the Nine Nights of Young's poem. These usually consist of from two to a dozen pictures expressive of a leading idea or theme, often demarcated quite sharply from the other units that precede or follow them. It would be hard to deny that Blake's next project, the designs for Gray's poems, which are also executed on the same kind of drawing paper surrounding the poetical texts, are organized in this fashion, but of course the units of Gray's poetry are far more concise and determinate than is the case with Young.

Some current theories in art criticism tend to discourage critics from attempting to recognize Blake's visual sequences either in the program for *Night Thoughts* or elsewhere. The tide of taste that is now running

against the great scholar (not of Blake, to be sure), E. H. Gombrich, is not interested in claims for pictorial programs. What such viewers want to know is what the pictures may be taken to imply about Blake the artist or the member of the working class. They prefer to think of the pictures as the expressions of Blake's feelings about "Life, Death, and Immortality" and anything else that might have come into the mind of the artist rather than as an intelligible pictorial commentary. I can have no hope of persuading those who would respond "yes" to the following question: do you deny that Michelangelo's set of pictures in the Sistine ceiling constitute a program? Those who do not deny it may still find it difficult to say exactly why the central sequence concludes with the *Drunkenness of Noah*, but they do not doubt that Michelangelo demanded a viewer who would make the effort to understand the arrangement.

After surveying the literature on Blake's *Night Thoughts* designs we can see that attempts to ascertain the chief patterns in the overall arrangement of the pictures seem questionable for two reasons: first, Young's poem is associative rather than tightly structured; this leads the viewer to expect the "illustrations" to be likewise disorderly. Second, the commonsense assumption that Blake was so out of sympathy with Young and so burdened by the sheer numbers of pictures required to accompany the 526 pages of printed text that he must have struggled adventitiously to come up with some picture to fill the blank surrounding paper for every page. If these attitudes indeed predominated in Blake's mind, one would hardly expect to find in the pictures consistent quality or order. This would lead to the suspicion that Blake was using the project mainly as an excuse for bootlegging in his own supposed "system" rather than wasting his energies on illustrating the unworthy Young. How natural, then, for the critic to deploy an abstract of Blake's monomyth derived from *The Book of Urizen* and *The Four Zoas* in such a way as to indicate that he was again chiefly concerned to tell the same "one story only" in the *Night Thoughts* designs!

Thus, Paley (1969) declared the applicability of a pattern of "creation, fall, redemption, and apocalypse," Frye's summary of "Blake's central myth" (p. 140, referring to *Fearful Symmetry*, p. 124). If you follow Paley's account closely, however, you will find that it is largely his critical rhetoric that fills the vacuum of "creation." And as for the "fall," while there are scenes that recall the Temptation in the Garden of Eden, it is not clear that they are supposed to be an adequate explanation of the causes of the richly imagined desperate state of the world in the designs or in the poem. Even Young's pietistic mind was not satisfied to regard all misery under the aspect of "The Fall." When Blake wished his viewer to think continuously of "The Fall," as in *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, he began by presenting a picture of

the Expulsion on the title page.

Look again at the water color frontispieces for the two volumes of *Night Thoughts*: both *Night Thoughts* 1 (illus. 1) and *Night Thoughts* 264 (illus. 2) are scenes of the Resurrection. This is the context Blake provided for a consideration of his *Night Thoughts* series. You can, of course, argue that, without the Fall, the Resurrection would not have been a possibility or necessity. Similarly, you can maintain that any vision of things presupposes a "Creation." Or that every Christian vision—and therefore Blake's—is premised on the doctrine of "the Fortunate Fall." But such reasonings are those of an Interpreter whose parlor needs sweeping. If you ask the simple radical question, where in his own writings does Blake speak of "The Fallen World," you are bound to answer, "never." This discrepancy at least suggests a disproportion between the concerns of Blake and of his expositor. What concerned Blake was "Fallen Man." And Regeneration.

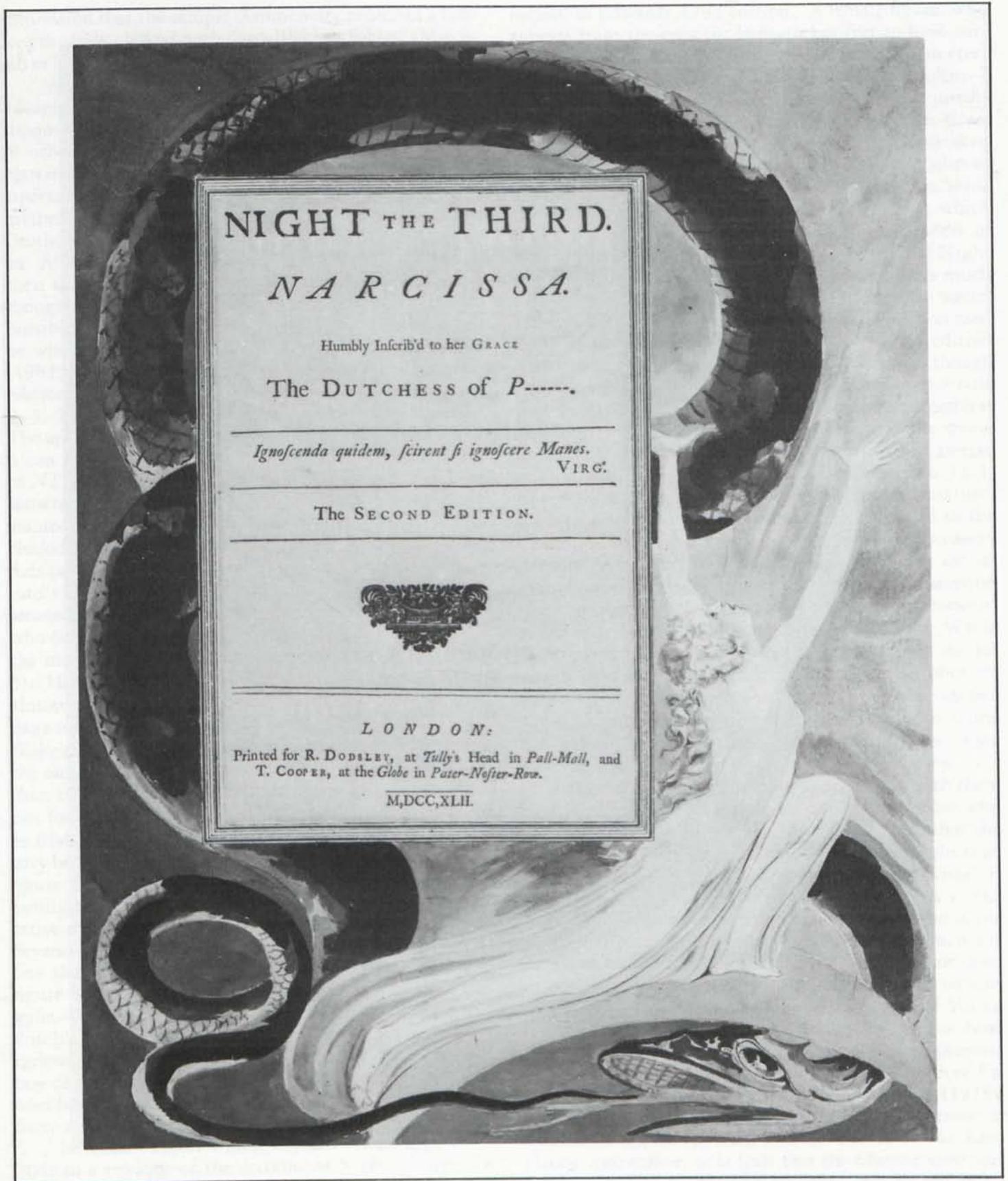
In 1970 I proposed a different view of the designs, maintaining with considerable specificity that the five prefatory pictures and thirty pictures for Night the First are arranged in a distinct sequence of units, veritable chapters. Paley (1982, p. 683) continues to chide me for this undertaking, pointing out that in his 1971 review he had reproved me for affirming that the pictures fall into such units of vision. But he is still unwilling to offer much by way of disproof. Although the theory of pictorial units was not much in evidence in the 1980 Clarendon edition, it remains on the docket for the *Night Thoughts* commentary because nobody has shown that it doesn't work. Of course there is a sense in which it is the obligation of the proponent of a theory to lay out all the evidence, both for it and against it, and I have not yet done so, but this theory cannot be persuasively maintained without a consideration of all 537 designs.

I have thought that an adequate presentation of the theory would necessitate a thorough discussion of issues that shade off from the question of organization: in other words, the as-yet-uncompleted commentary on all the designs. But I now believe that the question can usually be abstracted so that, with the help of charts, a concise overview of the entire series could be presented and still allow room to discuss areas where the theory is strained to accommodate particular designs. Rather than attempt such a chart here, I shall simply mention some considerations bearing on the probability of such an order as I claim to be ascertainable. No doubt any attempt to discern overall patterns of both pervasive and local schemata will encounter problem areas where the connections and distinctions are less evident than in others. But what does the skeptic do in, for example, encountering the sequence of NT 198-207 (V, 43-52), in which Death appears in all but one of the designs NT 199? Declare that the sequence is coincidental? Con-

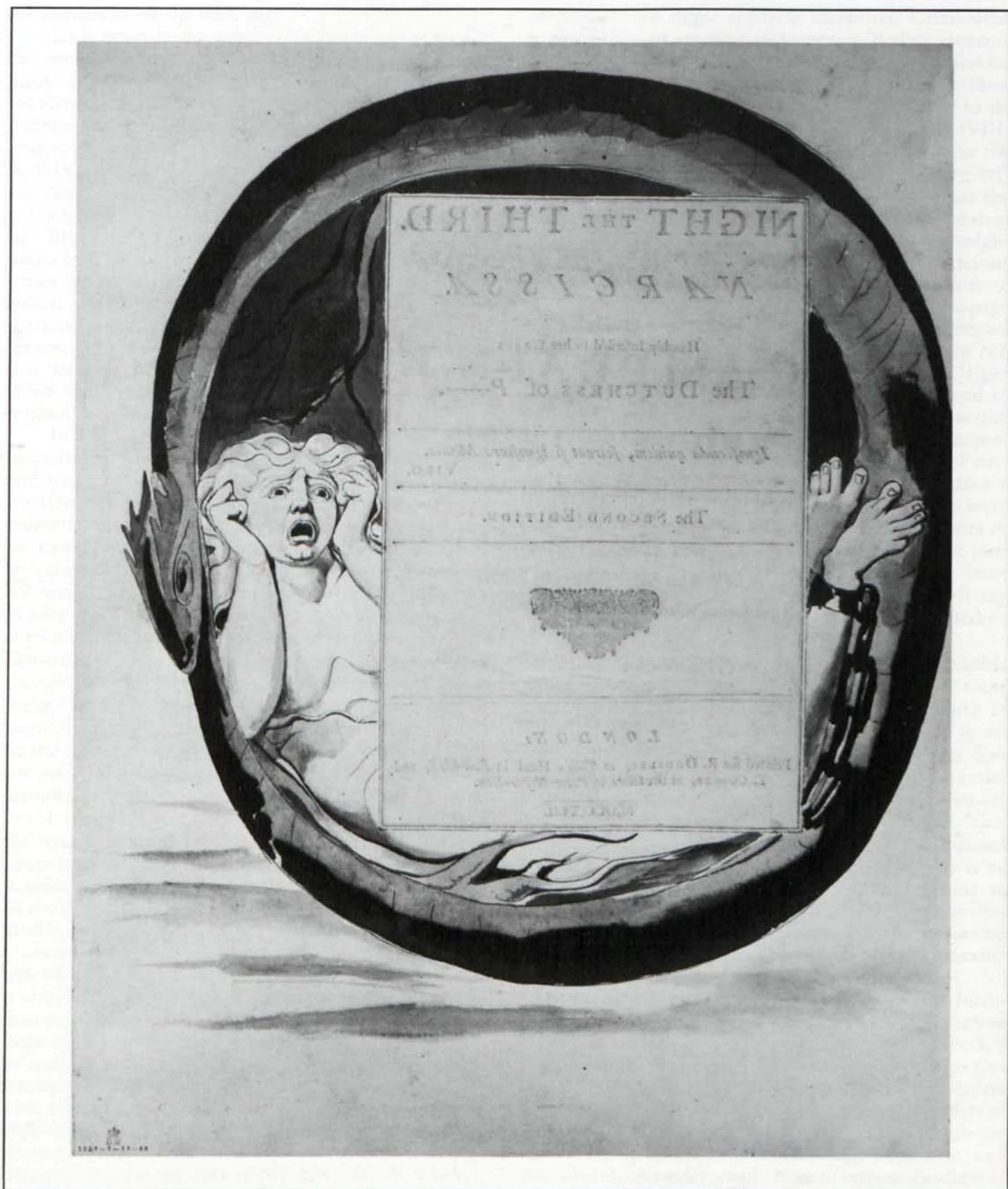
centrate on the single apparent exception? Often what is needful in an attempt to recognize Blake's patterns is to make the proper identifications and discriminations of figures. I shall go into a number of cases below. Here I shall point to a suggestive correlation having to do with the figure of Young's dead wife, "Lucia" (VIII, 1256), who in the poem was alluded to chiefly in the opening lines of Night the Sixth. But the footnote reference to her was cut off in mounting the text on the drawing paper for NT 222 (no doubt in Edwards' shop before Blake received the sheets), and the reader might infer that Young speaks again here of the dead Narcissa, a recurrent concern. Blake shows us the dead wife of NT 221, a prefatory design with a textually blank page for Night the Sixth. When we recognize her there, we can also see that she was the woman depicted in NT 110, the title page in the water color sequence for Night the Fourth. This is a clear case of the general need to look back and forth in the series to recognize the picture story that Blake is weaving around the materials provided by Young's poetry. As with other forms of narrative, such departures from Young's order produce a different story, a critique and a correction. Blake's story is often closer to that of Young than the comments in much literary criticism, ancient and modern, that purports to address a particular writing. But after more than twenty years of study I am not satisfied with any answer I have heard to the question of whether Blake's designs ought to be referred to as "illustrations."

As for the question of whether there are verifiable major divisions within each Night of the series, those who patiently wait to see the evidence, as set forth in the Clarendon commentary, or who are prepared to ascertain it for themselves should note well that Paley does not absolutely pronounce the theory that such an order exists preposterous; he speaks only of "a somewhat arbitrary structuring of the material" and declares "that this system of classification has been partly superimposed on the material." These words indicate that Paley is by now grudgingly persuaded that there is something to the idea. If so, it should be possible to debate several of the truly problematic cases and then, after having tested the evidence, correct our misconceptions and modify our arbitrariness.

In reconsidering the exegetical part of the Introduction, I agree both with favorable reviewers such as Hagstrum and negative reviewers such as Dörrbecker and Mitchell that English was not always kept up. Occasionally a dismally religious tone obtrudes. Such lapses should have been corrected. While these days readers of criticism have become inured to styles that seem to me still more objectionable, condescending, jargonistic, and mechanical, no reader should have to endure inauthentic enthusiastic superstition. But our patches of bad writing seem to have given both Dörrbecker and Mitchell the



3. *Night Thoughts* 78, Title page, *Night the Third: "NARCISSA,"* by permission of the Trustees of the British Museum.



4. *Night Thoughts* 79, *Night the Third*, verso of title page, by permission of the Trustees of the British Museum.

impression that the sample commentary promises a full-length study choked with "neo-Blakean Fables" (Mitchell) or "pseudo-Blakean associations" (Dörrbecker, p. 134).

A crucial problem in understanding Blake's *Night Thoughts* series is to ascertain exactly which figures are supposed to be identical: that is, which represent Young or other characters he mentions—Lorenzo, Philander, Narcissa, Lucia, Florello, in one or another of their aspects—and which characters represent Young's major mythological characters and personifications—Christ, Death, Time, the Devil, Nature, Darkness, Conscience, etc. All these in Blake's representations sometimes change their shapes and presumably their meanings drastically, though by aligning verbal and pictorial clues it is usually possible to determine with certainty who is supposed to be who, and who otherwise, and why. Thus Mulhallen (1981, p. 159) reasonably objected that the Clarendon edition erred (p. 89, n. 40) by lumping together *NT* 2, 3, 5, 7, and 8 (illus. 10) as representations of "Young." The apparently inspired poet with long wavy hair in *NT* 5 can hardly be identical with the curly-haired reader of *NT* 2 and the curly-haired insomniac of *NT* 8. Yet sometimes "Young" aspired to the bardic competence assuredly (though not unqualifiedly—consider the occluded luminary) depicted in *NT* 5. And Blake's indubitable representations of "Young" at times degenerate into such a figure as the pale lank-haired lyrist shown serenading the Duchess of Portland, Young's patroness, who (at a fancy-dress ball) affected the guise of Cynthia, the moon-goddess, in *Night Thoughts* 82 (III, 7) (illus. 5). Here Young is revealed in a degraded condition almost as abject as the amatory flautist-laureate in bondage to Venus and Cupid in *Night Thoughts* 162 (V, [7]). Blake's reader must consider all the factors bearing on the establishment of a legal identity in everyday life and then balance them with the transformational possibilities for showing spiritual identity which were available to Blake the artist. In a number of cases the interpreter may be indeed hardpressed to decide whether a particular figure is supposed to be yet another representation of a familiar character—Young again—or simply a representative man or woman in a common human predicament. Several times even the gender is questionable—though one should not promptly infer that in such cases the figure is supposed to represent Blake's mythical androgyne. We must recall Blake's commonsense approach to Fuseli's *Ugolino* in which it had been complained by a reviewer that one of the children looked female: "Whether boy or girl signifies not, (but the critic must be a fool who has not read Dante, and who does not know a boy from a girl)" (E 1982, 768).

