



*Blake*

AN ILLUSTRATED QUARTERLY  
VOLUME 21 NUMBER 1 SPRING 1988

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# Blake

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# Blake As Conceived: The Endurance of S. Foster Damon

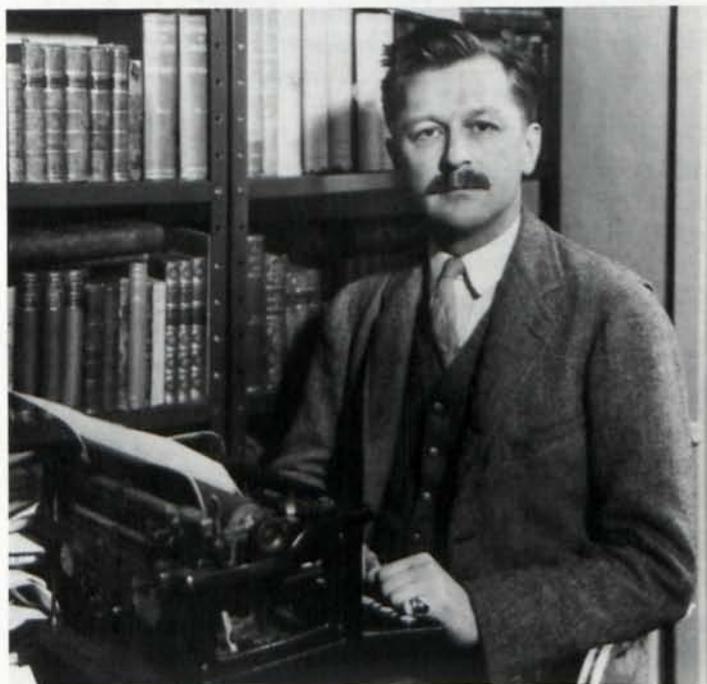
BY MORRIS EAVES

"The study of Blake inevitably leads to controversy; the reader of this dictionary might never guess that there was anything but an agreed orthodoxy." (anon. rev., "Guides to a New Language," 3 Oct. 1968)

S. Foster Damon was the young Turk of Blake studies when *William Blake: His Philosophy and Symbols* was published in 1924. He was "the patriarch of Blake studies" (Bloom rev., 24) when *A Blake Dictionary: The Ideas and Symbols of William Blake* was published in 1965. As I write this preface, *Philosophy and Symbols* is more than 63 years old, *A Blake Dictionary* more than 22, and Damon has been dead since 1971. It's fair to ask what *A Blake Dictionary* is good for at this late hour. Though Damon loved to pore over patriarchal tomes himself, he would have understood that people entering strange territory want up-to-date guidebooks. When I started getting serious about Blake, my guides were Northrop Frye's *Fearful Symmetry* (1947), David Erdman's *Blake: Prophet against Empire* (1954), and Damon's *Dictionary*. That was 1968, after all, and the *Dictionary* was nearly new. But today I'd still endorse my own experience: if Blake is where you're going, Frye, Erdman, and Damon should be your guides. As an introductory offer they remain unbeatable.

To understand the power of the *Dictionary* in this durable trio, we start with the recognition that Damon's lifetime coincided with the institutionalization of Blake. The process began well before Damon arrived on the scene and may continue indefinitely, but the crucial decades were those bracketed by Damon's Blake books. From the 1920s through the 1960s, various factors cooperated to assign to the name "William Blake" a set of attributes and a location in history. The rough consensus

Reprinted with minor alterations from S. Foster Damon's *A Blake Dictionary*, by permission of the University Press of New England, ©1988. A paperback edition of the second printing of Damon's *Dictionary*, with a new preface, an annotated bibliography, and index by Morris Eaves, will be issued in April 1988 by the University Press of New England.



Damon c. 1936. Photograph courtesy of Brown University Library.

achieved during Damon's lifetime is by and large the one we are still operating with today—the one that leads us to expect to find William Blake at home in one of the six slots allotted to the so-called major English romantic poets in standard textbooks devoted to the standard subject of English romantic poetry.

To the extent that the Blake of Damon's *Philosophy and Symbols* is the same as the Blake of the *Dictionary* in most essentials, the *Dictionary* is an annotated index to its own predecessor. The sustained equilibrium in the meaning of "Blake" that made it possible for a book published in 1965 to re-present a book published in 1924 has less to do with the consistency of the author than with the consistency of the scholarly institutions

within which he operated. Not that he or they never changed or learned anything new during all those years. But the fact that the Blake Damon calls to memory for his *Dictionary* is very largely the Blake first assembled for his *Philosophy and Symbols* four decades earlier confirms not just Damon's stubborn faith in his own critical powers but also the capacity of institutions to remember what they need to remember and to build on that memory while staunchly forgetting what they need to forget.

"Damon's . . . *Philosophy and Symbols* (1924) has been the foundation stone on which all modern interpretations of Blake have built" (Bateson rev., 25). Having laid the foundation in the 1920s, it was only proper for the pioneer to return to it in the 1960s with a late scholarly tribute to his own work. By then a flourishing public building was standing on the site, occupied by a mostly academic staff that some observers (not I) have identified as the middle management of a veritable Blake industry. As a scholarly resource, Damon's *Dictionary* has stood up as well as it has for as long as it has because it belongs to that collective effort. Some reviewers pointed out what they saw as a discrepancy between the impersonality of a proper dictionary and the "eccentric and occasionally oracular" (Erdman rev., 607) personality of this one. Damon himself played up the independence that made his compilation *A*, not *The Blake Dictionary*: "It is not the intention of this book to compile digests of the works of other scholars or to confute their theories. I have felt it better to make a new start and to attempt to present fresh evaluations of Blake's symbols" (*Dictionary*, xii). To the contrary: at the nucleus the *Dictionary* is precisely a digest of Damon's ideas that had become common property—refined, expanded, and occasionally changed under the influence of other scholars's ideas that he had found congenial. Consequently, even as he insisted on his independence, he regularly acknowledged his institutional position, as with his gestures toward scholarly posterity: "When a final answer has not been possible, I have tried to assemble the material for others to work on" (*Dictionary*, xii; also xi). Many of the parts of other scholars's works that Damon refused to digest were, after all, the peripheral parts for which no consensus yet existed. And his own attempts at "new" starts and "fresh evaluations" are, for the most part, simply the parts of the *Dictionary* one must learn to ignore. Fortunately those are few, and they usually advertise their own peculiarity.

The best reason for studying Damon is neither to acquire a real English Blake from the bowels of history nor a curiosity Blake from the fascinating mind of an eccentric scholar but to acquire the Blake that unglamorously satisfies the rules and requirements of our institutions of artistic memory, in which Damon lived and thrived. He later said it himself, with irony and unmistakable pride: "At last, Blake was academically respect-

able" ("How I Discovered Blake," 3)—made respectable by an academic whose work of Blake scholarship had been rejected by Harvard as too inconsequential to merit a Ph.D. Thus what we have before us in the *Dictionary* is undeniably a sturdy Blake, well crafted for the very purpose of being remembered, read, taught, and written about within our institutions of reading, teaching, and writing. Of course, despite its endurance, we would never want to mistake this brilliantly conceived Blake for the only conceivable Blake. Nor, however, can we pretend that we presently know *how* to conceive any other Blake of comparable usefulness. In short, the essence of the Blake who materializes in the pages of Damon's *Dictionary* is nothing less than the presently indispensable Blake. And only that indispensability makes it matter in the least that the *Dictionary* is "a rich treasury embodying the results of a lifetime of masterly and devoted research into every aspect of Blake's work and thought" (Pinto rev., 153). Yes, the treasury is rich. Equally important, it is the coin of the realm.

Needless to say, Damon's academically respectable Blake did not come from nowhere. Even by 1924 the way had been well prepared. The single most important event in the history of Blake's reputation had already occurred. It was, essentially, a solution to the problem of Blake's double mastery of words and pictures, which made it very difficult to achieve a good fit between Blake's works and the structures that commit poets and painters to different kinds of institutional memory. Today's academic division between departments of art and departments of English reflects and extends a separation with an extensive history both inside and outside institutions of higher education. Though it has become routine in the later twentieth century to celebrate Blake's magnificent twofold achievement in art and literature, that boast could only begin to register effectively at a certain ripe and recent historical moment. Until then, for all practical purposes Blake's doubleness was a kind of duplicity, an indigestible alliance, like a dessert combined with an entrée.

Blake died, after all, in 1827 as an engraver and painter in a circle that included mainly engravers, painters, and buyers of art. He was barely known to the writers such as Wordsworth and Coleridge with whom he is now yoked in anthologies of English romantic poetry. As that pair of statements indicates, the fundamental change in Blake's reputation occurred when history found a way to conclude that he is essentially a poem-maker rather than a picture-maker. The change began to come on strongly in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, with the efforts of Algernon Charles Swinburne, William Michael Rossetti, and others to produce editions of Blake's poems. Since many of those "poems" were originally crafted as "illuminated books" in "illuminated printing"—usually relief-etched and watercolored com-

binations of text and design—they were doomed to run afoul of the institutional standards for poetic legibility. The first duty of an editor is to present poems. We all know what poems look like: in such an edition pictures may be present as ornaments and illustrations but not as integral poetic ingredients.

Blake the printmaker and painter was not forgotten; in some narrow circles his art was even revered. But on the larger cultural stage the emphasis was steadily shifting from the visual element in his work to the verbal, and the memories of his literary and artistic work were being stored ever more systematically in separate cultural compartments. The institutions of literacy edited the illuminated books into poems, lowering the visual component to the status of the ornamental and the dispensable. Meanwhile, the institutions of imagery operated by art historians, collectors, and curators looked past the illuminated books—the mainstay, curiously, of Blake's literary reputation—toward the categories of Blake's oeuvre where pictures rather than words are primary, because there he most clearly conforms to the conventional definition of a visual artist.

These moves to separate words from images were portentous. On the side of the literary institutions, where most of the action was, the decision to regard the component of visual design in Blake's product as a separate rather than integral part of his work had the curious effect of transforming the design component from a disadvantage (how does one reproduce these illuminated plates for consumption; having reproduced them, how does one read them?) to a minor advantage. As long as Blake's visual art did not have to be coordinated systematically with the verbal in the process of interpreting, the visual art could signal his surplus creativity—his difference from the norm and even from the five romantic poets to whom his future was beginning to be tied. Thus, as long as the illuminated books did not have to be reproduced as illuminated books, as long as they could be edited, printed, interpreted, and taught as poems, the visual element of the work could serve handily as a kind of place-holder in accounts of Blake, marking his difference from the rest of his poetic family. Meanwhile, in the practice of literary criticism the visual element could have the (diminished) role of an optional rhetorical opportunity rather than a haunting, forbidding obligation that no practicing critic would know how to live up to. Moreover, as the burden of responsibility for Blake's reputation shifted from the institutions of art history and art collecting to the institutions of literary history and criticism, some major impediments to a favorable appraisal of Blake—such as the entrenched orthodox standards of drawing—became much more manageable. After all, the literary types in whose hands Blake's fortunes lay cared little and knew less about such orthodoxies.

It was not for nothing, then, that Foster Damon traced the beginning of his serious study of Blake to a literary edition: "The present study of the philosophy and symbols of William Blake was begun ten years ago, when Dr. Sampson's edition of *Blake's Poetical Works* made most of the texts accessible in their correct form" (*Philosophy and Symbols*, vii). Sampson's edition had in fact first been published in 1905 but Damon used the "Oxford Edition" of 1913, 1914, and later printings. In any event, we can see from his comment how Sampson's meticulous edition had helped codify a conception of Blake the poet. Now the question would be, what kind of poet? — *ans.* a sort of modernist. Damon's "ten years ago" had been around 1914, one of the three years when the older William Butler Yeats and the younger Ezra Pound spent the winter at Stone Cottage in Sussex together, plotting the next stage in the history of modern poetry. "Philosophy and symbols" had already become part of that history and were destined to become much more important parts with Yeats's increasing devotion to the kind of philosophical symbolism that culminated in *A Vision* (1925). Blake had already influenced the development of Yeats's symbolism, and Yeats with his collaborator Edwin J. Ellis had edited Blake's complete works with two volumes of commentary in 1893. Damon once called the first volume "unreadable" ("How I Discovered Blake," 2)—and indeed it took a Foster Damon to write a readable replacement for Yeats and Ellis—but that should not be taken to suggest that we can understand Damon's Blake without understanding the decisive alliance between Blake's literary fortunes and the fortunes of modernism.