Mitchell devotes almost half his review (pp. 201–204) to a critique of the account of *Night Thoughts* 78 (illus. 3), the title page of *Night the Third*, entitled "Narcissa," which depicts, in the words of the "Expla-

nation" in Edwards' 1797 edition: "A female figure, who appears from the crescent beneath her feet to have surmounted the trials of the world, is admitted to an eternity of glory: eternity is represented by its usual emblem—a serpent with its extremities united." Mitchell justifiably deplores some of the pietistic writing in the Clarendon exposition (p. 36) and corrects the mistaken assertion that the eye of the great dragon-python "glances at the reader." But he seems most concerned to show that the commentary "disregard[s] . . . the text which Blake is illustrating." Assuming that even readers of *Modern Philology* may be rusty on Young's story of *Night the Third*, Mitchell points out that in it there is much talk of Phoebe and of the Duchess of Portland (to whom *Night the Third* is dedicated—in the 1742 edition used with Blake's watercolor, but *not* in the 1797 edition with Blake's engravings). And Mitchell explains, as though he had made a discovery, that the figure on the title page contradicts Young since she is not a lunar goddess but "the woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars," beleaguered by a dragon, of Revelation 12:1. Mitchell spins many remarks out of this "witty" mixture, some of which may be preferable to what is said in the Clarendon edition. But on the whole his long discussion is more concerned to chide the Clarendon text for its pietism and errors, such as the unfortunate assertion that the serpent looks at the reader, than to put forward an alternative interpretation of Blake's picture. While the conventions of shorter book reviews permit the reviewer to deplore a proposed interpretation without articulating the preferred alternative, Mitchell spends five pages discussing things said about Blake's picture without indicating what he takes its meaning to be. One may infer indeed, that he does not have a theory.

Most of Mitchell's discussion is taken up with three critical moves. He as much as says that only those who had never read *Night the Third* could suppose that the woman on the title page is Narcissa. But he neglects in the first place to remind the reader that "Narcissa" is the name of the *Night*, printed in large letters as the title, and in the second place to mention that he is the first commentator to question whether the woman depicted has some connection with the woman mentioned in the text—probably, after Lorenzo, the most famous character in the poem, except for the figure of Young himself. In asserting that the woman depicted is Narcissa, the Clarendon editors were not being eccentric but were following the well-established tradition of Es-sick and La Belle (1975), Bindman (1975), Butlin (1978), Paley (1978), *et al.* Mitchell's second dubious move is to make it appear (p. 202) that he discovered the Revelation connection, or at least that the Clarendon editors had overlooked it. He accomplishes this by cutting a rather lengthy quotation from our text and then bring-

ing the point up as if from his own better-informed perspective. But of course we did mention and discuss the connection in the sentences immediately following the ones he quotes. Mitchell's third dubious move is to pretend ignorance (p. 203) about the ambiguities of the serpent as an ouroboros symbol, though all he had to do was follow our footnote 52 to de Groot's 1969 article (Clarendon Bibliography No. 46) to become enlightened. Once again, this route was well trodden, having been properly followed by Essick and La Belle before us.

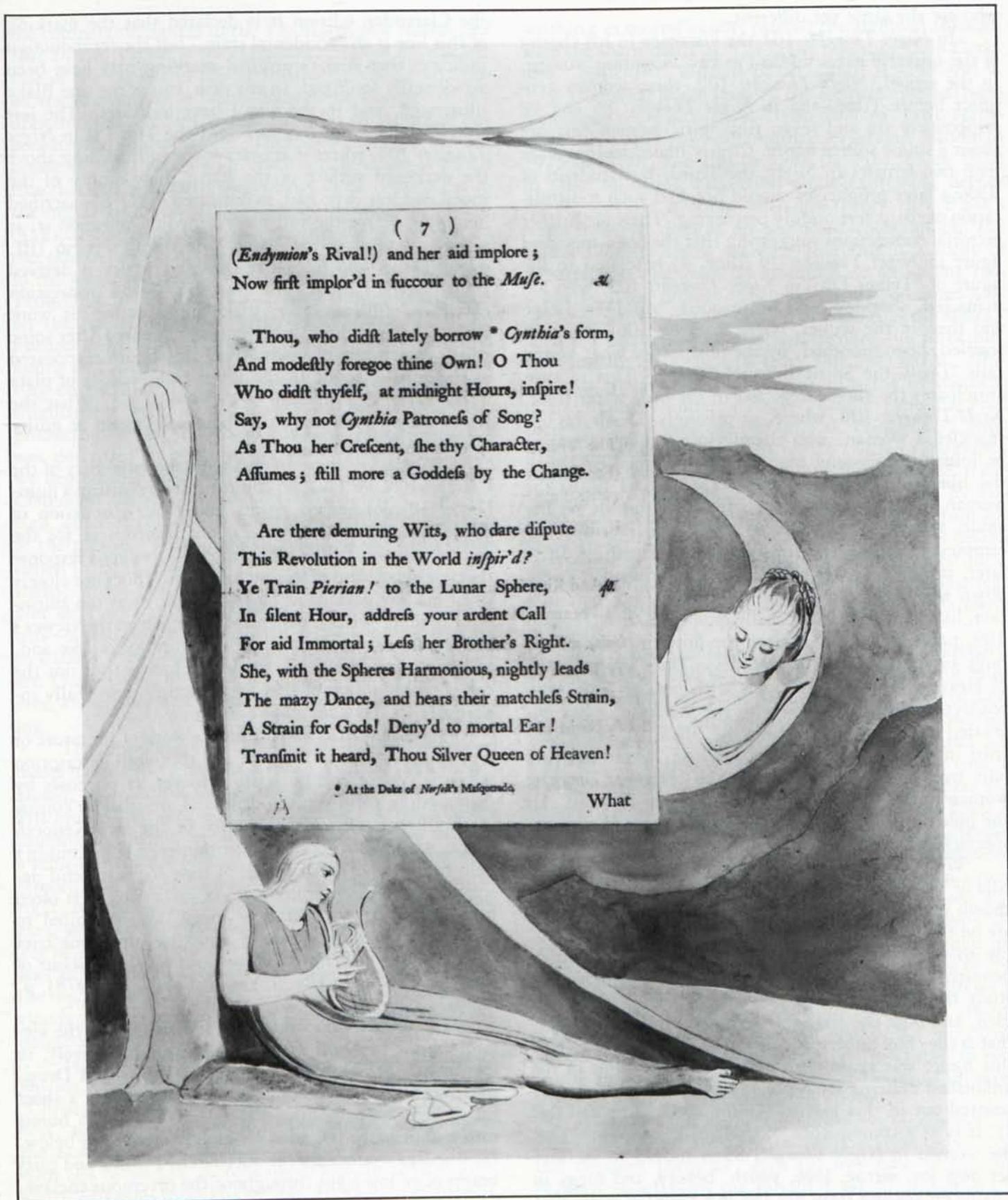
There is no denying one point that Mitchell labors without elucidating: the connection of the lunar symbolism of the title page with the lunar associations of the Duchess of Portland in the text of *Night the Third*. The problem is so complicated, however, that not much of value can be said about the question without an overall consideration of the representation of characters in *Night the Third*. For the Clarendon edition it seemed consistent with our introductory purposes to concentrate (pp. 35-39) on connections among the frontispieces and some title pages and tailpieces within the entire *Night Thoughts* series rather than to get into the intricacies of *Night the Third*, or any other *Night*. Mitchell's impression that he had come up with new ideas might have been allayed if we had not carelessly neglected a footnote referring to an article by one of the editors that was given as a paper in 1972 and finally published in 1977, at about the time our Introduction was being put into shape. The article by E.J. Rose, "*Ut Pictura Poesis* and the Problem of Pictorial Statement in William Blake," was, however, duly listed as item 96, the last entry in our Bibliography, where it was noted that *NT* 78, 79, and 345 are discussed and that the first two are reproduced. But we neglected to go into Rose's handling of some of the problems subsequently brought up by Mitchell. The further observations I shall present here include a good deal that is not a rehash of already published commentary.

Of the two women mentioned on Young's title page, Narcissa, who was thought to have been modeled on Young's stepdaughter but who seems both in the poem and in Blake's pictures to be more like a wife—an Emanation, perhaps—died pathetically, leaving the poet bereft. The Duchess of Portland, Young's patroness, on the other hand, is glorified as a veritable moon goddess, and her mortality is not considered in the poem. I don't know whether Blake could have construed Young's epigraph for *Night the Third*, attributed to Virgil, "*Ignoscenda quidem, scirent si ignoscere Manes,*" or located it in *Georgics* 4:469, where it is a pathetic reflection on the intractability of the Manes—roughly, the souls of the dead as underworld deities—to the folly of Orpheus in losing Eurydice.¹ The woman shown in the title page is in a superlunary position and thus recalls the occa-

sional triumphal position of the woman clothed with the sun of German Renaissance prints. She is on the upper arch of an inverted crescent moon, rather than within the crescent (the latter is traditionally the commoner position), but it evidently is not to be understood as signifying a reservation as to the glory of Mary's position.² With regard to the crucial question of whether the woman in *Night Thoughts* 78 (24E) is conscious of the threat presented by the proximity of the enormous serpent, the water color indicates one thing, the engraving another. Our perfunctory note, Clarendon edition p. 78, gives little guidance in this matter save for the indication that the woman has only five (visible) stars in the water color but seven in the engraving. More indicative of meaning is the fact that in the water color the woman's mouth is wide open, probably distorted with a scream, whereas in the engraving her rapturous face expresses unmitigated joy. Presumably when Blake made the (undated) engraving he knew there was to be no sequel such as is represented by *Night Thoughts* 79 (illus. 4), and thus decided not to qualify the radiant impression, whereas in the water color he prepared the viewer for the peripety overleaf. In looking at *Night Thoughts* 78 alone we may suppose that the radiance of the threatened woman will enable her to evade the tails and loop of the serpent, whereas at least the un-luminous moon will fall into them. The impression created by the engraving, 24E, is, in contrast, entirely optimistic, suggesting that somehow all will be well and that the serpent will not succeed in springing his trap.

In the water color series any optimistic expectations aroused by *Night Thoughts* 78 are dashed when one turns overleaf and finds a pessimistic sequel, *Night Thoughts* 79 (illus. 4): here a long-haired woman, shackled, howls her distress within the belly of an ouroboros, which has swallowed half his length of tail. This distraught, unattractive woman is an antithesis of the glorious woman in *NT* 78, who had, however, shown at least two signs that she was indeed threatened and might not triumph.

Is she "the same" woman, "Narcissa" (*pace* Mitchell) who, like Eurydice alluded to in the Virgilian inscription, is a victim of the unforgiving Manes? Or should we think of her as, like Wordsworth's Lucy, all too mortal? Her fate, howling, shackled, being digested by the rooting innards of the malicious serpent, forbids us to suppose that she is undergoing a benign natural death. A moment's thought, however, at least assures us that she can hardly represent the Duchess of Portland—except she be supposed to be Blake's idea of the Duchess, mortal like the rest of us and now in agony because she had been flattered into disregarding it. But Blake would have thought this idea too commonplace to be interesting. One must look ahead to the thirty other designs in *Night the Third* to recognize the point Blake is making in presenting in the prefatory designs two women



(7)

(*Endymion's Rival!*) and her aid implore ;
Now first implor'd in succour to the *Muse*. *21*

Thou, who didst lately borrow * *Cynthia's* form,
And modestly foregoe thine Own! O Thou
Who didst thyself, at midnight Hours, inspire!
Say, why not *Cynthia* Patroness of Song?
As Thou her Crescent, she thy Character,
Assumes; still more a Goddess by the Change.

Are there demuring Wits, who dare dispute
This Revolution in the World *inspir'd*?
Ye Train *Pierian!* to the Lunar Sphere, *22*
In silent Hour, address your ardent Call
For aid Immortal; Lest her Brother's Right.
She, with the Spheres Harmonious, nightly leads
The mazy Dance, and hears their matchless Strain,
A Strain for Gods! Deny'd to mortal Ear!
Transmit it heard, Thou Silver Queen of Heaven!

* At the Duke of Norfolk's Masquerade

What

who are the same yet different.

In *Night Thoughts* 101 the visionary in his chariot of the universe gazes upward at two ascending women. In the sequel, *Night Thoughts* 102, three women genuflect before Time, and in *Night Thoughts* 85 and 98 respectively six and seven tiny spirit women emanate about a single source figure. Clearly Blake deploys more than two females in Night the Third, but students of Blake's later prophecies should not find such multiplication of characters unduly perplexing. There are further pictorial connections suggesting that the open-mouthed figure in *Night Thoughts* 79 (illus. 4) is related to the figure of "Tyrant Life" in *Night Thoughts* 105, who has manacled, shackled, and imprisoned "Mind" in a cage and then in the sequel, *Night Thoughts* 106, is herself startled, open mouthed, by the prospect of what Young calls "Death the Spirit Infinite! Divine!" This in turn anticipates the theme depicted in the final water color, *Night Thoughts* 109, where, surprisingly, Death has unshackled a woman, who already soars, and is about to be joined by a young man now being freed by Death the liberator. Earlier, in *Night Thoughts* 81 (25E) the woman, nude except for the band of a shackle on her ankle, and with long agitated locks, had frantically attempted to escape the sinister cope of Death. A little later, in *Night Thoughts* 94 (27E), one woman is swept down the river of Death while another, her hair in a bun, like the woman who finally escapes in *Night Thoughts* 109, paces upstream, against the flow, in front of the huge brooding figure of Darkness. The "Silver Queen of Heaven," the lunar goddess with braided hair, who with crossed arms slumbers to the serenade of her enraptured poet in *Night Thoughts* 82 (illus. 5), has awakened in the sequel, *Night Thoughts* 83, where her hair falls free, but (trapped within the crescent, like the woman in the ouroboros in *Night Thoughts* 79 [illus. 4]) she holds up her hands in consternation, viewing some spectacle not included in this picture.

What distresses her, the reader can see, is the flo-tilla of "Woes" that "cluster" as they swim into her ken, shown in the facing page, *Night Thoughts* 84. Her eyes are on the squadron of five Woes, doubtless corresponding to the senses, that are most prominently featured beneath the text panel. The curious reader may, however, study the second cluster, powered by two howling old men, and note the strangely lumpish "snow personage" that is the chief burden of this group. Here adumbrated, this figure was again sketched as a coda design in the unfinished drawing for *Night Thoughts* 538, as I recently pointed out in this journal (Grant 1982, p. 8 and fig. 1). It is as a consequence of this vision of "Woes" that the woman in *Night Thoughts* 85 is moved to sacrifice her own joy, virtue, love, youth, beauty, and song, in a flame emanating from her and in a pictorial order that exactly reverses the verbal order of Young's line 97. In

the Clarendon edition it is declared that the marking of this line is an "accidental stain," but the reproduction indicates that Blake's original marking may have been accidentally smudged. In any case, this is the line Blake illustrated, and in the way I have indicated. The last time the moon appears in Night the Third is in *Night Thoughts* 103, where it appears at the full, shining above the darkened surface of the Earth, now empty of the moon goddess, who had, as indicated in *NT* 85, sacrificed her Joys. Above the full moon, meditating upon it, is a dark goddess called "Night" in Young's poem (III, 429). Those who recognize that this figure is derived from Durer's famous print *Melencolia I*—an impression of which, at least later, Blake hung above his work table—will not distrust her or her influence. After some thirty more years of meditation, this figure reappeared as the angelic scribe in the lower right border of plate 17 of Blake's *Illustrations of the Book of Job*. What she wrote there I shall not repeat here lest I again be guilty of offensive pietism.