Blake's system-making, his blend of psychology with religion, his exalted claims for the powers of art, the difficulty of his work, and his failure to win an audience in his lifetime are only a few of the several factors that cooperated to make him a potential artist-hero and guardian angel of a significant filament of modern poetry—not necessarily the strand that was spare and taut in its verbal standards, but the mythopoeic strand that wanted to make poetry the cult-object for an elite society of initiates who would deal only in the deepest, most significant kinds of knowledge of which the world at large was unworthy. This helps to explain why Damon's Blake is "definitely a mystic," as Damon says he discovered by reading William James's *Varieties of Religious Experience* ("How I Discovered Blake," 2). We would hardly be the first to notice that Damon's Blake is a mystic of a particularly artistic persuasion, for whom the traditional goal of seeing the face of God becomes a vision of imagination—a magico-aesthetic mysticism closer to the Order of the Golden Dawn, the late nineteenth-century occultists, and poets like Yeats than to the author of *The Cloud of Unknowing*.

We haven't space here to trace the affiliations with modernism that helped shape an academically respectable Blake: a mystic but also, as Damon's title advertises, a philosopher and symbolist. In the game of institutionalization finding powerful metaphors is an important maneuver, and Damon's three favorites had all the right connections at the time. But in the long run Blake-mystic and, to a large extent, Blake-symbolist, at least, fell away as inadequate anachronisms. Their historical connections with the period of Blake's discovery, the roughly fifty years from 1875 to 1925, became more apparent than their connections with Blake's texts. But a variety of other, analogous terms have had to be brought in as substitutes, simply because *some* mode of identification is required.

The metaphors continue to shift, but so far the general need that they try to satisfy has changed much less. R. P. Blackmur once expressed that need well in his essay on "A Critic's Job of Work," which uses Damon's own *Philosophy and Symbols* as an example of that job properly done: ". . . Mr. Damon made Blake exactly what he seemed least to be, perhaps the most intellectually consistent of the greater poets in English" (qtd. Morton D. Paley in Damon, "How I Discovered Blake," 3n). Blackmur registers precisely the combination of surprise and relief that has become characteristic of Blake's reputation—or, we might say, characteristic of the narrative that is told repeatedly to justify his inclusion among the "greater poets." At least in the twentieth century, the *surprise of discovering a poet* who is *consistent* has been a reliable part of the stories that readers tell about their relationships with Blake, and those four terms have been basic indices of his place in our literary institutions.

In discussing the literary elements in the growth of Blake's reputation, I would not want to give the impression that Damon's *Philosophy and Symbols* eliminated Blake's art from consideration. To some extent, especially by comparison with the literary scholars who would come later, he did the opposite. The last section of *Philosophy and Symbols* commented, however briefly, on each plate of the illuminated books, while other books on Blake often left the designs unmentioned. But Damon segregated the designs into little clusters under the heading "decorations," interpreted them as extensions of meanings gleaned first from the poetry, and relegated them to the back of his book where they can easily be forgotten. The best evidence of their forgettability comes with the *Dictionary*, where Damon eliminates the design component of illuminated printing as a subject of systematic discussion. The justification for doing so—in a presumably unabridged Blake dictionary that one literary-minded reviewer called "extraordinarily comprehensive" (Bateson rev., 25)—is left implicit. It is again, of course, the metaphor that made most twentieth-

century advances in the study of Blake possible: Blake is a poet. And he is that kind of poet who uses words as "tools . . . to rouse with thought" (*Philosophy and Symbols*, xi), a philosopher. As Damon said emphatically, "*Jerusalem*, as pure poetry, is obviously inferior to the *Songs of Innocence*. . . . *Blake was not trying to make literature*. Truth, not pleasure, is the object of all his writings" (his emphasis; *Philosophy and Symbols*, 63).

As Damon indicated, to find Blake the thinker one travels well beyond *Songs of Innocence* ("The lyrics are in every anthology; yet professors of literature wonder if the epics are worth reading!" *Philosophy and Symbols*, ix) into the territory of the "epics" (as *Jerusalem* can be termed only if considered a literary work), where thought takes precedence over pleasure—as it must, if Blake is to be taken seriously enough to deserve his place beside Wordsworth and Coleridge. Damon passed this version of Blake the philosopher into literary history, where it was eventually taken up by Northrop Frye, who depended fundamentally upon the model of Blake designed by Damon. The Blake of *Fearful Symmetry* (1947) is even more exclusively a writer than Damon's, an even more profound thinker, and an even more consistent one. Frye's Blake is no longer a mystic—the appeal of that metaphor had dissolved in the mists of modernism—but he is very much a philosopher. When Damon combined philosophy and symbolism he got mysticism; when Frye combined them he got myth. Myth, for Frye, is not unlike mysticism for Damon: both are terms for thinking at a particularly profound level that in previous centuries would have been identified with religion. Damon would not refuse to allow that Blake was a Christian, but he knew he had to be an especially appealing kind of Christian, a "Gnostic" Christian, said Damon (*Philosophy and Symbols*, xi), or a mystic. Frye went a step further by relentlessly exploiting the implications of a new metaphor: religion, deeply considered and thawed out, is poetry. Both draw on the same myths. Blake's revelations as a thinker, then, are myths that reveal the fundamental nature of poetry itself.

David Erdman, the third member of our trio of resources, came in to do a job that desperately needed doing by the mid-1950s. He relied heavily on the Blake of Damon and Frye, the philosophically consistent thinker more poet than painter and more interested in truth than pleasure, as the basis for *Blake: Prophet against Empire* (1954). Erdman's great revision in the licensed image of Blake involved little change at the base. Damon and Frye's Blake was a man of universal ideas; we learn to read him by reading through a confusing welter of particulars into general patterns of thought. Erdman's Blake we read in reverse, back from those general patterns of thought into particulars, and then we use the

particulars to align the patterns with everyday events in London. Erdman's work augmented the impression already established of a *profound* Blake, whose concern, though with everyday events, was with the most elevated aspect of those events: liberty, justice, fraternity, equality. In bringing him down to earth, Erdman paradoxically managed to create an even more formidable Blake, a both-and rather than an either-or thinker whose poems could deliver simultaneously profound truths about poetry and equally profound reactions to local events. And, like Damon and Frye, Erdman reinforced the element of surprise in discovering again a consistent thinker, this time a consistent social and political thinker, where before we saw none. When Damon returned with his *Dictionary* two decades after Frye's book and a decade after Erdman's, he had no trouble recognizing the Blake he found. This augmented, fortified, and considerably refined Blake, though now a celebrity much in demand to ornament the books of scientists, literary theorists, theologians, and philosophers, was still recognizably the Blake whom Damon had introduced to the academy in the 1920s, now ready to be represented by a scholarly instrument as impartial and consensual as a dictionary.

From our vantage point more than two decades later, we can now see that Damon's *Dictionary* arrived just in time to signal the end of an era of definition and the beginning of an era of rapid consolidation and codification—with, certainly, some evolution. As many significant additions to our knowledge of Blake as there have been over the years since the *Dictionary*, most have been additions to the base. One important alternative image has been a changing, as opposed to a consistent, Blake. We might speculate about what motivated the creators of a monolithically stable Blake: the need to hold a difficult subject still long enough to get a focused likeness, perhaps, and, more important, the need to deny the possibility that Blake might be intellectually erratic—even insane. If so, then a consistent Blake was the required precursor of any (memorable) Blake less consistent. The way for a Blake who changes his ideas significantly over the course of his life was already prepared for to some extent by Erdman, whose focus on political ideology almost necessarily brought change into the picture, though it must be said that Erdman's Blake is notable for his stubborn refusal to change with the tides of English opinion on the French Revolution—and in that way belongs in the family with Damon's and Frye's.

The more important product of our new knowledge is a Blake more in line with the historically situated engraver and painter. Although the advances in understanding Blake as an artist have been major, nonetheless they have chiefly proceeded from the prior understanding of Blake as a writer and remain subsidiary. The main categories of analysis have been preserved. In fact, with a very few notable exceptions, most of the scholarship on



Damon c. 1961. Photograph courtesy of Brown University Library.

Blake's visual art has been done by English professors working out of their areas of specialization. Understandably, they have eased the difficulties of their transition by importing their literary understanding of Blake. In their terms, Blake the artist works by analogy alongside Blake the writer. Meanwhile, the position of Blake among the art historians has not altered profoundly in recent years. He has greater name recognition among them and perhaps somewhat greater respectability, and, at last, a relatively complete kit of scholarly tools for art historians. Even after these modifications to the scholarly base, however, so far no rumblings in recent art history suggest an imminent change comparable to Blake's twentieth-century ascendancy among the romantic poets.

The nineteenth century made it impossible for readers of the twentieth to "discover" Wordsworth or Keats. The same fate may befall Blake in the twenty-first century. W. J. T. Mitchell's often cited article on "Dangerous Blake" recognized the sobersidedness and the unmitigated sublimity characteristic of the established Blake. Mitchell's prophecy that "we are about to rediscover the dangerous Blake, the angry, flawed, Blaké, the crank . . . the ingrate, the sexist, the madman, the religious fanatic, the tyrannical husband, the second-rate draughtsman" (410–11) seemed a symptom of the need to reinstitute surprise in the Blake canon—and of a fear that a Blake who can't surprise his readers may not be able to hold his place. In the half-decade since Mitchell's article, though progress has continued, no new era has begun. Meanwhile, however, the consolidated Blake holds his own, along with Frye's *Fearful Symmetry*, Erd-

man's *Blake: Prophet against Empire*, and Damon's *Blake Dictionary*, to make them the oldest surviving threesome in literary studies of comparable influence, and, to my knowledge, the best. Not that there is any reason to suppose that we have seen our last Blake. Like all such "figures," as we call them, in the history of the arts, Blake is one name that can cover many mutable and even incompatible things. Literary and art history have called many Blakes to our attention and will call many more. Many are called, but few are chosen.

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## Thomas Stothard

### The Mechanisms of Art Patronage in England circa 1800

Shelley M. Bennett

Although Thomas Stothard (1755-1834) was one of the most prolific and highly esteemed illustrators of his time and a close associate of John Flaxman and William Blake, today he is little known. Bennett examines the reasons for Stothard's decline in reputation and shows how his work reveals the changing nature of the artist's role in the increasingly industrialized society of turn-of-the-century England.

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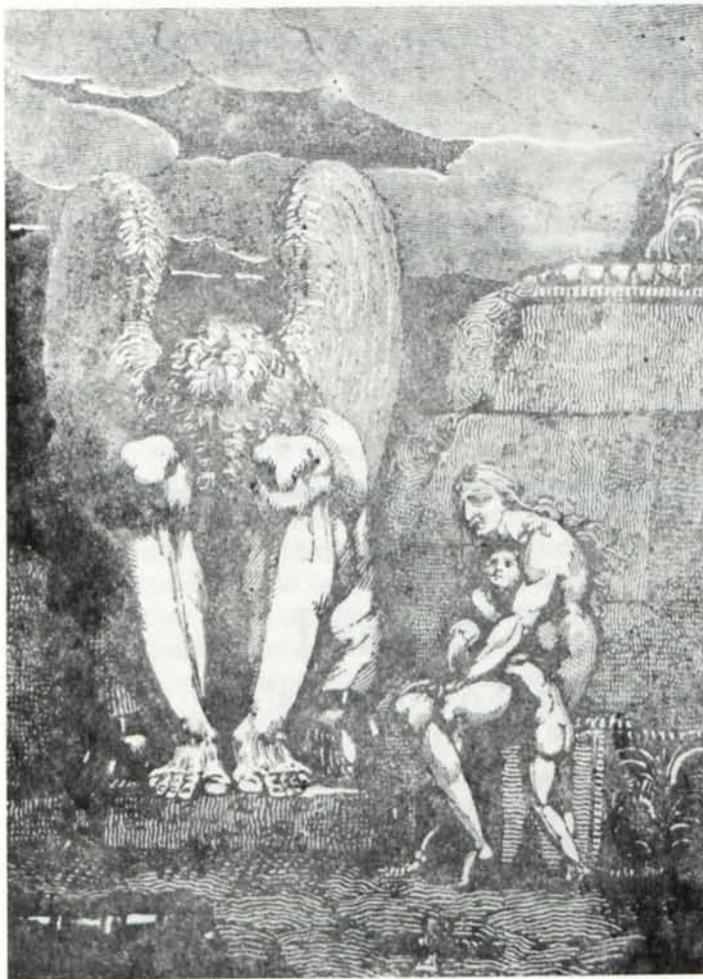
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## MINUTE PARTICULARS