Dörrbecker chose to challenge the reliability of the Clarendon *Night Thoughts* commentary by raising a number of ill-coordinated points about our discussion of *Night Thoughts* 264 (illus. 2), the frontispiece for the second volume. It is evident from Dörrbecker's response that our exposition of this picture (which does not closely illustrate any passage in *Night Thoughts*) was too affirmative in tone. We also depended too much on the viewer's being able to see what Blake's picture looks like and, as I have already agreed, the monochrome (but not the color) reproduction of this great picture is woefully inadequate in the Clarendon edition.

Whether criticism addresses a work of literature or a picture, the role of accurate and thorough description is crucial. Most bad criticism achieves its purposes by disregarding inconvenient details. I am glad to concur in this belief with the authority of the late Kenneth Clark, who was a good art historian even if he couldn't help condescending to Blake: "I have found careful description an enlightening form of criticism. It is often humiliating to discover how much one has failed to observe, or to understand, in a picture, until one tries to describe it in detail. Descriptions can be a labour of love . . ." (Introduction to Vasari, *Lives* . . . [1978], p. xxvii).

The viewer who studies the frontispiece to the second volume of *Night Thoughts*, non-interpretatively, in the British Museum Department of Prints and Drawings, sees: a nude male figure with long hair, a short full beard, open mouth, and upcast eyes, who bursts into a dark place bounded by clouds above and below. He displays wounds on his outstretched hands and casts beams of yellow light throughout the cavernous enclave. On closer inspection, it is apparent that this figure is not simply flying toward the viewer (as are, for example,

the comparable figures in the *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* 14 and *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* 8); the left side of the chest and hip are distinctly visible and can be traced even, as it were, behind the coverlet of the uppermost two recumbent figures who are stretched out beneath the central figure. There is a mark on the left breast of this man whose cruciform position is much like that of the resurrecting Christ as he is depicted in the engraved version of the title page of *Night the Fourth* (31E), though, surprisingly, wounds are not shown on the otherwise practically identical figure as he appears in the water color frontispiece for the first volume, *NT* 1 (illus. 1). In *NT* 264 (illus. 2) the indubitable stigmata on the hands, together with the characteristic facial features and the wound on the chest, identify the central figure as Christ; remarkably, Christ wears a wedding ring on the fourth finger of his left hand. This is distinguishable even in the inadequate monochrome reproduction in the Clarendon edition. Though this ring was described in our (unpublished) descriptive notes, we neglected to mention it in our commentary in the Clarendon edition, out of carelessness rather than design, since it could only strengthen our interpretation of the picture. This omission was duly noted by Mulhallen in 1981. (She also mentions the ring in her 1975 thesis, which has recently become available for study.) Not only does this small but crucial piece of symbolism—a wedding ring on Christ—not appear elsewhere in Blake's work, but it may well be unique in Christian art. Once having observed the ring in this picture, however, the viewer will hardly be mystified as to its meaning.

The uppermost of the two recumbent shrouded males has his curly head cast back, with eyes and mouth closed, so as almost to face the left edge of the picture. His muffled left arm is apparently raised to ward off the illumination, while on his chest appears, perhaps through a semi-transparent shroud, the suggestion of scaly chest armor. The lower figure, with helmeted head to the right, is open mouthed, howling, but has probably closed eyes, as he twists his torso away from the illumination. Yet he is seated in such a way as to show both shrouded legs as they bend across the picture. The dark shapes at the top and bottom of the cavern are curved and resemble clouds, as is often the case in Blake's depictions of underground scenes.

How the first describer of the picture, Frederick Shields, understood this frontispiece is worth recalling: "Christ the Light of the World, the Sun of Righteousness, appears in the centre of the design, seen only to the bust, and environed with thick darkness, which, with His outspread, pierced hands and the radiant glory which emanates from His person, He parts and dispels. Dimly apparent within the darkness visible beneath him, looms the shrouded image of the power of darkness,

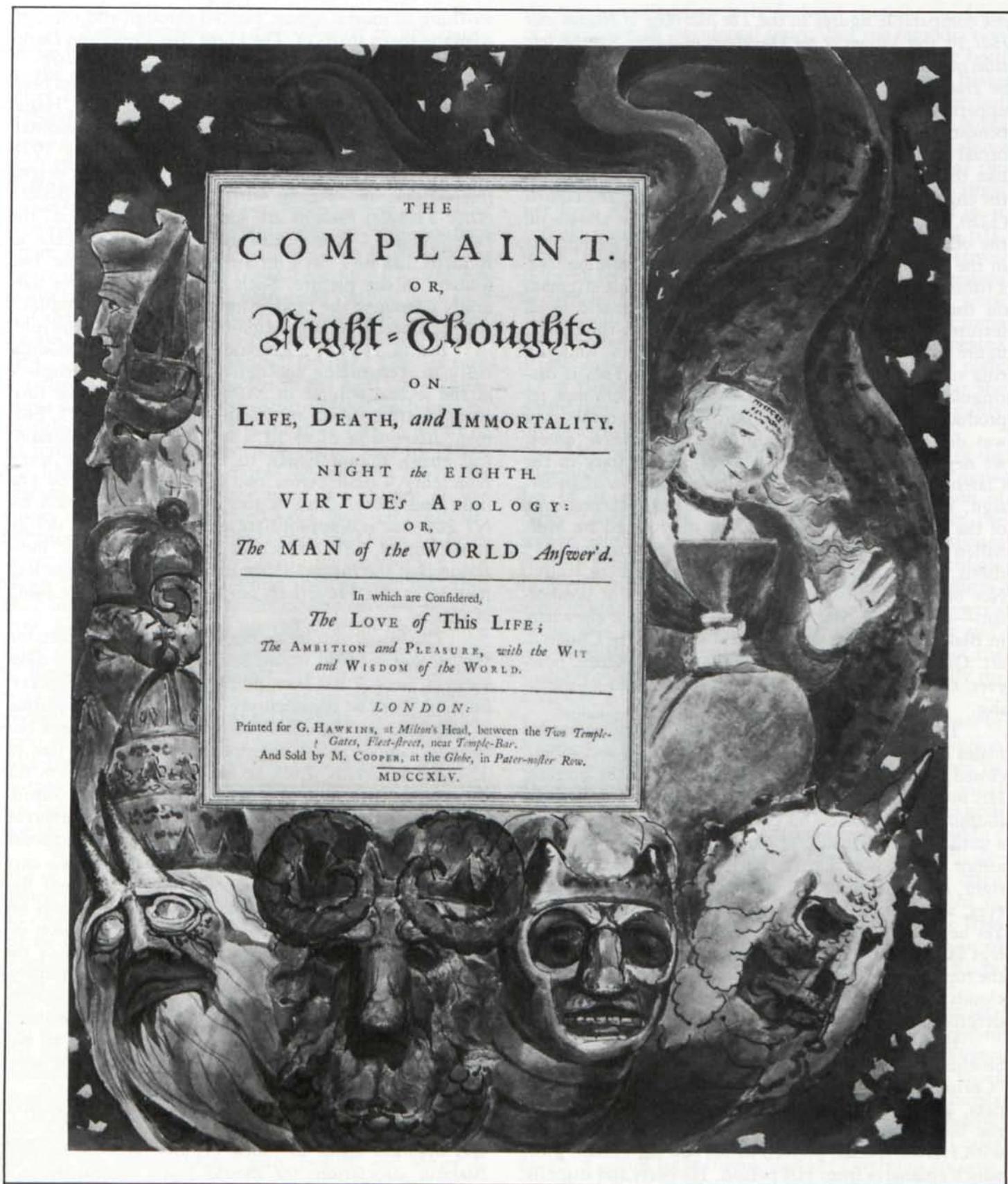
writhing in mortal agony, pierced through and through with the sharp shafts of 'The Light that shineth in Darkness'" (Gilchrist, *William Blake*, 1880, II, 298-99).³

That what Blake shows is the Resurrection has been mentioned more recently by Grant 1970 (p. 316), Hagsstrum 1973 (pp. 148-49, with reservation), Bindman 1975 (p. 180), and Butlin 1981 (I, 216). Paley 1978 (p. 40), following Hagsstrum while expressing deeper reservations, in keeping with his theory that Blake's *Night Thoughts* designs are supposed to be about "the Fallen World," seems unaware that this is a scene of Resurrection and pays no attention at all to the two soldiers in the picture. Such selective procedures naturally guarantee the production of "neo-Blakean fables," such as Dörrbecker and Mitchell deplore—in principle.

Butlin 1981, p. 216 (cat. 330.264) has no difficulty in recognizing the derivation of the frontispiece of the second volume of *Night Thoughts* from the final plate of *All Religions are One* (pl. 10, Principle 7). Erdman, *Illuminated Blake* 1974, p. 26 (with a typographical error), quotes Essick to the effect that the scene represents "Christ before two pagans overcome by His light and glory." This is too general a conception for *NT* 264, but it is appropriate enough for the tiny design at the top of *ARO* 10, where there is no specific indication that the miniscule recumbent figures (whose legs may be tangled together) are the soldiers at the tomb of Christ.

The visual similarity between *ARO* 10 (Clarendon Fig. 8) and *NT* 264 would seem to be obvious for most viewers, once it has been pointed out, but Dörrbecker, holding that the commentary in the Clarendon edition is animated by "pseudo-Blakean associations," uses our asserted connection to exemplify his complaint (see p. 134 and fn. 24, p. 138): he declares that we affirm the connection "probably just because [*ARO* 10] is considered as an early appearance of the motif of outspread arms in Blake's *oeuvre*." No. The figure with outspread arms in the illuminated printing appears within a cave and is undoubtedly exhorting the two recumbent figures. This means that the basic pictorial elements are the same in both pictures—not that the Clarendon interpreters were unduly swayed by the similarity of the single motif of outspread arms. A thorough interpretation should, indeed, go on from the overall resemblance of the two designs to make the necessary discriminations. But the viewer who is unable to recognize the basic similarity of the two designs can never arrive at a valuable comment on either.

On page 134 Dörrbecker quotes five sentences from pages 38-39 that set forth an interpretation of *NT* 264 and deplores them as "such [a] free flow of pseudo-Blakean associations (or should I say 'illuminations?') which if only translated into less ecstatic phrasing, are truisms as relevant for a painting of the resurrection by,



6. *Night Thoughts* 345, Title page, Night the Eighth, by permission of the Trustees of the British Museum.

for example, Sebastiano Ricci. . . .” A few touches of rhapsody in the style I too regret, though I may have penned them myself. But all the points claimed can be verified in context, except perhaps these sentences, which are too compressed: “The hands [of Jesus] simultaneously display to doubters that Jesus *is* the human family; as he suffered for all, he can offer the infinite expanse to all, and even prepare to offer the handclasp of Friendship. Blake never quite depicts this moment of fraternity. . . .”

As for “doubters,” the reference here is not only to the soldiers who cannot bear this illumination, but to the next design in the series, *Night Thoughts* 265, the title page of Volume Two, in which Jesus displays the wound on his hand and the wound on his breast to a Doubting Thomas. In *Night Thoughts* 264 the explosion of Jesus within the cave might for a Blakean audience suggest “the infinite expanse,” even though Blake himself never used exactly that term (consult the *Concordance*). The “handclasp of friendship” is, to be sure, a gesture that Blake’s Jesus never quite stoops to, though Jesus comes so close to it in *Night Thoughts* 531 (IX, 113), with Young, in the poet’s penultimate appearance, that the reader has justification for reflecting on Blake’s final reticence in representation: why *don’t* the two there shake hands? Then there is the case of “Sebastiano Ricci,” one of the also-rans Dörrbecker introduces in his race to catch up with Blake. I have already declared (without having checked them all!) that no other artist, large or small, represented the adult Jesus as wearing a wedding ring, but I would be happy to retract if some precedent could actually be shown. But it is most unlikely that such a hypothetical precedent, if it could be found, would change what Blake meant the reader to understand when he employed this familiar symbol in an unexpected context. Blake first made reference to the “human families” in *Night the Ninth of Vala* or *The Four Zoas* (E 1982, 404: p. 135, l. 37), complementing references to the “universal” or “divine family” in *Vala I*, all presumably written later than the pictures for *Night Thoughts*. But the wedding ring in the frontispiece to the second volume indicates that Blake had recognized the basis of “the human family” before he saw fit to write about it. No doubt Blake here intended to challenge the view of the future of marriage offered by a simple reading of Matthew 22:30; appearing as he does to those who dwell in realms of Night, Jesus the bridegroom is showing the way, not yet the end.

One of the best pictures Blake ever painted, *Night Thoughts* 345 (illus. 6), the title page of *Night the Eighth*, ought next to be considered, both with regard to the adequacy of the reproductions in the Clarendon edition and for what it shows about Blake’s fundamental ideas and symbols while he was engaged in the *Night Thoughts* project. As a vision of the Whore and Beast of

Revelation 17, this picture has never been surpassed—either by Durer’s wonderful woodcuts or by Blake’s own later awesome water colors of this subject. According to Young’s title page, this section of the poem constitutes “Virtue’s Apology” and an *Answer* to “*The MAN of the WORLD*,” together with a consideration of “*The Love of This Life; The Ambition and Pleasure, with the Wit and Wisdom of the World.*”

Young fulfills this announcement in lines 525 ff., where his effusive censures of illicit *Pleasure* and *Ambition* are well enough summarized by the rather tame NT 373. This picture of a fascinated Roman emperor tethered by a chain to a blithe young woman—a prototype of “Mirth” in Blake’s first design for *L’Allegro* (Butlin 1981, cat. 543.1, pl. 672)—represents the tenor of disapproval Young was able to articulate, whereas the title page presents a prophetic denunciation in the manner of St. John. Blake’s grotesque-sublime title page goes far beyond Young’s ethical vision of vanity to achieve a consolidated epiphany of evil. Blake must have expected his viewers to notice that Young’s words are unable to identify that pair “that was, and is not, and yet is” (Revelation 17:18). And more recently we search in vain through “Blake’s myth,” with Paley, to find some connections with the stories of Vala and Orc. But connections close enough to elucidate anything in the picture will not appear: Orc never grew seven heads and ten horns.

In the strict privacy of Blake’s first precisely dated annotations, those to *Watson’s Apology for the Bible . . . addressed to Thomas Paine*, however, we observe Blake the author using the same images as in the picture to express his own almost despairing beliefs: “To defend the Bible in this year 1798 would cost a man his life[.] The Beast & the Whore rule without controls” (E 1982, 611).⁴ The picture tells the same story and analyzes the institutional mechanisms through which tyranny perpetuates its sway. Dörrbecker has nothing good to say about the quality of the reproductions of NT 345 in the Clarendon edition, singling out the following aspects of the color version for reproval: “The bright translucent washes of blue and yellow are strongly affected by the color of the ‘ground,’ the creamy tinge of the printing paper; they lost much of their brilliance and depth, and in some places in the reproduction are omitted altogether” (Dörrbecker 1982, 132). Of the examples he cites, NT 107, 125, and 156 lack vibrancy, though the reds are not seriously off. This is also the case with the duller reds of NT 345; indeed, Paley declared it to be, overall, “fairly good, although the Whore of Babylon’s scarlet cloak has gone too far toward orange.” Paley adds, “in contrast, the reproduction in Butlin’s *Catalogue*, plate 344, conveys the true color” (1982, p. 680).

In point of fact the fairly prominent *skirt*—the Whore wears no “cloak”—is in the Clarendon edition

indeed, as alleged, rather "too orange." This hue was an attempt to render a violet-rose pink. On the whole, this Clarendon color reproduction is somewhat less successful than the color reproduction of the drawing, plate 35 in Paley's 1978 Phaidon selection. The appreciable difference between these reproductions is, however, less a matter of particular hues, which are usually quite similar, than of the superior distinctness of the Phaidon reproduction. The Clarendon version is too fuzzy and the hues are insufficiently vivid, though in itself the matte finish looks more like water color than the rather glossy finish of the Phaidon. In one aspect the Clarendon is clearly superior: the background sky (apart from the blue or white flakes/stars that punctuate it) is varied grey, whereas the Phaidon renders it a muddy brown—a color Blake almost never uses, but one which shows up regularly in reproductions of his sky-greys.