### The Resurrection of *America* Copy R

Robert N. Essick



1. Blake. *America*, copy R, frontispiece (pl. 1). Relief and white-line etching, 23.4 x 16.9 cm., printed in blue ink. Photo courtesy of Christie's New York.

Copy R of Blake's *America* has been known for many years only through fragmentary accounts in sale catalogues and the more direct but dubious evidence offered by William Muir's facsimile. The original volume came to light in 1987, precisely one hundred years after the publication of Muir's lithographic imitation and, according to *Blake Books*, its last recorded appearance in the marketplace!<sup>1</sup> The return of copy R to public notice permits a more accurate description of its characteristics

and its history of ownership than has heretofore been available in the literature on Blake's illuminated books.

The volume in question was consigned by a Philadelphia collector for auction by Christie's New York in the summer of 1987. Christie's and one of its bibliographic consultants at first believed the book to be a lithographic facsimile. Seeking another opinion, the auction house sent the book by air express to Thomas V. Lange, Associate Curator of Rare Books at the Huntington Library, San Marino, California. Some years ago, Lange discovered the two lithographic plates in *America* copy B (Pierpont Morgan Library, New York), thereby demonstrating his considerable expertise at discriminating between Blake's originals and forgeries or facsimiles.<sup>2</sup> Lange immediately recognized the volume as an original illuminated book printed by Blake. Thanks to Lange's generosity, and the kind permission of Stephen Massey and Chris Coover of Christie's Book Department, I was allowed to inspect the book while it was at the Huntington.

I base my identification of the rediscovered *America* as copy R on its relationship to Muir's 1887 facsimile. The latter is printed on rectos only, whereas the original contains eighteen plates on ten leaves, with plates 1 and 2 (frontispiece and title page) facing each other on separate leaves and the remainder of the plates printed recto/verso.<sup>3</sup> Further, the plates of the original exhibit a considerable range in blue and green ink colors, and these are not followed closely in the facsimile. There is, however, one convincing type of evidence linking Blake's book and Muir's. Almost all impressions from Blake's relief-etched copperplates have some "foul" inking—that is, droplets or smudges of ink in the etched whites or on incompletely wiped relief borders. Some patterns of foul inking appear on more than one impression of a single plate, but the vast majority of impressions have some unique features. It would be almost a statistical impossibility for two copies of an illuminated book the length of *America* to have the same accidental ink deposits throughout all their impressions. Muir's facsimile does not reproduce every tiny droplet in the rediscovered *America*, but more than enough smudges and dots are shared by the two works to make it virtually certain that the original is the prototype Muir used for his partly photographic, partly hand-drawn, lithographic copy. For example, the original frontispiece (illus. 1) shows some rather messy over-inking that clogs the white interstices of black-line crosshatching just to the left of the winged giant's right leg. A very similar inking effect appears in Muir's work. The smudges to the left of the "A" of "AMERICA" on the title page, between the "E" and the "R," and most other ink deposits visible in illus. 2 are captured by Muir (see illus. 3). He also reproduces the shadow lines of foul inking just inside the white cloud bearing the text on plate 10 (illus. 4).

The basic physical features of *America* copy R can be most conveniently set forth under the following specific headings.

**Plate States:** Plate 13 is in the second state, with only one tail on the serpent, as in copies A–D, H, M–Q. All other plates are in the published states appearing in all other complete copies.

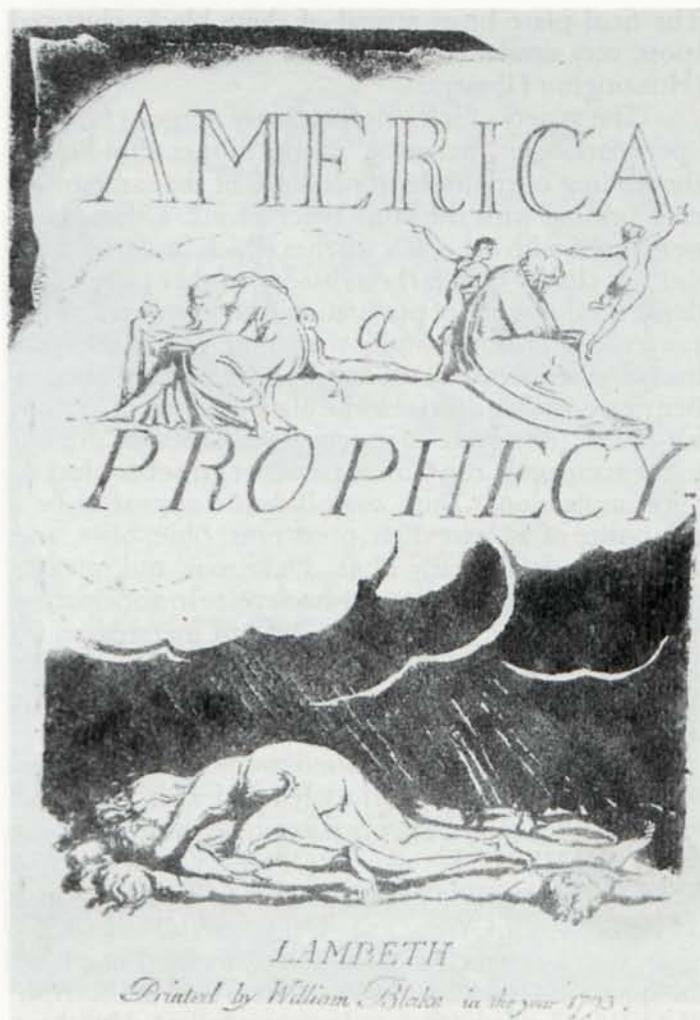
**Paper:** Ten leaves of wove paper trimmed to 36.4 x 25.5 cm. The fifth leaf, bearing plates 7 and 8, shows the watermark "E & P" lower left (when viewed from the recto). Blake used this paper, manufactured by Edmeads and Pine, in at least twenty other copies of his illuminated books, including seven other copies of *America* (C–E, G–K [there is no J]). The leaves were cleaned in this century (see *Provenance*, below) and apparently dried under heavy pressure. As a result, there is no indication of the light platemarks almost always present in unwashed impressions of Blake's relief plates. The absence of these slight indentations, and the rather flat appearance of the inked areas, probably contributed to the now-rejected opinion that the volume is a lithographic facsimile. The blank recto of the frontispiece is slightly stained; the title leaf has a pinhole, now patched, left of the imprint. The recto of the fifth leaf (pls. 7/8) shows slight foxing along the right margin. The sixth leaf (pls. 9/10) has a short tear, about 1 cm. long, at the top edge with some loss of paper. A small circular stain mars the flames lower right on plate 17; plate 18 is slightly foxed and bears a small stain over the "s" of "bands" in the seventh line from the bottom.

**Inking and Printing:** Many plates show bold reticulations in the ink, much as in the dark sky above the prone figures at the bottom of the title-page design (illus. 2). These maculated patterns are probably the result of a very viscous ink, insufficiently dampened paper, or a combination of both. The blue and green ink hues vary considerably from plate to plate, as listed below with other information on inking variants.

Plate 1 (illus. 1). Blue.

Plate 2 (illus. 2.). Blue. The top left corner of the etched border and the dark sky between it and the cloud outline are printed with no evidence of wiping. In some copies, this area is partly (e.g., N) or completely (e.g., E) uninked. The border left of the figures above "PROPH-ECY," printed in copies I and N, does not appear in this copy.

Plates 3–8. Blue. The word "*Preludium*," printed from a small separate plate (e), appears above the upper design on plate 3. The final four lines of text on plate 4 have been masked in printing, as in copies B–F, H–M, and a. Some letters on plate 5 are smudged, as though the plate moved slightly in the press, and streaks in etched whites suggest an attempt to wipe away foul inking.



2. Blake. *America*, copy R, title page (pl. 2). Relief and white-line etching, 23.5 x 16.7 cm., printed in blue ink. Photo courtesy of Christie's New York.

Plate 9. Bluish-green tending toward olive along the lower edge of the image.

Plate 10 (illus. 4). Dark olive green.

Plates 11–12. Light blue. Plate 11 (illus. 5) is lightly inked and has several printing flaws in the hatched areas, lower left.

Plate 13. Blue, with over-inked patches in the dark sky.

Plate 14. Blue-green.

Plate 15. Blue.

Plate 16. Light blue.

Plate 17. Light blue-green.

Plate 18. Light green.

A few plates show small black ink spots, perhaps offset or rubbed off from another print when still damp.

The final plate bears several of these black, clustered spots, very similar to those on the same plate in copy I (Huntington Library).

The variety of ink colors strongly suggests printing "per-plate," not "per-copy." By the former term I mean the pulling of multiple impressions of the same plate, each printed with the same batch of ink. Other plates were inked with other ink batches which, in some cases, did not closely match those used for other plates. Evidence for this mode of production is also provided by the existence of multiple copies with more-or-less the same ink color; for example, copies C-G, I-L, all described by Bentley as having at least some plates printed in "greenish-Black" (88). Plate 10 in copy R was probably printed in the same press-run with these other greenish-black or olive impressions. Thus, copy R would appear to be a composite of at least three press-runs: blue, olive, and blue-green. In the early 1790s, Blake took multiple impressions of each illuminated-book plate in anticipation of multiple sales. When these did not materialize, he changed in the later 1790s to per-copy printing of each copy of an illuminated book as a unit, taking only one impression from each plate to create a single volume.

*Binding:* Modern plum-red morocco by Sangorski & Sutcliffe, elaborately gilt tooled and with green and black morocco inlays. Stamped in gilt on the upper front cover, "AMERICA/ A PROPHECY/ WILLIAM BLAKE." Stamped in gilt on the spine, "AMER-/ ICA,/ A/ PROP-/ HECY/ . . ./ WILL-/ IAM/ BLAKE." Housed in a green cloth folding box, lettered in gilt on the spine, "AMERICA/ A/ PROPHECY/ -/ WILLIAM/ BLAKE." The front free endpaper is followed by three fly-leaves, the first of which bears the armorial bookplate of Christine Alexander Graham and (below) a clipping of lot 18 from the 1911 Anderson auction catalogue (see *Provenance*, below). The three front fly-leaves and the three at the end of the volume are variously watermarked "MBM," "Ingres," and "France." The plates are bound consecutively in order, 1 through 18. Foliated in pencil, probably by a binder, 1-10, top right of rectos (including the blank recto of the frontispiece facing the title page). Another pencil number on leaf 8 recto (pl. 13) has been partly erased and is illegible. There is also fragmentary evidence of a pencil inscription, almost completely erased, on the blank verso of the title page. A pencil squiggle below might be the number 2 or 7. None of these pencil inscriptions can be attributed to Blake.

*Hand Tinting:* This copy is properly described as uncolored,<sup>4</sup> but it does show a limited amount of tinting in the colors of the printing inks, probably executed to compensate for poor printing of small details. The hand tinting I have definitely identified as such is as follows:

Plate 3. Branch upper right, both ends of the worm at the bottom, and part of the vegetation below the

bound youth above the text painted in by hand.

Plate 5. Some hand work in blue on the letters of "PROPHECY."