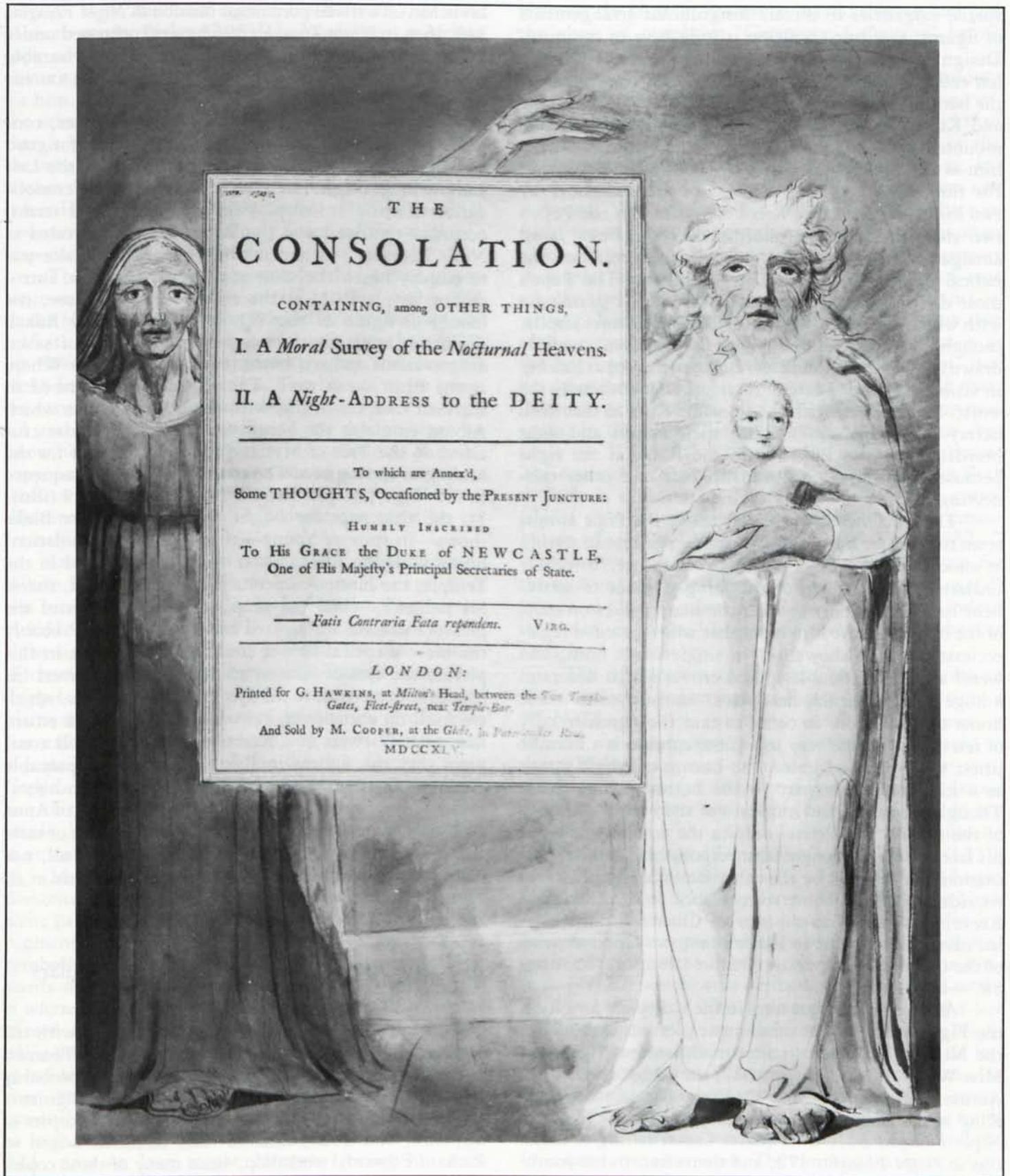
Neither the Clarendon nor the Phaidon edition was able to do anything with the wonderful blue washes (to which Dörrbecker perhaps alluded) on the face, neck, bosom, and hand of the Whore, or the stronger blue highlight on the Judge-head—the rightmost—of the Beast. If you look closely at the superb color collotype reproduction in Keynes's 1927 Harvard selection you will feel that nothing in either the 1978 or 1980 editions of NT 345 was satisfactorily reproduced—when measured against such a high standard. But I am sorry to say that Paley was profoundly mistaken to have held up Butlin's 1981 Yale reproduction, which is a dreadful botch—due, perhaps, to an attempt to bring out Blake's elusive blues. In the Yale reproduction the Whore's blouse, the skin of the serpentine body of the Beast that forms the background for her figure, and the huge lips of the Pope-head at the lower left, all turned out a bloody awful red, while the blue overlaying the grey is a darker cousin to the aforementioned dreadful blues that disfigure the reproductions of the Huntington designs for Milton's poems. On the other hand, the features of the Whore and Beast can at least be distinguished in the Yale color reproductions, whereas the monochrome in the Clarendon edition is atrociously bad, turning everything to mud. Considering that Clarendon had earlier published a quite acceptable monochrome of the picture (Paley and Phillips 1974, pl. 67, p. 269), this botch in the 1980 edition is unaccountable.

As the arrow-headed tail of the serpentine Beast curls above the text panel seeking to enlist a third part of the inchoate, flaky stars of heaven, "Mystery," duly labeled, with long blond agitated hair and heavily rouged cheeks, wearing a reddish-gold spiked crown and large ostentation of other gold and red jewelry on her expanse of flesh, prominently displays her huge chalice that contains the blood of the Saints. Her heavy slanted eyelids, which do not match her pretty, hard face, give her a sly look as she peers, with a set mouth, out of the picture,

apparently seeing something alarming since her left hand is raised, with fingers parted, expressing consternation. There is a horizon line near her raised hand to signify the curve of the globe that is beneath the sway of her machine. We need not wonder long about whom she is married to.

The middle pair of the front four heads of the Beast, the ram-horned King who wears a spiked crown like that of the Whore and the budding-horned and helmeted Warrior, stare at the viewer; the King with small, shaded, and sad indistinct eyes and downturned mouth, the skull-like Warrior with huge red eyes and vast toothy would-be smiling mouth. After commenting on the aforementioned error in the Clarendon edition—describing the direction of the gaze of the serpent in *Night Thoughts* 78 (illus. 3) as being toward the viewer—Mitchell was emboldened to raise a semiotic question as to whether one can ever be certain that a figure who looks out from a picture is supposed to be looking directly at the spectator. While rules for ascertaining the direction of view may be no easier to formulate for pictures than for life, in the actual experience of pictures this is not ordinarily a serious problem. Those viewers who have confronted Memling's *Blessing Christ* in the Norton Simon Museum or the central figure in Michelangelo's *The Crucifixion of St. Peter* in the Pauline Chapel of the Vatican (viewed from the floor, not at picture-level as in photographs) can have no doubt that the figures are looking directly at them. In Blake's own tempera quartet of 1810 (Butlin 1981, cat. 667-70; pl. 890, 891, 962, 892), three of the four central characters likewise look the viewer straight in the eye. A paradoxist might argue that Blake's Warrior in NT 345 has only pseudo or mask eyes, but still one must insist that the eyes are directed toward the viewer. A more convincing case could be made for the theory that it is the King who is truly sightless. According to *this* pictorial analysis, these two figures are the most pressing part of the problem; later, in 1809, when Blake redid the subject (Butlin 1981, cat. 523, pl. 584), none of the heads addresses the viewer; and when Blake redid it yet again as the picture for Dante's *Purgatory* 32 (Butlin 1981, cat. 812:89), it is a different head that stares at the reader with, necessarily, a different implication.

The heads at the ends of the front four look down and up; at the right the bewigged Judge who wears only a single large horn (with its spiral curve that Hogarth would have declared the line of beauty)—and also, note, a dark crown with blunt knobs—this Judge has saber-tooth fangs and stares down ominously with intense small red eyes. Positioned at the right, it appears that the Judge is the chief support of the Whore. It might be argued that the weight of the Whore falls upon this (the wider) side simply to accommodate the text panel, but I believe that Blake seldom allowed



7. *Night Thoughts* 417, Title page, *Night the Ninth*, by permission of the Trustees of the British Museum.

spatial exigencies to dictate insignificant arrangements of figures; as a rule, position is indicative of meaning. Design is no less apparent in the figure at the viewer's left end of the front four, the Bishop. His triple crown—the bottom circlet merely spiked (like those of the Whore and King), the upper two with decorated spikes, surmounted by the cross and ball of sovereignty—marks him as the Pope, who would not abjure secular power. For this reason too he is flanked beside and above by two kings, whose sheep horns contrast with the Pope's two sharp-pronged goat horns: thus the Beast is an amalgamation of sheep and goats designed to retard the radical distinction of the Last Judgment. The Pope's most disturbing characteristic is that he is gazing up with white blind eyes, uncannily lacking distinct pupils, though the position of the pupils has been carefully drawn in. Of all the characters Blake portrayed as lacking in vision, the Pope's case of cataracts is undoubtedly the worst. He is linked with the frontline King in that both betray serpentine scales about their collars and wear beards. He is also linked with the Judge at the right because both have long, whitish hair and other connecting features of similarity and contrast.

The three heads at the left above the Pope almost seem to emanate from him and appear resolute in staring at some invisible prospect (perhaps the future), evidently unalarmed. The crown of this king is made of softly-bent bands that contrast with the sharp spikes on most of the others. Above him is another white-bearded regal-ecclesiastic, who shows only a single cow's horn, and wears a fantastic double-spiked crown which decorates a huge bent triangular headpiece: we must count three horns on this figure in order to find the requisite tally of ten horns. At the very top of the column is a humble priest who wears a biretta, the button of which stands as a kind of counterpart to the horns of the others. Though subject to the influence of the varied authority of the others, this Priest (despite the tension shown in his face) is the component least responsible for the abominations perpetrated by the other facets of the Beast and its rider. He bears some resemblance to the Clerk and Reeve, who bring up the rear of Chaucer's dubiously-led cavalcade, at least in Blake's tempera representation of the *Canterbury Pilgrimage* (Butlin 1981, cat. 653, fig. 587—detail only).

All five major characters in the title page for *Night the Eighth* reappear in subsequent pictures throughout the *Night*: the Whore is first modulated as tyrannical Miss World, *Night Thoughts* 347; the Judge as the three Accusers of the Just Man in *Night Thoughts* 363; the King at first shares his sovereignty with Miss World in *Night Thoughts* 347, then enacts Caesar falling to assassins in *Night Thoughts* 372, and thereafter, in his youthful identity, is enchained by Pleasure, in *Night Thoughts* 373. The Pope becomes more weirdly reptilian to guide

Leviathan on a trivial portentous mission in *Night Thoughts* 349, then in *Night Thoughts* 396 he sits enthroned under a balacherion and offers an arrogant blessing as a humble tonsured priest grovels, about to plant a kiss on his cloven hoof.

Other spiritual presences, greater and lesser, continue to operate throughout *Night the Eighth*, for good and ill, as they must do in order to bring on the Last Judgment in *Night the Ninth*. But a crucial "consolidation of error" (to employ one of Frye's useful terms) occurs as the Beast and the Whore are first revealed in *Night Thoughts* 345 and ramified thereafter. Blake was to employ much the same strategy in *Jerusalem*, introducing in plate 75, at the end of Chapter Three, the (doubled) figure of the Whore as Tirzah and Rahab disporting with the mostly-serpentine Beast of seven dragon-heads and ten horns: they represent the Whore in the Beast, as it were. The redemption described in the final Chapter begins with the frontispiece in which Albion emulates the beneficent posture of Christ crucified on the Tree of Mystery and gives himself for the healing of the nations. The counterpart to this sequence in the *Night Thoughts* series is *Night Thoughts* 417 (illus. 7), the title page for *Night the Ninth*, where Blake shows—in spite of Young—that the real "Consolation" began with the Presentation of the Christ child in the Temple: the blessed Simeon, holding the Child, shares his radiance, while the prophetic Anna celebrates the presence so long anticipated and now at hand. Probably the most skeptical viewer could appreciate that in this picture the eyes of Simeon are upcast as he delivers his blessing, in contrast to the eyes of Anna and Jesus, which are fixed on the viewer, on whoever happens to return that gaze. Viewers of a Keatsian disposition will complain that the figures in this picture have a palpable design on them, or respond that only "Blake enthusiasts" could be impressed by what they see: the torsos of Anna and Simeon are not long enough for any viewers of taste and judgment to be taken in by what is, after all, not a very well-drawn picture. So say the connoisseurs in all ages.

III. Some Engraved Copies, with Particulars of Three Engraved Designs

A point made several times in connection with the new Census of colored engraved copies of *Night Thoughts* in the Clarendon edition is that few copies were probably colored by Blake. The presence of discolored pigments in some details in most White Death, Type I, copies of 6E, 18E, and 20E points to their common origin in Richard Edwards' workshop, since many of these copies (though not the pages in question) bear various inscriptions. Moreover, the more one sees of the copies I-2

through I-14, the more certain one becomes that none of them are by Blake. Copy I-1, in contrast, a Mellon copy now at the Yale Center for British Art, bears an owner's inscription declaring that Blake had colored it for him. The washes are different enough from those in the other White Death copies to set it apart and assure that it was not a model copy used as the standard for the other copies. On the other hand, the quality of the washes suggests that this may have been a unique copy colored by Blake. When I last studied this copy in 1981, however, I became increasingly skeptical about Blake's responsibility for its coloring.

The case for Blake's having colored seventeen plates, some very carefully, others merely touched with color, in the battered but quite wonderful White Death Copy I-15 is, on the other hand, very strong. Bentley (1977, pp. 956-57) and Butlin apparently agree with me that these are Blake's own washes. The best of these pages are considerably better than their counterparts in Copy I-1 and thus tend to discredit them, though since we know nothing about the time or circumstances of either copy, and since we are aware of the variety of effects Blake was capable of achieving in various copies of the illuminated books, all such deductions must be extremely tentative.

Lange (1981-82) has reported the rediscovery of a White Death copy mentioned in a note on page 92 of the Introduction of the Clarendon edition but not included in the new Census because it had been out of sight since 1926. He points out that the combination of characteristics in this copy necessitates listing it as Copy I-12A, rather than as I-16, and he correctly complains that this awkwardness of designation results from our unfortunate attempt to employ small variations as a principle of organization for the new Census. Since Copy I-12A, though extremely well preserved, is simply one of the many copies commercially colored for Edwards, like Copies I-2 to I-14, however, no great issue is at stake in this particular case.

More important is Lange's soon-to-be amplified demonstration that the three pages in which the coloring went bad are the result of unintended oxidation of the pigments, rather than the employment of odd colors for symbolic purposes either by Blake or colorists in Edwards' shop. In the Clarendon edition this phenomenon is referred to as "Grotesque Coloring," an unhappy phrase chosen to keep open the possibility that the blotched paint on Disease in 6E (p. 10) is deliberate rather than coincidental. I myself had come to the same conclusion that these colors are accidental before seeing Lange's compelling evidence that the colors were never intended to look as they do now in unrestored copies. (Copy I-12A, now on loan to the Morgan Library, has been beautifully restored.) Whether our attempt to hedge on the possibility of purposiveness be attributed to care-

lessness, timidity, or ignorance, would that we had laid the ghost of purposive "Grotesque Colouring" before publication of the Clarendon edition!

Some of the other things the Clarendon Introduction attempts to do fail quite badly. Apparently no reviewer checked out our tedious attempt (pp. 17-35) to enumerate the alterations of the various states of the engravings. Mitchell (1982) in an unscholarly way, indeed, tried to poke fun at this whole enumerative undertaking. Yet the information had to be presented because Blake the engraver thought that minute alterations often needed to be made. Such matters are wearisome to report in words, but they are as much the concern of true scholarship as the reporting of manuscript variants in writing. Insofar as Mitchell wished merely to object that such unengaging data are made unduly prominent in the large type of the Introduction, he had a point. But his dyspathies with exact reporting go deeper than that. Unfortunately, the whole job will have to be done over again, in the *Night Thoughts* commentary volume, because the 1980 edition contains too many inaccuracies. The errors of fact in these matters, as well as the neglect to include a chart of *Night Thoughts*-Notebook correlations that had already been included in the Erdman-Moore edition of Blake's *Notebook* (see Grant 1982, 7 and *Notebook*, pp. 51-52), the absence of captions for the final engraved designs, and the absence of an overall system of plate numbers for all the pictures, can indeed be attributed to the "sheer carelessness" that Dörrbecker finds in other features of the book.