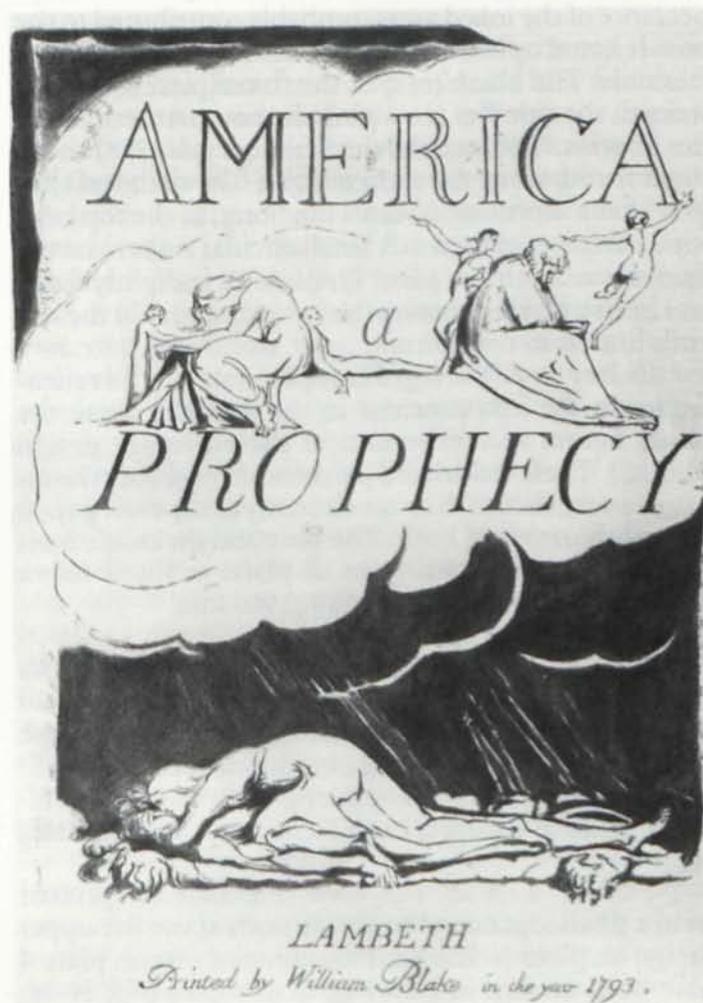
Plate 8. Hand tinting along the outline of the skull and on both shoulders of the seated man.

Christie's 1987 auction catalogue (see *Provenance*, below) includes notes on several other spots of hand tinting. I am less certain of these, except for some strengthening of letters in the text, but the catalogue descriptions deserve recording here:

Plate 3. "Lightly strengthened in pen and ink by Blake in . . . the figures at top . . . and the calligraphic verses."

Plate 4. "Lightly strengthened . . . in a few places (several letters in the verses, the tree roots at bottom)."

Plate 6. "Lightly strengthened . . . in a number of places (the nose of the wyvern, many of the initial capitals in the calligraphic verses, the rocks at bottom)."



3. William Muir. Facsimile of Blake's *America*, 1887. Lithographic reproduction of the title page, printed in green and hand-tinted in the same color. 22.3 x 16 cm. Essick collection.

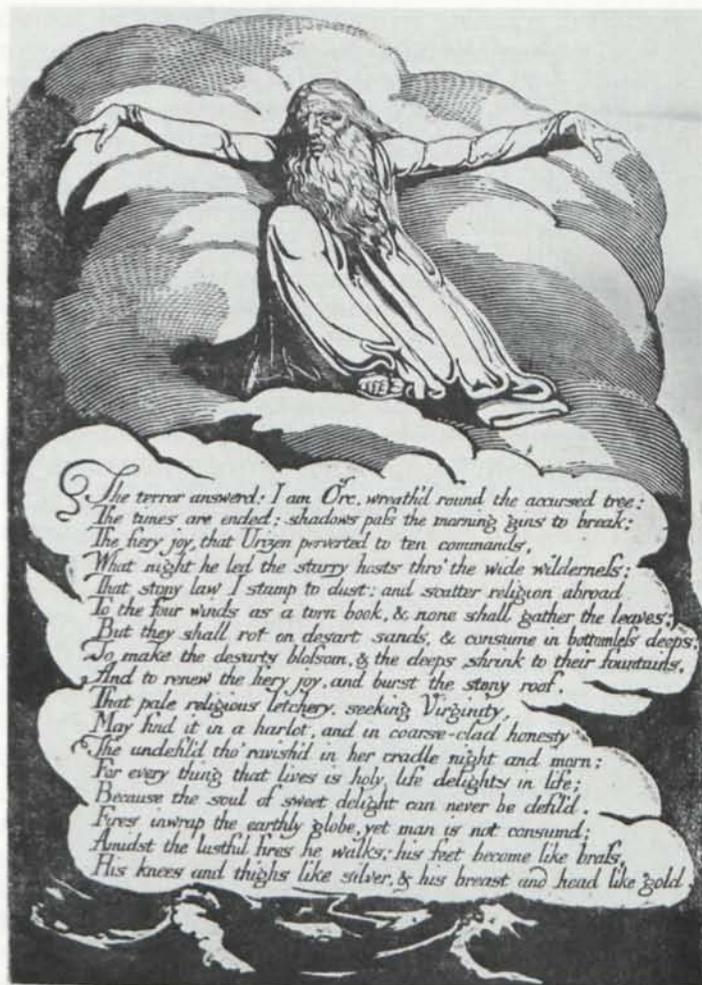
Plate 7. "Lightly strengthened . . . in a few places (the soaring figures' flowing hair, one leg of the right-hand figure)."

Plate 11. "Lightly strengthened . . . in a few places (a couple of the initial capitals in the calligraphic verses, a few other letters)."

Plate 12. "Lightly strengthened . . . in a very few places (several flame tongues at far right center, tail of one letter of calligraphic verses)."

Plate 16. "Lightly strengthened . . . in several places (the clouds and extended fingers of right-hand figure, a few letters in the calligraphic verses)."