The descriptions of the first, second, and fifth of the (uncolored) engravings for Edwards' 1797 edition of *Night Thoughts*, for example, contain many lapses or lacunae; in consequence, the viewer is not assisted to grasp Blake's purposes in introducing significant variations in the designs as he prepared them to be issued as engravings. Here are sample corrections that do not involve rewriting the entries for two of the pictures in the Table of Engraved Designs: *Night Thoughts* 6 (I.[1]); 1E (title page), Clarendon pp. 17-18, and *Night Thoughts* 20 (I. 15); 5E (p. 8), Clarendon p. 19. Concerning *Night Thoughts* 6 (illus. 8), we remarked: "the watercolor is a full-page picture, painted edge-to-edge, thus differentiating it from most other pictures in *Night the First* (e.g. NT 20) which were deliberately not carried to the edge of the paper." This indicates that NT 6 is a late addition to the pictures, since only a few after *Night the First* were painted in the deliberately reduced format. (Our comment, Clarendon edition, p. 88, n. 34, on this stylistic aspect does not really face the issue.) The text panel for NT 6 was surrounded by seven framing lines of varying thickness such as were employed for subsequent title pages. The running text panels have only a single framing line. My inference is that these lines were added in Edwards' shop after the text pages



8. *Night Thoughts* 1E, Private Proofs, page 4, First State (NT 6).

were mounted in windows in the drawing paper but before Blake began to work on them. The engraving of 1E lacks the decisive ruled edges that appear first in 3E (NT 14). In what we refer to as the first state, "Private Proofs, p. 4," we declare that the "mother's foot will be indicated later." It is not in fact shown in any state. We neglect to mention that two prime indications of this priority of the first state are, first, that the mother has a pointed nose and receding chin, as in the water color but not the published engraving. And second, that the ground is indicated only by sketchy contour lines, not hatching, as in later states. Also the hands of the receiving angels above the text panel are outstretched rather than bent down as in *both* the water color *and* the later engraved states. The eyes of the aspiring girl who stands in Death's hand are more distinct than in either the water color or the later states. And the semi-draped female spirit above her, who is being received by the angels, is as distinct as any other figure in the first state, whereas in the water color (which includes noteworthy pentimenti indicating that the figure was shortened), the flying figure becomes a transparent spirit, an idea retained in subsequent states. One might infer that Blake already intended to add the shading to indicate that the flying female is a spirit but that he was, as artist, preoccupied in the (surviving) first state with defining other details before finishing the picture for the public.

It is always a nice question as to which stage in the evolution of a work of art the critic is justified in premising the full potentiality of implication that a finished work affirms. The fact that the mouth of Death is clearly (but not prominently) indicated in the first state but *not* in the water color or in later states of the plate is not a difference that can be attributed to accident. Yet one should hesitate to attribute a symbolic import to this deliberate alteration—to declare, for example, that the diminution of pictorial attention to the mouth "means" that Blake was intent on avoiding any implication, at this stage of his narrative, of "Death the Devourer."

On the other hand, a major pictorial element in all stages of the developing picture, such as the long hair agitated by the wind blowing it to the right exhibited both by the woman standing in Death's hand and the flying female spirit, demands recognition and interpretation because it is presented in unmistakable contrast with the unwhipped hair of the other figures, most notably with that of the deliberately bound hair of the woman with the distaff and the slack hair and beard of the giant form of Death as he first appears in the *Night Thoughts* series. Later, of course, as in *Night Thoughts* 20 (5E), Death's hair too is whipped by the wind—and his eyes are opened—as he frantically strikes at the sun: Young's "insensate archer" (who also stimulated Byron in *Childe Harold* I, st. 91) there shows an aspect the

viewer could not have told at the outset. The details of *Night Thoughts* 6 (1E), more accurately reported, would veto our *Nota Bene* that "the watercolor is closer to proof state two than state one." But they increase the likelihood that the First engraved State preceded the water color.

The water color for *Night Thoughts* 20 (illus. 9), on the other hand, surely preceded the engraving, 5E, (the order one would, of course, have expected) because it is not an edge-to-edge picture: the feathers on Death's Dart fade out sketchily in the upper corner where there was plenty of space to have indicated them. Both at the left and at the bottom much pictorial space is deliberately unoccupied, in contrast to the essentially full-plate style of engraving. As we indicate, the image was reversed in engraving, to produce a recto design. This reversal makes for awkwardness in reporting the right and left sides for corresponding details. In the water color the crown for the king beneath the outstretched leg of Death has four spikes while the crown for the king beneath the vertical leg (as we neglected to specify) shows six spikes. In the engraving both crowns show five spikes. The head of the king beneath the vertical leg is little changed in the first state of the engraving except that his hair is indicated and a collar and medallion are added at the throat. The change in the other head is more remarkable, and problematic. In the first state of the engraving the features of this king, a youngish man with a moustache, are shown in profile; his hair appears on both sides of his head, which seems at first simply to have been cut off by the bottom edge of the plate. But the king's crown appears in the corner as though it had fallen off; within and above it is a piled-up mound, which more closely resembles hair than engraved lines that delineate the curve of the earth and contours of the ground. This mound is off-center in relation to the crown but is painted (normally *not* by Blake) reddish-purple in Type I colored copies, as though it were a regal cloth lining for the crown. In Type II colored copies (also probably not by Blake), it is painted brown, like hair. These details of coloring at least tell us what the colorists took the mound to be. Another detail of the engraving we neglected to specify is that in the engraving a tail of Death's robe crosses the throat of this king, suggesting that he is being strangled by the robe as well as by the foot of insolent Death, who, having trodden two kings whose torsos are twisted together in a single shroud, now has his dart poised to strike the very sun.

More thorough reporting of the details of the engraving might have allayed Dörbbecker's judgment (p. 138, n. 21) that our description and suggested interpretation of water color *Night Thoughts* 20 are "fantastic." Dörbbecker wishes to maintain that the king's head beneath Death's outstretched foot in the water color version

is invisible for no other reason than that it was twisted so that all that can be seen is the bottom of a chin; and that the providing of a face in the engraved version was simply a matter of facilitating recognition. We had stated flatly that this king was decapitated in the water color and had remarked earlier (p. 13) that this representation was politically "provocative," obviously because it would recall the fate of the King of France. Once the reader has discerned that Dörrbecker's citation of a painting ascribed to the Pollaiuolo is a red herring, having nothing to do with the question of whether decapitation is indicated in either Blake's water color or his engraving, it is evident that his counter-evidence has no force. Conceivably what the viewer is supposed to see in the water color is indeed the underside of the chin rather than a head cut off above the neck. But the crown is not on the king's head in either version: *some* king has been uncrowned. And this king is twisted into the same shroud as another dead king, one still wearing his crown. Let us forego the possibility (I believe it to be a certain implication in both cases) of decollation. Let us suppose instead that in 1797 Blake had been called into court because of his dubious political associations. Question: "Mr. Blake, which two degraded kings are we supposed to think of when we look at this picture of yours?" Answer: "The kings of Asia, Your Honour. The kings of Japan and China."

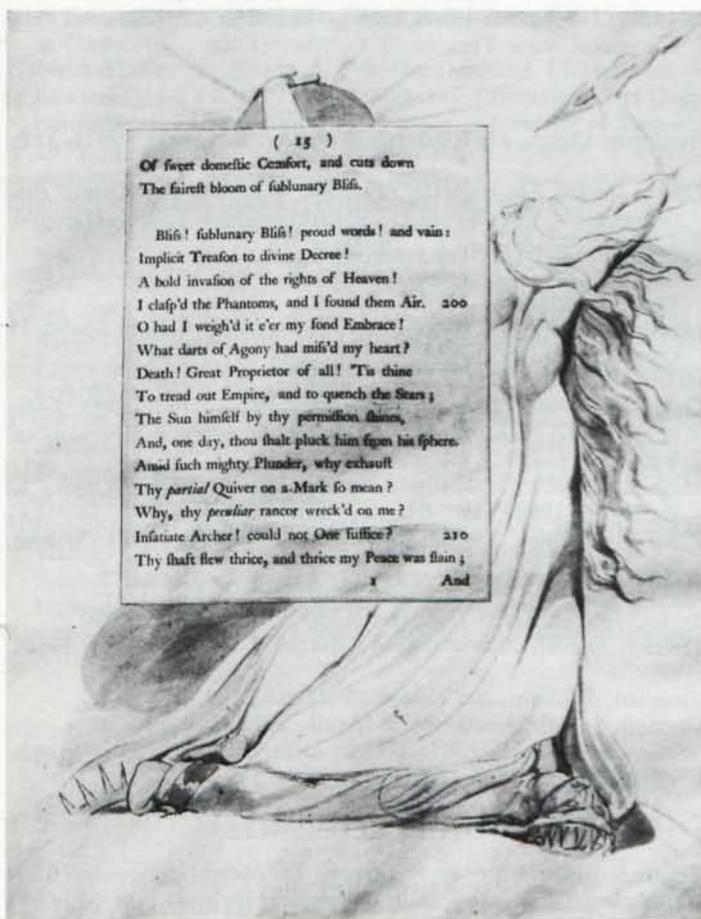
The description on page 18 of the Clarendon edition of the water color for *Night Thoughts* 8 (I.[3]) (illus. 8) is too perfunctory and does not provide a clear enough basis for explaining the slightly varied picture that becomes engraving 2E (p. 1). In the foreground a young man, muffled in a robe except for his head and the toes of his sandalled right foot, rests on his right side and leans on his right elbow with his body stretched out in front of a sleeping dog and a flock of sheep. Near his head a vine with thirteen leaves stretches up the left side of the text panel, while in the starry night sky the angel-winged figure of Sleep hovers in the air and touches the flock with a wand. Above the text panel, against the background of a break in the clouds, a small male figure with a visible but indistinct face sleeps on his left side underneath a coverlet. The dog has long curly hair, and the heads of a horned ram and two ewes are distinguishable in the flock. The text confirms that the figure in the foreground is Young the insomniac, who has a tense sleepless look about his eyes as he stares into space, not meeting the look of the viewer. The coverlet on his right arm is curiously draped, suggesting that he holds a long thin object that hangs down to a point just above the ground: this object seems to me to have the shape of a (foreshortened) book.

The water color, which was contracted on three sides, has been expanded in the engraving by adding grass to the left edge of the plate and in the foreground,

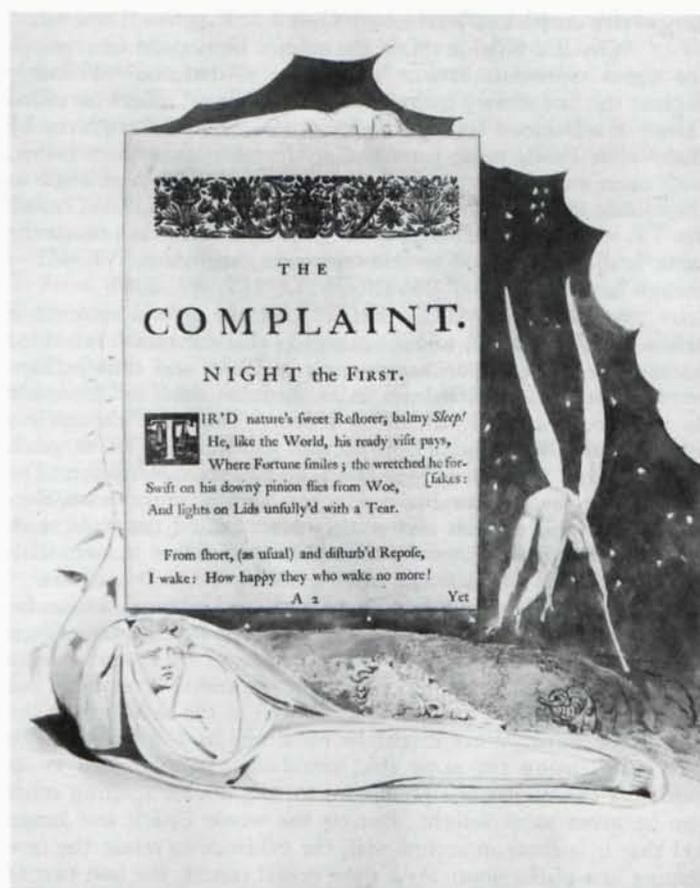
as well as by straightening the sky enclave above the text. In the engraved version it becomes virtually a full-plate design. Young's face becomes less tense, and his eyes are more heavily lidded. The coverlet over the hidden object has deeper folds, but the covered object still suggests a book. The dog is now shorter haired and the quality of his coat becomes hardly distinguishable from that of the sheep. Above the dog the back and ears of another sheep have been added in what had been an indistinct area, while the rumps of three more sheep and the left horn of the ram have been added. The staff of Sleep is slimmer, the coverlet on the sleeping man above the text panel is symmetrically twisted (in a possibly sinister manner), while the thirty-six stars are in almost exactly the same positions they were in in the water color. The stars appear to be arranged in particular constellations (which I have not been able to identify); the arrangement may add some further overtone of significance.

It is unlikely, however, that the stars are as important as the suggestion of a muffled book hidden beneath the coverlet of Young the insomniac. Appearing as it does at the end of the varied book-scroll sequence of NT 2, 5, 6 (illus. 8), and especially facing design 7, and linking with the books shown in NT 14 (3E), NT 18 (4E), and NT 34 (9E), the hidden book in NT 8 represents an important stage in the relation of the author with his text. Several possibilities suggest themselves, once the viewer concedes the likelihood that if the object is a book it must be Young's own poem, *The Complaint and the Consolation or Night Thoughts on Life, Death, and Immortality*, which the author is at pains to conceal.

If we take as a starting point Blake's later motto, "No Secrecy in Art" (E 1982, 275) and infer that the vine with thirteen leaves that grows up next to Young, together with his concealed book, indicate the results of bad influences on his spirit, we will not place too much trust in Young's book. Yet Blake's vast project of illustrating the *Night Thoughts* must have proceeded on the faith that the poem constitutes a base worth building on: most details in most pictures are in accord with the spirit and letter of Young's poem. But Blake must also have believed that he was authorized by the spirit from prophecy to add much from his own visionary perspective in order to free the visionary elements of Young's poem from their all-too-often timorous author and place the whole work in the light of prophecy. In suggesting at the outset of the poem that there is something resembling a book beneath a cloak of respectability in *Night Thoughts* 8, Blake had begun the task of rectification. The rest of the pictures are designed to bring Young's latent imaginings and evasions out into the open.



9. *Night Thoughts* 20, *Night the First*, page 15 (Cf. 5E), by permission of the Trustees of the British Museum.



10. *Night Thoughts* 8, *Night the First*, page [3] (Cf. 2E), by permission of the Trustees of the British Museum.

¹ He might have got the drift simply by consulting Lemprière's *Classical Dictionary* on "Manes," which he would earlier have had occasion to do while engraving Fuseli's fantasy on *Aeneid* 6:896. See Essick 1983, no. xxx, pp. 175-76 and pl. 76.

² Note that in Blake's two splendid water colors entitled *The Great Red Dragon and the Woman Clothed in the Sun* (Butlin 1981, cat. 519, 520; pls. 580, 581), the woman is within the crescent, not on top of it.

Outside *Night the Third* in the *Night Thoughts* series the figure who most closely resembles the apocalyptic woman of *Night Thoughts* 78 (illus. 3) appears as the sky goddess in *Night Thoughts* 446 (IX, 28), identified as "Night" in Young's poem. This cosmic woman is crowned with stars, and her body and sky-filling robes are punctuated with stars; those on her hand and foot are displayed as though they were stigmata. In order to handle the interpretive linkage to the woman in *Night Thoughts* 78, however, one must first establish her relationship to the poem in *Night Thoughts* 447 and then treat both as episodes of the recurrent poet-muse theme in the entire series. In other words, the connection between *NT* 78 and *NT* 446 is not close enough to be interpretively decisive.

The intended significance of Blake's apocalyptic woman's gesture of raised arms and hands outspread may be more specific than ardent supplication or generalized prayer. One can hardly be indifferent to Benjamin West's treatment of practically the same subject, probably also done in 1797 as part of his scheme to decorate

Fonthill Abbey: *The Woman Clothed with the Sun*, as West represented her, stands, levitated by angels and her own wings, above the dry crescent moon as well as above the threatening, staring sea serpent who vomits water. She looks rapturously upward with upraised arms and outspread hands toward her infant boy, who is being carried up into heaven by one angel and conveyed by another (see Nancy L. Pressly, *Revealed Religion: Benjamin West's Commissions for Windsor Castle and Fonthill Abbey* [San Antonio: San Antonio Museum of Art, 1983], fig. 33 [cat. 37, p. 69], or John Dillenberger, *Benjamin West: The Context of His Life's Work*, with Particular Attention to Paintings with Religious Subject Matter [San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 1977], pl. 76). Prompted by West's illustration of Rev. 12:1-5, 13-17, one might infer that Blake's woman in *Night Thoughts* 78 (24E) is likewise supposed to be understood as having just passed her own infant son up to angels that are visible to her, but not to the viewer. Yet this gesture has no point of correspondence with Young's poem, and Blake's other aspiring women in the front designs for each *Night* or in *Night the Third* do not disburden themselves of a child. See *NT* 6 (I, [1]:1E) (illus. 8), *NT* 37 (II, tp verso), and III, p. 6: *NT* 81; 25E, III, p. 10: *NT* 85, III, p. 12: *NT* 87; 26E, III, p. 34: *NT* 109. The aspiring women in *Night the Fourth* all gesture differently, but they too appeal for themselves rather than for another. It seems, therefore, that the West picture, despite its suggestive similarities to *Night Thoughts* 78, does not provide any useful interpretive

perspective on Blake's picture.

³ Why did Shields think the soldier he noticed (the one at the right) represents Satan, "the power of darkness"? Probably because the face closely resembles that of "Satan," otherwise called "Head of a Damned Soul in Dante's Inferno," a head engraved by Blake after Fuseli some years earlier. It too is seen from below, with open mouth and blank eyes, at practically the same angle as the soldier in NT 264. Essick 1983, no. xxxii, pp. 170-72, and fig. 73, now dates the states as c. 1789 and notes that much the same head appears in five other pictures, including NT 432—though he overlooks NT 264 (illus. 2).

⁴ Bentley 1978, 1404, declares that the second sentence is deleted. Erdman 1982, 884-85, declares that the cancel is a ruled double line in pencil uncharacteristic of Blake and thus perhaps attributable to Samuel Palmer. Alas, Erdman does not comment on the terminal word, which he renders "controls," though his 1965 edition, like those of both Keynes and Bentley (1978), reads it as singular. Erdman (1983) offers no further clarification. The concordance reveals that Blake does not use the plural noun elsewhere, and also that he always elsewhere spelled the word with two *ls*. The OED shows that the plural noun was in use, with specific political reference, in Blake's time.

I am grateful to Robert N. Essick and Thomas Lange for having restudied Blake's inscription, which is in the Huntington Library. With the aid of a special microscope, they were able to discern these facts: there is a smudge at the end of "controls," but the letter "s" appears to have been written in the same ink as the rest of the word. What might be construed as a stroke through this letter, using the same ink, could also be construed as an indistinct cancel. Blake's preference for the double spelling must also be given some weight. But on the whole Essick and Lange feel that it is more in accord with the evidence to retain the new reading of a plural noun. As for the pencil cancel, the first part of the aphorism is crossed with three horizontal but *unruled* lines, the second part with two lines, also *unruled*; only "controls" lacks any pencil lines. It should be understood that a number of the subsequent annotations are also in pencil, though most are written in the same ink as is used on the title page aphorism. Samuel Palmer signed the book in ink, not pencil. There is no sign elsewhere that he altered Blake's annotations. Therefore, there is no reason to assign the rather faint pencil cancels on the second aphorism to anyone other than Blake.

My conclusion from this review of the evidence is as follows: in 1798 Blake saw overwhelming evidence that "The Beast & the Whore rule without Controls." Subsequently, perhaps as late as the Peace of Amiens, 1802-03, Blake took another look at Watson, with pencil in hand. In addition to adding certain comments, he (faintly) canceled at least most of the second aphorism. Ordinarily, Blake might have conceded, the Beast and the Whore rule with (some) controls; in the best of times the rule of the Beast and the Whore is so veiled that it need not be affirmed. In evaluating the alterations, there is no obligation to think that the cancellation by Blake represents a retraction. Much as in the case of "Opposition is true Friendship," *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, pl. 20, which was painted out in colored copies (E 1982, 42 and 802 n), we need not suppose that Blake actually changed his mind about the principle involved. Every honest man as prophet is bound to see the marks of the Beast and the Whore much of the time in the activities and relationships prevailing in an imperium.

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Reply to John Grant

W.J.T. Mitchell

Several reviewers of the *Clarendon Night Thoughts* found the reproductions inadequate, the scholarship uneven, and the interpretive commentary tendentious and unconvincing. John Grant's lengthy reply to these reviews concedes that there is considerable merit to all these complaints, and yet manages also to convey the impression that an injustice has been done. Sometimes the injustice comes about because of things the editors inadvertently left out of their book: my review, for instance, might not have objected to the neglect of crucial details in the commentary if the editors "had not carelessly neglected a footnote referring to an article by one of the editors" on the problem in question. At other times Grant's complaint is that the reviewers are hostile to Blake, or that they have inadequate theories (despite the accuracy of their specific objections), or (in my case) that they fail to do the editors' job for them, and write a satisfactory commentary rather than objecting to inadequacies in the one provided by the Clarendon edition. In all cases the strategy is one of apparent concession, followed by an attack on the motives or the intellectual and scholarly competence of the reviewers. It is not, on

the whole, pleasant reading.

Let me take up first the issue of hostility to Blake. Grant delivers the opinion that ninety percent of the *Night Thoughts* illustrations are "fine pictures," and suggests that anyone (like David Bindman) who disagrees with this judgment is engaged in the sort of "Grecian mocks" that Blake despised. Despite Grant's opening promise to "clarify standards and deviations from them," his assertion invokes no discernible standard but his own authority as one who has been deeply involved in the study of the *Night Thoughts* designs for many years. The question of the relative quality of these designs both within Blake's oeuvre, and in the context of late eighteenth century book illustration, is an interesting one, but it is not likely to be settled by accusing anyone who dares to question Blake's accomplishment of uttering "Grecian mocks." Until this problem is subjected to more sober discussion, my instinct is to trust the judgment of a well-informed art historian who, like David Bindman, has demonstrated his ability to look at Blake's pictures sympathetically.

Grant's defense of the commentary on the *Night Thoughts* designs opens up the most interesting and potentially fruitful part of this discussion, because this aspect of the project, unlike the reproductions and the scholarly apparatus, has yet to be published and is still subject to correction. My review attempted, no doubt unsuccessfully, to offer some friendly advice about ways

to make this commentary more useful to both the general reader and the specialist. I recommended that the commentary pay more attention to the specific connections of Blake's designs with Young's text, that it try to say something more definite about the art historical context of Blake's designs, and that it bring Blake's other work to bear with some precision and discrimination. This last bit of advice was directed at what I saw as an unfortunate tendency to construct "neo-Blakean fables" around sequences of designs by importing the familiar clichés of Blake's "system" or monomyth. I see that Detlef Dörrbecker arrived independently at the same feeling of dissatisfaction with what he calls "pseudo-Blakean associations."

Grant's reply to this objection concedes only the stylistic point about the tremulous religiosity of the commentary ("English was not always kept up. Occasionally a dismally religious tone obtrudes. Such lapses should have been corrected"). But the style, I'm afraid, is not so easily separated from the substance. The real problem, which I did not see until Grant assembled the various reviews in his reply, is the programmatic theory about Blake's designs that Grant is pushing in his commentary. Grant may well be right that there was a program in the sense in which Gombrich and others discern a program in Michelangelo's Sistine ceiling. He is wrong that "the tide of taste is running against" this way of reading pictures in art history or anywhere else. No self-respecting art historian would ignore a program, especially one preserved in explicit, extant documentary instructions. Blake's own "Last Judgment" paintings are "programmatic" in this sense, as his "Descriptions of the Last Judgment" and "A Vision of the Last Judgment" clearly demonstrate. The problem with applying the programmatic model to the *Night Thoughts* designs is twofold: (1) we have no textual evidence of Blake's program (if any) for this series; (2) a series of illustrations and ornaments physically conjoined to a text is a rather different sort of creature from a series of panels, tableaus, and murals in an architectural setting with no textual accompaniment.

I don't raise these objections to prove the impossibility of there being a program behind Blake's *Night Thoughts* designs, only to suggest that any such claim has to be argued, not asserted as a matter of faith, and that it will always be, at best, a controversial, somewhat speculative theory. It is all too easy to construct narratives out of a sequence of pictures, especially if that narrative concerns such vague matters as "fallen man" and "regeneration," and far too difficult to prove or disprove that any such narrative is "correct." Grant makes much of the fact (if it is a fact) that "nobody has shown that it [his theory] doesn't work." If this is a sample of the "standards" that govern what goes into the Clarendon *Night Thoughts* then we are in deep trouble. Surely a

theory ought to have more going for it than the fact that it hasn't been disproved. Nobody bothered to disprove the phlogiston theory either; it just dropped into oblivion because it wasn't interesting or productive.

My suggestion was that the commentary at least begin with the specific connections between Blake's pictures and Young's text. I offered this as a matter of common sense with the expectation that the editors probably had this in mind all along. But now Grant informs us that his "theory of pictorial units" (what I read as "neo-Blakean fables") "remains on the docket for the *Night Thoughts* commentary because nobody has shown that it doesn't work." I urge the editors to reconsider this matter, and to reflect on the indisputable fact that this commentary will be canonized by their edition; it will remain as the basic point of departure for generations of Blake scholars and aficionados. It ought to be a relatively restrained, conservative document, providing the reader with reliable information, specific references, and with speculations about Blake's "program" clearly identified as such.

I must conclude by saying just a word about John Grant's suggestions that I manipulated the evidence in my review to make it appear that I was "discovering" something that was in his text already, and that my poking fun at some of the descriptive enumeration was "unscholarly." On the first point, there is simply a misunderstanding. I never claimed that it was any "discovery" of mine (or anybody else's) that the female figure of *NT* 78 is drawn from the iconography of the woman clothed with the sun in Revelation. I took this as uncontroversial, public knowledge. The problem, I tried to suggest, was to say something about the meaning of this motif as an illustration to Young. More specifically, I suggested that Blake was starting from Young's figure of the Duchess of Portland as the Greek moon-goddess "Cynthia! Cilene! Phebe!" in *Night* III, which this design introduces, and that his design "transforms Young's Greek lunar goddess into her Christian analogue, the Virgin as Queen of Heaven, the 'woman clothed with the sun' described in Revelation 12 with 'the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars,' contending with 'that old serpent, called the Devil.'" I went on to suggest that

The fact that Phebe was usually depicted with the moon on her head astride a chariot drawn by serpents makes Blake's transformation of Young's figure an iconographic "inversion" in a very precise sense. Blake's title-page emerges, in the light of these facts, as a witty illumination of Young's text, a transformation of his stoic, latitudinarian morality, stale Greek mythology, and urbane social flattery into a visionary, enthusiastic, and apocalyptic statement. And he does this, we should note, not against the spirit of Young's text, but as a way of freeing what he sees latent in it.

Now, no doubt, I'm more partial to my own speculative interpretations than to John Grant's, but these at least have the advantage of starting with the text

being illustrated, and ending with an account of the specific features of the illustration. I gather that Grant has no problem with my final characterization of the design as "visionary, enthusiastic, and apocalyptic"; what he doesn't care for, evidently, is my suggestion that Young's moon-goddess (rather than the canonical figure of "Narcissa," named on the title page) is the textual reference point. He says that this is too complicated to go into, that it's all dealt with elsewhere, and cites a "well-established tradition" to support the identification of the woman with Narcissa. My claim is that the fact of Blake's allusion to Young's moon-goddess is quite uncomplicated (though its meaning may be rather subtle), that it ought to be at least mentioned in the commentary (not in an uncited essay), and that "well-

established traditions" ought to be presented with some critical scrutiny. This one seems to have arisen from a neglect of Young's text.

As to my "unscholarly" poking of fun at the enumeration of details: I deny any "dyspathy" with "exact reporting." But I still think an obsession with the presence or absence of Death's Big Toe in Blake's designs is an occasion for a certain amount of humor, especially when its sublime significance is represented in the grand proportions of full size print in a lavish edition like this. All I was asking for was a certain sense of proportion, both in the scholarly apparatus and the critical commentary. I continue to hope that something like this will prevail in the forthcoming supplement to the Clarendon edition of the *Night Thoughts*.

Further Thoughts on *Night Thoughts*

Morton D. Paley

John Grant's discussion article falls into three parts: a consideration of the reliability of the published *Night Thoughts* reproductions, some new information and conjecture, and a defense of his mode of interpreting the designs. On the first subject, there is little more to be said. Comparing these reproductions against the originals in the British Museum Print Room was the most depressing experience I have ever had as a book reviewer. How the Clarendon Press, one of the world's few truly great scholarly publishers, came to accept such poor work is beyond my comprehension; that they did dismay me as it does many others. There is no point in quibbling about this, as Grant concedes the major objections that his reviewers have made.

Regarding the new material in Grant's essay, I am concerned about three matters. One is the reversal of images from water color to engraving in some instances, something that has a fairly simple explanation. If we imagine Blake's procedure, we can see that when he executed the water colors he had no idea as to whether the pictures finally selected for engraving would be on recto or verso pages. He could only know, with the obvious exception of title pages, whether the pictures were recto or verso in the edition that he in effect created by using Dodsley's printed pages. However, since Edwards' letterpress would have been printed first and the leaves later passed through a plate printer's press,¹ Blake would have known whether the pictures to be engraved were to be recto or verso simply by counting lines. The

text was not centered on the page but was offset to the left on recto pages and to the right on verso pages wherever there were illustrations. This was in accordance with standard book production procedures of the period—a subject of which Grant takes little cognizance. In some instances, therefore, reversal was necessary for formal reasons. *All the designs that were reversed in engraving were on pages that had to be changed from recto to verso or vice versa*, as follows: 14, 20, 24, 31, 87, 94, 99, 121, 125, 143, 148, and 153—a total of twelve engravings out of the forty-three published.

The incredible theory that the NT 6 water color followed the engraving is one of those mare's nests too frequently encountered in the *Night Thoughts* edition ("grotesque coloration," as Grant now admits, being another). All the differences that Grant notes between NT 6 and engraving 1E are there—and all can be accounted for by Mr. Blake's revising and re-revising on the copper plate using his burnisher. Blake was if anything unusually fecund in his improvisations on the plate. No *ur-NT 6* is necessary to account for changes in the mother's nose or in the angels' hands or in any of the other details that Grant mentions. We normally assume that drawing precedes engraving unless it can be proved otherwise; by this assumption we now know the New Zealand set of *Job* to have been produced by someone other than Blake, since engraving preceded drawing in this instance, as Bo Lindberg has shown. As if to becloud the issue, Grant laboriously proves that the state of the engraving that obviously is the first state is—the first state. At this point, a careful reperusal of Essick's *William Blake Printmaker* would be in order.

Third, did Blake color *any* copy of the Edwards edition? There is no certain proof that he did. From time to time the *Night Thoughts* editors admit this, yet

Grant says that "Type I colored copies are normally *not* by Blake" (emphasis his) and that "Type II colored copies" are "probably not by Blake." No one doubts this, yet there is something about the peculiar wording that makes one sense in these references to a classification system itself seriously open to question an insinuation that *some* copy actually was colored by Blake. This is the time to assert that for all we know Blake may have colored one or more copies of the Edwards *Night Thoughts*, but it has never been proved that he did so. Again, the New Zealand set of *Job* ought to offer a cautionary example.

Last comes the question of a general approach to Blake's *Night Thoughts*. In my 1969 essay I offered one perspective: that the designs reflect in many ways the system of Zoas and Emanations that Blake was beginning to conceive for *Vala*. Grant rather over-simplifies my argument in his comments, but I will leave it for the reader to judge its usefulness.² But Grant also challenges me to *disprove* his schematization of the first *Night's* illustrations in *Blake's Visionary Forms Dramatic*.³ At first this seems rather hard, since Grant also says that the schematization really depends on his commentary on all 537 designs—a commentary to which, if it exists, I have certainly had no opportunity to refer. Nevertheless, let me offer one instance from "Envisioning the First *Night Thoughts*," comprising water colors 13-17, designated by Grant as Group III, and entitled by him "The Circle of Destiny and Edward Young."

No. 13, showing a winged boy emerging from the cracked Mundane Shell is called "Male Aspiration" by Grant, although we know that the meaning Blake attached to the very similar image in *For Children* (no. 6, plate 8) was birth: "At length for hatching ripe he bursts the shell." Furthermore, since each of Grant's "units" in *Night I* must begin with "a major incursion into the scene of a superhuman character from another realm of existence,"⁴ this image must become one! Even Grant admits that in this case "the symmetry is complicated by the fact"⁵—but in this case is there any symmetry at all?

The caption "Young's Distractions" certainly could apply to *NT* 14, where the picture shows the poet dreaming his dreams in accordance with Young's text. But no. 15, which shows the poet looking into an open grave under a cypress tree is not so clearly one of "Young's Distractions," unless this term is to be trotted out for every graveyard contemplation in this *Graveyard* poem. As for 16, the young woman rising from a broken egg shell does obviously relate to no. 13, but as a parallel image of birth, not of Grant's superimposed "Female Aspiration." Young's own lines on this page are in fact very close to Blake's *For Children* caption:

Embryos we must be, till we burst the Shell,
Yon ambient, azure shell, and spring to Life . . .

And why isn't *this* "a major incursion into the scene of a superhuman character from another realm of existence"? Because it doesn't begin one of Grant's "units"?

In 17 we see a caterpillar-man inside a chained circle, looking at himself in a mirror while a female figure looks on appalled. This is Blake's image of the spiritual condition of Young as described on this *Night Thoughts* page:

How, like a Worm, was I wrapt round and round
In silken thought, which reptile *Fancy* spun,
Till darken'd *Reason* lay quite clouded o'er . . .

This is *Young's* error; there is no convincing reason to designate it as "Masculine Error" or to pair it with 16 as a sub-group called "Female Aspiration, Masculine Error." Nor does the title "The Circle of Destiny and Edward Young" appear particularly useful when applied to the entire "unit," even if one accepts Grant's simplistic definition of the Circle of Destiny ("promising new beginnings fade away into ancient errors and perennial frustrations"⁶) or perhaps *especially* if one accepts this definition, since if the term "Circle of Destiny" is to be used for every such *Night Thoughts* situation, it is not going to mean very much. (Incidentally, it's strange to find an author who objects so strenuously to the presence of Zoas and Emanations in the *Night Thoughts* series here employing a term Blake uses only in *The Four Zoas*.)

It would be tedious to go on. These five pictures don't compose a "unit" in any meaningful sense. Grant's schematization has never gained currency among Blake scholars first of all because of its arbitrariness and secondly for what may be an even more important reason. Viewing the *Night Thoughts* series as a huge linear construction to be divided into linear sub-compartments, each with its own catchy title is an enormous disservice to Blake's artistic accomplishment. It is as if Blake were to be conceived as a Urizenic plodder spinning out his pictorial themes like the caterpillar man of *NT* 16. Is such a model as this really to serve for the projected "Commentary" on *Night Thoughts*? If so, the text volume of this edition is likely to prove as great a disappointment as the plates have been.

¹ This was of course the usual printing procedure, in this instance illustrated by the existence of a copy of the Edwards edition bearing only the letterpress. See G.E. Bentley, Jr., "Young's *Night Thoughts* (London: R. Edwards, 1797): A New Unillustrated State," *Blake/An Illustrated Quarterly*, 14 (1980), 34-35.

² "Blake's *Night Thoughts*: an Exploration of the Fallen World," *William Blake: Essays for S. Foster Damon*, ed. Alvin H. Rosenfeld (Providence, R.I.: Brown University Press, 1969), pp. 131-57.

³ "Envisioning the First *Night Thoughts*," *Blake's Visionary Forms Dramatic*, ed. David V. Erdman and John E. Grant (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1970), pp. 304-35.

⁴ "Envisioning the First *Night Thoughts*," p. 308.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ "Envisioning the First *Night Thoughts*," p. 318.

Grant's "Problems in Understanding": Some Marginalia

D.W. Dörrbecker

He started the controversy,
he gave the challenge,
and has fled from it.
—Thomas Paine, *Rights of Man*, II

Under a slightly misleading title, John E. Grant has provided us (1) with a forceful and impressive attack on some of the reviewers of *William Blake's Designs to Edward Young's "Night Thoughts": A Complete Edition*, as well as (2) with a—this time singlehanded—new and revised version of some of the chapters in the introduction to that *magnum opus* which, in collaboration with Edward J. Rose, Michael J. Tolley, and David V. Erdman, he had edited for the Clarendon Press at Oxford. Grant has divided the 57 pages of the typescript of his essay which were known to me when I was asked for some comments by the editors of this journal into three separate parts. Of these, one is concerned with the reproductions of Blake's *Night Thoughts* watercolors (NT), the other two mostly with problems of their interpretation and with revisions of the chalcographic reports in the "Introduction" to the Clarendon volumes. I do not share the editors' decision that *all* of this material warrants publication in its present state; if printed, however, Grant's second and third sections will certainly be good for yet another extensive review. Nevertheless, I have tried to keep the following notes, if not to a minimum, then at least to a reasonable proportion, and they will therefore deal almost exclusively with the first section of Grant's essay, which contains most of the criticisms of my own 1982 review of the Clarendon NT edition.

Reading this section, one is surprised to find that—though dissatisfied with many of the reviews of his publication—Grant seems rather to agree with than to contradict his reviewers: there is in his article much talk about the *unreliability* of the reproductions in the *Complete Edition*, and there is relatively little (and perhaps even less than in a review such as that by Dennis M. Welch and Joseph S. Viscomi) which attempts to salvage those halftone and color offset plates from the often harsh criticisms they have been subjected to.

Grant begins by telling us about his own and his co-editors' disappointment "with the overall quality of the 800 reproductions in [the] massive two-volume edition published in 1980," and he goes on to say that "neither the color nor the black and white reproductions are, on average, commendable." This might seem a bit startling when stated by one of the three editors who,

after all, were responsible for the publication now under discussion, and yet up to this point this is indeed in complete harmony with all those of the scholarly reviews of the Clarendon volumes that were based on a firsthand experience and an examination of the original watercolors at the British Museum Print Room (see Bindman 1981; Hagstrum 1982; Lincoln 1981; Paley 1982; Welch & Viscomi 1981; and Dörrbecker 1982¹). The same cannot be said of what immediately follows this concession: if the reproductions are not commendable, it must seem (at least for an art historian) a strange euphemism to go on with proclaiming that "their shortcomings *should [not] be seriously misleading*" (italics mine). Yet this sort of reasoning, or rather, wishful thinking, is sadly characteristic of the whole of Grant's response to his critics.

The purpose of his article, Grant says, is to clarify "standards and deviations from them," so that in the future we can "assess the edition in a way that will advance scholarship." From Grant's point of view, this is also what has not been achieved by any of the many reviews published between 1980 and early 1983. Where such a discussion of standards of reliability is advocated, however, one might expect some more general remarks concerning those criteria which are likely to help us with differentiating (at least a bit) between the varying degrees of what, in passing, Grant mentions as the usual unreliability of the plates in art books. His reviewers, no doubt, were all well "aware that in most [though obviously not all] art books the reproductions are untrustworthy." Yet, unlike the editors of the NT edition, some of the reviewers actually took pains to establish the precise extent of deviation from the originals in the publication they had been asked to describe and evaluate by comparing the published plates with the watercolors in London. And, though the examples chosen by the various reviewers differed widely, all the resulting reviews agreed that there is *considerable* deviation between the watercolors and their photographic replicas as printed by the Clarendon Press.

Despite his promise that he will not "defend the Clarendon edition where it is indeed deficient," Grant makes it clear right from the start that he will be discussing these criticisms and lamentations of his colleagues only in a very specific sense. Thus, he asserts that his reviewers have simply missed the point, and he does "not believe that they have succeeded in dealing either with many important aspects of the edition or of Blake's pictures as they are reproduced therein." This is a sentence which deserves to be looked at carefully because it seems to contain a clue to the governing principles of Grant's longish paper. Being part of his introduction, it serves a fourfold purpose: (1) to discredit the intellectual integrity of his critics with the readers of his *apologia*; (2) to claim for himself (and, possibly,

for his fellow-editors as well as the few truly favorable reviewers like Halsband or John Russell Taylor of *The Times*) exactly that "elevated" status of the ideal viewer of Blake's designs which, as a concept of *criticism*, had been justly exposed as "an annoying tic" in Blake studies in W.J.T. Mitchell's review (Mitchell 1982, p. 203); (3) to make it seem only natural then, that on the following pages he sidesteps many of the issues which had been brought forward in the reviews (see below for some examples); and (4) to establish a curious world-turned-upside-down view of the respective roles of author and reader-reviewer—according to John E. Grant, even in a scholarly publication it is the author who is to decide about the standards by which his work may, or may not be evaluated, not the audience, which either will have to be content to follow the author-editors, serving as their *claqueurs* (though paying, not being paid for serving this function as usual), or will be discarded as blockheads who cannot even discover all those "many important aspects" that have been kindly presented to them at a mere \$365. Now, if I enter into a scholarly discourse with a set of false premises in mind, I shall of course be able to "prove" most anything. If Grant is unwilling to actually speak to the point—which in this case, alas!, had been made and dictated by the reviewers—he refuses to face up to a discussion in favor of mere polemics, and he is certainly not complying with the demands made on scholarly integrity with those "severe thoughts on scholarly procedures" of his which I had quoted in the final footnote to my review.

By way of a reply to Grant's attack, this might seem all that really needs to be said, the rest being perfectly clear to anyone who has read not only the above essay, but also the reviews by Welch and Viscomi, Hagsstrum, Mitchell, Paley, Bindman, and myself. Since I, too, had not read them all when Grant's typescript arrived, I think it might still be worthwhile to reply in more detail to some of the statements in Grant's response.

Concerning my own criticism of the quality of the color plates in the *Complete Edition* (and much the same might have been said of the criticisms by Bindman, Paley, and Welch and Viscomi, who all have made themselves guilty of similar "procedural errors"), Grant insists (1) that they are neither trustworthy nor generally useful, being "wrong from one-third to two-thirds of the time" (though in another instance Grant kindly concedes that at least "in about half the cases Dörrbecker complains about . . . there is something seriously amiss in the reproduction"), (2) that they pay no attention to the problems of "color averaging," and (3) that I should have looked at the "difference" which an admitted mistake makes for the design as a whole rather than at the mistake in isolation. The first of these points is not argued, but merely asserted; I am fully aware of course,

that whether my statements concerning the discrepancies between the color reproductions and the original watercolors are "trustworthy" or not, cannot really be decided in any other place than the Print Room. Grant's quest for an evaluation of the exact amount of harm done to single designs by the specific mistakes in the reproductions—which he admits are present—to me seems quite absurd, especially since the quest is proposed by someone who should have minimized the very mistakes which he now proclaims a rewarding subject for further studies; moreover, the procedure recommended by Grant is sufficiently impractical even in a long review to allow this suggestion to be passed over in silence. It is true, however, that I ought to have developed my argument somewhat further where I had only drawn attention to the fact that "if just one color comes off wrong from a reproduction, this causes a distortion in the whole of the color composition which is unmendable" (Dörrbecker 1982, p. 132).

In his eagerness to vindicate the Oxford publication, Grant freely admits that he read "the 1972 and 1976 [sic] theses by Hill and Mulhallen," i.e., the only two full-length monographs which previously existed on the subject of his research, "only recently."² He now believe[s] that they both "would have been much more effective if the authors had been able to benefit by the kinds of awareness now available in the 1980 Clarendon edition." None of his reviewers, however, did in the least attempt to dispute *this* claim for the importance of the two *NT* volumes. On the contrary, what Grant presents as a new insight into the relevance of his own work had been granted—and welcomed, though in a somewhat lower key—in many of the reviews I have seen, which often mention that the *NT* designs have now become more easily accessible than ever before (see Bindman 1981, Lincoln 1981, Welch & Viscomi 1981, Hagsstrum 1982, and Dörrbecker 1982).

Next, Grant thought it necessary to devote a paragraph to the "standards" which I seemed "to have in mind" when putting to paper my "opinions about the adequacy of the reproductions." The following two sentences of his rebuke certainly call for comment: "Unlike Paley, who declares that he checked the Clarendon reproductions against the originals, Dörrbecker admits that he is judging by other criteria. Naturally, comparing the reproductions with the originals should help in evaluating their quality, but (perhaps surprisingly) such checking is neither necessary nor sufficient for a reliable report." This statement is just one example from Grant's text which makes it hard to believe in the author's capacity for fair play in dealing with criticisms of his work, though it may also and very simply be a sign of Grant's suspension of all critical judgment when attacked. Had he chosen to read my review in a less prejudiced mood, the following corrections would have

been superfluous, and all this space might have been used for the real thing: scholarship.

Grant here attempts to establish a difference in approach between Paley (who, however, is said to have been "not much more successful . . . in presenting a reliable analysis"), Viscomi, and myself. "Unlike Paley," so his readers are being told, I had not compared the reproductions with the originals at the British Museum Print Room before writing my review for *Blake*, and, it is cunningly added, I was judging on the basis of some "other criteria." According to Grant, this had been "admitted" by myself, yet he fails to provide the relevant quotation from my review. This omission seems wise, however, since no such references can possibly be supplied; on the contrary, one will be at a loss if trying to trace what exactly might have prompted this imputation.³ True enough, I did not explicitly *declare* that I had gone through the entire series of these watercolors at various times as well as in 1980-1981 when, in preparation for my review, I compared *each* of the originals at the Print Room with its reproduction in the Clarendon volumes, taking notes and (indeed!) annotating my review copy quite heavily. Yet from the character of my notes on the reproductions it should have been clear to any unprejudiced reader that the review could not possibly have been written without a stay in London.⁴ At the same time, I freely admit that this did not take me "months rather than weeks" (for which Grant argues justifiably in a different paragraph). And yet, what sort of reviewer is being demanded by this editor who, after having been engaged on this project during well over a decade still has to admit that he has been guilty of "sheer carelessness"?

In reply to the statement quoted above, there is something else which seems to ask for contradiction: although "checking" the reproductions against the originals is in itself not sufficient (yet who had said so?), it is still and most certainly "necessary for a reliable report" as its factual basis. As long as we want reproductions to serve as an aid to research purposes, as a temporary substitute and a representation of the originals *in effigie*—and Grant seems to agree on that—all else is nonsense where an evaluation of their reliability is at stake. Tellingly, this need to compare the plates in the Clarendon edition with their London "prototypes" has been felt most strongly by one colleague who had been prevented from doing so when writing his review (see Hagstrum 1982, p. 340). With at least David Bindman, Andrew Lincoln, Dennis M. Welch and Joseph S. Viscomi, Morton D. Paley and Jean H. Hagstrum all agreeing on this point, one is left wondering about the purpose of that paragraph in Grant's rebuke: was it meant to cast shadows of baseless doubt over the statement of Paley, who, in Grant's phrasing, did not simply compare the reproductions with the originals, but only "declared"

that he had done so? or was it meant to disqualify my own comments on the reproductions by cleverly pointing out that I had not even attempted such a declaration of the obvious and that in addition I had been judging by a set of alien, unknown, undescribed, and probably unspeakable criteria which are so freakish and uncanny that Grant just didn't dare to unveil them?

Then Grant laments that "it is easy to set an impossibly high standard of expectation as Dörrbecker often does in complaining when the pictures are only a little off," and I would readily agree with him, had not Grant himself admitted that these standards are *not* impossibly high (see below), and had he not overlooked most of what I as well as other reviewers had indeed said about the usefulness of the *NT* edition even as it is. Also, I am ready to apologize for not having mentioned that *NT* 264 comes off much better in the color reproduction than in the halftone plate; this omission, however, was due to the disposition of my review which had been subdivided into separate chapters on the monochrome and on the color plates.

Furthermore, it will have been evident to readers of my review that at no point did I intend to have their achievement weighed against genuine facsimiles or even monochrome colotype publications. Grant himself draws attention to my footnote 8, where I had tried to make clear exactly what takes him another page of his typescript to explain: that a colotype publication would have been enormously expensive to produce. It is not hard to imagine, however, why a similar reference to my note 43 is lacking from Grant's text; there, much the same topic is dealt with and a few, admittedly arbitrary, examples are given of "how much closer one can get to the original colors with the ordinary offset process and at a moderate price" (Dörrbecker 1982, p. 139). Though one will now want to ask the editorial team of the Clarendon volumes for a more detailed account of their own standards of reliability in art reproduction, the issue which has been raised by Grant only in his present response is quite different: why did the editors tolerate their publishers' petty economies which allowed for nothing better than, e.g., what Grant terms "the best pidgin English for black achieved in much modern color reproduction," and will they tolerate the respective results in future publications too (which they themselves might be asked to review)? Shall such inadequacies really and simply "be understood," and shall silence follow this sort of apodictic statement?

In a different paragraph Grant attempts to whitewash the mediocre results in his edition by comparing them with other reproductions that are still more inaccurate; entering into this train of thought, I would nonetheless feel tempted to ask for a higher quality of color reproduction in a pseudo-facsimile of just one of Blake's series of illustrations like the *Complete Edition*

(which offers 80 color plates at \$365) than in a catalogue raisonné (which had been planned without any illustrations at all, and which was published at \$300 with a total of 239 illustrations in color), or in a slim monograph like Paley's which covers Blake's entire career as an artist (containing 16 color plates and sold at \$19.95). I guess that both Martin Butlin and Morton Paley would be ready to agree with much in Grant's critique of the reliability of the color plates in their books. Methodologically, however, Grant's procedure can only be understood as an attempt to establish a particularly *low* standard of reliability which will then enable him to set off the Clarendon plates more positively, and to feel content with their own humble achievement.

Personally, I would prefer different comparisons: if we really are to measure the relative success and/or failure of the color reproductions in the second volume of this edition against what it is possible to achieve with the ordinary processes that allow for mass production, I would recommend as a standard not a Blake book (old or new), but one of those mostly "untrustworthy" and accident-ridden art books that Grant is referring to. We all know that Titian and his Venetian followers daubed their canvases with "unorganized Blots & Blurs." The uncouth hodgepodge of colors on their palettes and the complete lack of outline and definition in their paintings guarantee that both the photographer and the printer will be faced with enormous problems when trying to create a reliable reproduction of one of their works, especially since hardly any of these abominable productions can possibly be printed at something like 70% of their original format. Now, let us have a look at the *Genius of Venice 1500-1600* exhibition catalogue. The sight of it may make us shudder, but treat it gingerly, and a careful and thorough examination will show that it was published in 1983 for the Royal Academy by Weidenfeld and Nicolson in a paperback quarto which sells at £8.95—that there are 95 color plates (i.e., more than in the *NT* edition, though all are much smaller of course)—that (at least according to my notoriously high standards) none of them is perfect, to be sure—yet that almost all of them are of superb and, it has to be admitted, often unprecedented quality in this particular field of art historical publications. The relatively modest price one has to pay for this volume, complete with more than three-hundred pages of text and hundreds of small black-and-white reproductions, is to be explained by the number of copies printed of this catalogue, no doubt far more than the one-thousand copies of the *NT* venture, as well as by the heavy subsidy for the exhibition project. Nevertheless, the comparison will prove that at a retail price of £150 technically much more than what has been achieved in the Clarendon edition would have been possible. It then seems to have been due to other factors that this technical achievement had

to remain no more than a possibility.

In my review I said that "it is hard to believe that any serious and responsible attempt has been made to properly check the proofs of the reproductions against the originals while seeing these volumes through the press" (Dörrbecker 1982, p. 137). This conjecture has neither been refuted nor confirmed in Grant's paper. In passing, however, we learn from him that at least in one case he (as well as the other members of the editorial board?) had been left "without benefit of monochrome proofs," and, it is added, "as usual." Even after reading Grant's lengthy vindication one still does not know what precisely the editors *did* to ascertain the highest standards possible for their (professional and renowned) publishers, and what they did not even attempt to do.⁵

Instead of offering an explanation for just why all those compromises were necessary (be it in 100% or just 50% of the cases listed in the various reviews), Grant leaves us with a moving (and almost disarming) account of what can only be understood as self-accusations: the editors, "like other scholars . . . were disappointed with the overall quality of the 800 reproductions," there might be "something seriously amiss" or "woefully inadequate" in the reproductions, and, unfortunately, "most of the color reproductions in the Clarendon edition are dead, lacking the vibrancy that it *is* possible to convey in color reproduction," yes, they even might be "atrociously bad, turning everything to mud" (*italics mine*). This is neither "unaccountable," however, nor is there such an easy way out as Grant continually tries to suggest: someone who, in his own words, "had much responsibility in designing" this edition cannot simply blame the responsibility for its many and "freely acknowledge[d] . . . shortcomings" on the publishers alone—he will at least have to face up to the questions concerning *his* position in the production process.

Grant thinks it interesting that I have attributed that "lack of vitality . . . to the choice of cream-colored paper for printing" (the same observation has been made by Bindman 1981 and by Welch and Viscomi 1981). Though he now seems convinced that "quite possibly this was a contributing factor," he still urges his readers to believe that this was—if not an "unaccountable" then at least—an almost unavoidable shortcoming, referring to "the Yale University Press choice of a much whiter paper for Butlin's 1981 catalogue" which did indeed prove to be "not sufficient to have resulted in [more] satisfactory color reproductions." Grant overlooked or intentionally concealed from his readers, however, that in one of my notes I had said: "It needs no stressing, I suppose, that the use of glossy coated paper [such as in Butlin's 1981 catalogue, that is] would have produced even worse results" (Dörrbecker 1982, p. 137 n.7); what I had advocated was "a similar make of printing paper as, e.g., that used [by the same publishers] for the plates

in Keynes' *Blake Studies*" (Dörrbecker, p. 131).

Two paragraphs further on one encounters yet another misrepresentation of what is actually to be found in my review. There, Grant quotes me as simply "find[ing] 'those beautiful wide margins' (p. 136) one of the features of the Clarendon edition that he can whole-heartedly praise"; obviously speaking of the pages with the reproductions, Grant then goes on to tell his readers that he now "consider[s] the margins an aesthetic and scholarly nuisance, a barrier against free access to a major critical and artistic accomplishment . . . useful only for taking notes—for those who can afford to write in such an expensive edition." The quotation and the page reference are both correct; they do not, however, give any sense of the context that these few words have been lifted from. When I happened to mention my taste for wide margins, I did so *sub voce* the introduction in a paragraph dealing with the physical aspects of the production of these volumes. I had made my meaning explicit by speaking of "the lavish layout of the introduction [which] leaves those beautiful wide margins to which we are no longer accustomed" (Dörrbecker 1982, p. 136). Instead, the context of Grant's misleading reference to my "praise" makes it look as if I had meant it to apply to the pages with the reproductions and had thus spoken out for the luxury of a happy few at the expense of "an aesthetic and scholarly nuisance." In connection with W.J.T. Mitchell's review of the *NT* edition, Grant chastises his critic for what he interprets as one "dubious move" amongst others, i.e., the "cutting [of] a rather lengthy quotation from our text." With respect to my "praising" of the wide margins in the text section of the *Complete Edition*, Grant's own procedure must be said to be fairly similar to that which he considers as lacking scholarly integrity in others.

In much the same vein, one might easily add more such corrections to Grant's biased readings of his reviewers, as well as a list of all those questions which were brought forward by the latter but have not been honored with a reply in Grant's article. Instead of offering new arguments to refute these criticisms, Grant has preferred rather to pose new problems. The subject of the inclusion of relief etchings among the "preliminary drawings" for the *NT* watercolors he has passed over in silence, and the same applies, e.g., to questions concerning the dating and the description of some of these drawings (see Paley 1982 and Dörrbecker 1982). The many parallels for designs in this series among Blake's earlier (and later) works which had not been mentioned in the introduction to the Clarendon volumes, but have been pointed out by the reviewers (especially strong on this point are Welch and Viscomi) get almost no mention. The size of the reproductions is still spoken of as if it almost met with that of the originals, while in fact the reduction by approximately

30% is quite considerable. It can be effectively experienced in any library where there is a chance to place the present imperial quarto volumes side by side with copies of either Keynes' 1927 portfolio or the imperial folio publication of the Gray illustrations (which, of course, are about the same size as the *NT* watercolors in the originals) edited by Herbert Grierson in 1922.

Then, in Grant's final chapter, some strange theories about the chronological sequence in the production of the plates for the 1797 edition are brought forward which I find hard to reconcile with what I know about printmaking processes in general, and with what Robert Essick has taught us about Blake's personal techniques in particular. I wish to conclude, however, with a few remarks not concerning the "indication of the capacities of the present Blake community to deal with Blake's most extensive project in visionary criticism," but rather its capacity for scholarly discourse and fair play.⁶

While there has been much talk about the sister-arts tradition in Blake criticism ever since Jean Hagsstrum discovered the topic for us some twenty years ago, the relation between *some* of the literary critics who have made the study of Blake's multimedia productions the center of their scholarly activities and the (still too few) art historians who have ever dared to intrude into this field of study seems to be characterized by feelings of distrust and competition rather than by a desire for cooperation. Suspending their twentieth-century critical judgment and taking Blake's artist's ideology (which of course *is* fascinating) for their own, some literary critics like Grant allow themselves to see in Sebastiano Ricci just "one of the also-rans," and a superb "Pollaiuolo" [sic] painting to them is merely an orthographical problem and "a red herring"—figuratively at least. I shall not ask how many minutes or hours Grant has ever devoted to the study of Ricci's masterpieces at Venice, and I shall not enlarge on the reasons which made me choose this artist of the late baroque as an adequate *contrary* to Blake who yet was capable of executing a painting of the resurrection which would have had all the same iconographic ingredients that are listed by Grant and his fellow editors for Blake's *NT* 264, but would have had a widely differing meaning because of artistic elements for which there seems to be no room in the mode of description that has been chosen for the introduction to the Clarendon edition. Also, and especially since Grant finds my view of *NT* 20 "conceivable" at least, I am not worried about the fact that he misinterpreted my reference in note 21 to the Pollaiuolo's London altarpiece as an attempt to supply "counterevidence," where in fact it had been quoted as an example for a well-known pictorial technique for rendering three-dimensional, "statuesque" phenomena into the two-dimensional picture plane by showing the same type of figure or object in both front and back views, a device which has been

described in Leonardo's *Trattato della pittura* and many other Renaissance texts concerned with the *paragone* between the arts of sculpture and painting.

So what does worry me is (1) John Grant's evident reluctance to even look at paintings which have no Blakean license and no *immediate* bearing on the interpretation of one of Blake's own works, and (2) his tendency to prescribe such reluctance as a prerequisite for the well-attuned Blake scholar in general. I must protest against Grant's implication that a *credo* has to be sworn before one attains the right to speak up in the round of the self-declared group of the initiated, the closed circle of the "properly attuned" readers and viewers of Blake, just as I have to protest when he equates my attempt "to distance [myself] from 'Blake enthusiasts'" with an attempt to distance myself from an appreciation of Blake's artistic achievements. The recognition of and esteem for the latter, however, by no means require us to actually see Blake as Michelangelo's equal, or to despise the achievements of Rubens and all those other "also-rans," or to level the existing differences between Blake's masterpieces and his less successful works, or to believe for oneself in *each* of Blake's aesthetic claims.

I was not the first, of course, and probably won't be the last to find fault with the overall quality of the *NT* series as a whole. Hagstrum, for instance, whose review has been singled out by Grant as one of the two "favorable" ones he mentions, also agreed that "not all Blake's designs for Young are masterpieces, though some most assuredly are" (Hagstrum 1982, p. 339). With this, both David Bindman's and my own "common sense opinion" are in perfect conformity, and in no place did I ever question what Grant has to say about the presence of "some great pictures" in this series. I am glad to learn that Grant does not entertain any futile hopes "to improve [my art historian's] taste for Blake," which is neither needed nor asked for, but I wonder how in the future he is going to behave towards a less "exceptionally specific negative" reviewer like Jean Hagstrum, who has done so much for our knowledge of the *NT* designs.

Criticism, to be intelligible, will always have to be based on arguments that allow for their verification or falsification through others; therefore, it seems to be Grant's dilemma that as a literary critic he must, if not accept, then at least take seriously those thoughts which he now tries to ridicule as "Grecian mocks," while as a reader he deeply sympathizes with their condemnation by Blake. By means of a subjective and naive identification with the objects of his studies and their author, Grant may well imagine himself to be the "more properly attuned reader." Yet the quality of his scholarship will still have to be submitted to an examination on the basis of rational criteria, and therefore may well be the object of more such "Grecian mocks." In any case, the use of a few Blakean quotations in an attempt to accuse

a colleague of heresy is not likely to advance our knowledge, and it seems particularly out of tune with an essay which itself complains about one reviewer's "unscholarly way" of trying "to poke fun" at the editors of the *NT* edition. Therefore, and until Grant is willing to comply with his own earlier methodological standards, I shall feel rather happy in the company of such scholars and more open-minded friends as Paley, Bindman, Viscomi, Mitchell, and—"the connoisseurs in all ages."

¹ These abbreviated references, which I shall use throughout, can easily be completed with the help of the Bibliography in Grant's response, above.

² Karen A. Gabbett-Mulhallen's dissertation had—correctly—been listed for the year 1975 on p. 83, item 84, of the "Checklist of Studies and Reproductions" in vol. 1 of the Clarendon edition, while Gillian M. Hill's 1972 Exeter Ph.D. thesis was not even mentioned there. It had been included, however, in Bentley's checklist of Blake dissertations which was printed in whole number 49 of this journal. Grant himself gives the correct date for Mulhallen's thesis in a different paragraph of his rebuke; it has been generally "available for study" since at least 1979 through University Microfilms International, but probably would have been available to the editors much earlier if they had asked the author for permission to use her unpublished study in preparation for their own introduction and commentary on the *NT* series.

³ It just may be that Grant misunderstood what I had said concerning the criteria for "cautious value judgments" (Dörrbecker 1982, p. 130); the respective sentence, however, clearly applies to Blake's original watercolors, *not* to the quality of the reproductions in Grant's edition.

⁴ See phrases such as "only when compared with the originals," or "to list the major discrepancies between the original designs and their reproductions" (Dörrbecker 1982, pp. 131 and 132), which certainly imply that recourse to the *NT* watercolors had supplied the reviewer with the decisive criteria for his evaluation of the reliability of the Clarendon halftones and color offset plates.

⁵ I think there is no need here to outline the sort of editorial responsibility I had been speaking of; a perfect example for such responsible editorship and for the kind of editorial report which is lacking from the *NT* edition has been established by Morris Eaves when in whole number 31 of the *Blake Newsletter*, 8 (Winter 1974-1975), 86-88, he told us what it means to embark on "Reproducing 'The Characters of Spenser's *Faerie Queene*.'" This article—which rightly remarked that "an account of this sort is not the custom in fine-art reproduction, but . . . should be"—will be fairly well known to Grant since ironically it had been prompted by the printing of a color reproduction which accompanied as interpretative essay written by himself in collaboration with Robert E. Brown.

⁶ First, however, I have to point out that of course my own review is not entirely free from fault. There remain a number of typographical errors which I had overlooked, and, in my note 14, I stupidly presented Joseph Farington as the Royal Academy's "secretary," a post which the diarist never held. Also, I now regret some rather polemical asides—in the review, not in the present reply to Grant's above article—and I have to accept Grant's justified chiding of one of my own paragraphs as being "ill-coordinated," as well as of my all too hasty and careless rejection of the possibly meaningful connection between *ARO* 10 and *NT* 264 in my note 24.

NEWSLETTER

SUPPLEMENT TO *BLAKE RECORDS*

G.E. Bentley, Jr. has been commissioned by Oxford University Press to prepare a supplement to *Blake Records* and would deeply appreciate and gratefully acknowledge being told of any hitherto unpublished references to the poet or his family before the death of his wife in 1831—or even down to the publication of Gilchrist in 1863. The work is already in draft, and therefore it is desirable that suggestions should be sent to him soon at University College, University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario M5S 1A1 Canada or, before 1 July 1985, to the Old Forge, Shilton, Oxfordshire, OX8 4AD, England.

FRYE ON FILM

"The Scholar in Society: Northrop Frye in Conversation," a half-hour documentary film prepared by the National Film Board of Canada, features a discussion with Northrop Frye about the role of the humanities in the University and the relation between education in language and reading and the ability of people to function fully and freely in society. Mark L. Greenberg, who served as Literary Consultant to the filmmakers, and who secretly wishes there were more of Frye on Blake, nevertheless believes Blakean will find the film inspiring. It was screened at the 1984 MLA Convention by a large and appreciative audience. Those interested in obtaining either a 16 mm print or a video format should contact Ms. Mary Jane Terrell, National Film Board of Canada, 1251 Avenue of the Americas—16th floor, New York, NY 10020.

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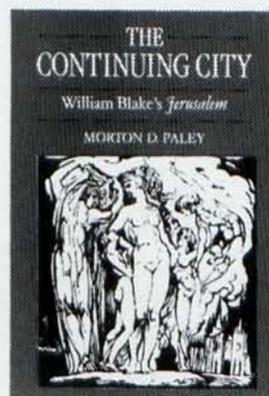
William Blake's *Jerusalem*

MORTON D. PALEY,
University of California, Berkeley

Jerusalem was the longest and most ambitious work Blake published using his unique method of illuminated printing. In this book—the first full-length study of *Jerusalem* to take into account the enormous development of Blake scholarship over the past twenty years—Morton Paley views Blake as a participant in several traditions: poetic, artistic, and political.

Beginning with an examination of Blake's relationship to these traditions and his individual manner of appropriating and adapting them, Paley proposes a method of "reading" Blake's designs, demonstrating this method with a detailed exposition of some of the major plates, many of which are reproduced in the book. The second part of the book discusses the two central myths of *Jerusalem*: that of humanity in its tormented sexual division, and that of the poet's struggle to unite his female counterpart, his own spectral aspect, and his imaginative self. The book closes with an exposition of the form of the entire work.

1984 364 pp.; 22 illus. (2 in color) \$57.00



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