*Provenance:* The first published reference to the volume is its appearance in the catalogue for the London auction of works from the collection of George Smith, Christie's, 1 April 1880, lot 164 (£31.10s. to the book-dealer Bernard Quaritch).<sup>5</sup> Quaritch offered the book for sale in his advertising flyer of two leaves, entitled *William Blake's Original Drawings* and dated May 1885. On page 2, without an item number, copy R is briefly described as "18 designs [i.e., plates] printed in blue, half bound green morocco, gilt edges," and priced at £36. The same entry appears in Quaritch's reissue of the flyer, dated November 1886. This advertisement also notes (page 4) that Muir's facsimile of *America* is "in preparation." Copy R next appears in Quaritch's *General Catalogue of Books*, 1887, item 10,251, with the same description and price as the earlier flyers. The entry is repeated for a final time in Quaritch's catalogue of February 1891, item 93. The volume was probably sold before January 1895, for it is not included in the extensive Blake offerings in Quaritch's catalogue of that date. The purchaser was the great Blake collector William A. White of Brooklyn, New York, who also owned uncolored copy E and colored copy M of *America*. White lent copy R anonymously to the Grolier Club exhibition of 1905, no. 18 in the catalogue. The book is there described as "trimmed" to "14½ x 10⅞ inches" (36.8 x 25.7 cm. — just a few millimeters larger than the present dimensions), "printed in blue ink," watermarked "E P" (i.e., E & P), and "bound" and "gilt." Copy R changed hands when it was sold in New York "from the important Private Library of a Brooklyn Collector" (no doubt White), Anderson Auction Company, 27 October 1911, lot 18, "half dark green morocco, gilt edges" (\$625, according to a priced copy of the catalogue in the Huntington Library). The auction catalogue includes a reproduction of the *America* title page. The patterns of foul inking in this plate clearly identify the volume in the auction as copy R, and thus provide the best evidence for its earlier ownership by White. This illustration also reveals a large stain below the "O" of "PROPHECY," now no longer present. The plate must have been cleaned sometime after 1911. Since the title page is on paper of

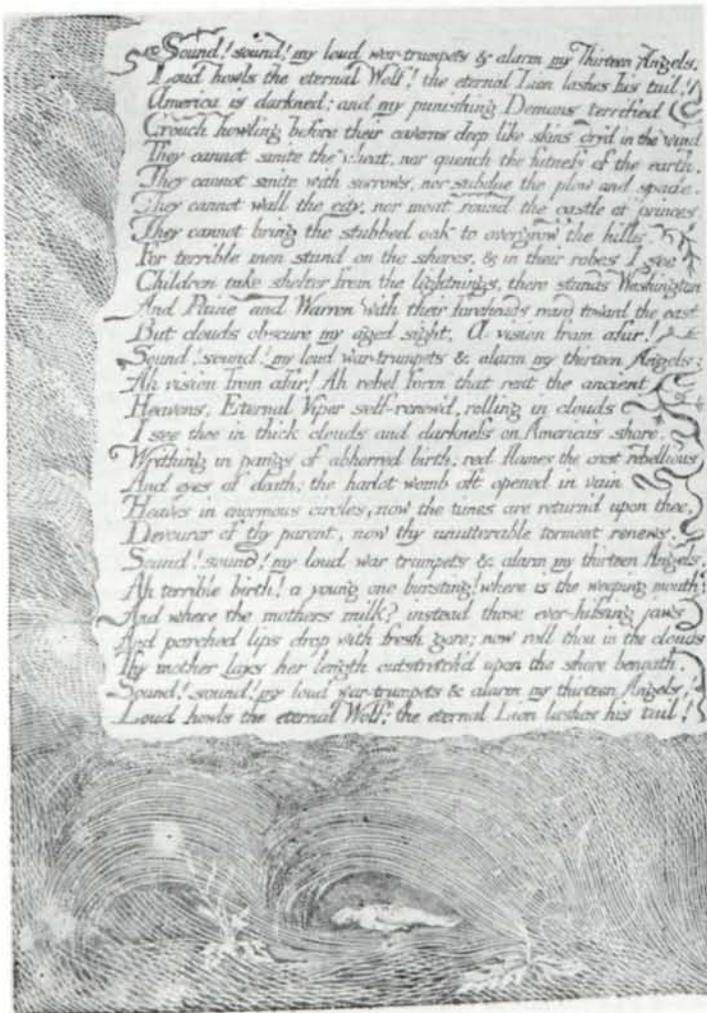


4. Blake. *America*, copy R, plate 10. Relief and white-line etching, 23.5 x 16.7 cm., printed in dark olive green ink. Photo courtesy of Christie's New York.

the same white hue as all others in copy R, they too must have been washed and pressed dry at about the same time.

I have found no record of the book's purchaser at the 1911 auction, but either at the sale or soon thereafter it was acquired by Christine Alexander Graham of Maryland, who also owned copy A of *Songs of Innocence* between 1912 and 1943 (Bentley, 404). Copy R was very probably cleaned, slightly cut down (thereby removing the gilt edges), and rebound by Sangorski & Sutcliffe shortly after the 1911 auction. The volume passed by inheritance to the late Margaret M. Sullivan of Philadelphia. Her brother, acting on behalf of Sullivan's estate, brought copy R to Christie's in 1987.

Christie's New York placed the book in its auction of 13 November 1987, lot 46. The very detailed and accurate description in the catalogue is accompanied by color reproductions of the frontispiece, title page, and plate



5. Blake. *America*, copy R, plate 11. Relief and white-line etching, 23.4 x 16.9 cm., printed in light blue ink. Photo courtesy of Christie's New York.

10.<sup>6</sup> *America* was by far the most important work in the auction, as indicated by the brave estimate of \$125,000 to \$175,000 and the color reproduction of the upper design and seven lines of text from plate 10 on the catalogue cover. Bidding opened at \$80,000 and did not stop until reaching \$160,000. With the addition of the 10% purchaser's premium paid to the house, *America* achieved the new auction record for any illuminated book of \$176,000. (The previous record of £77,000—then about \$158,600—was set by copy D of *Songs of In-*

*nocence and of Experience*, sold at Christie's London in June 1979.) The buyer was the London print dealer Libby Howie, who in December 1986 purchased at auction the upper design only from Blake's "Echoing Green" for an anonymous collector. *America* copy R is probably destined for the same collection. I will report any further information I can obtain about the volume in my annual sales reviews in this journal.

The provenance of *America* copy R affects the previously recorded history of copy D, now at Princeton University. Bentley (101), citing "Keynes & Wolf" as his authority,<sup>7</sup> states that copy D was acquired by W. A. White "in 1891," lent to the Grolier Club's 1905 exhibition, no. 18, and sold at Anderson's on 27 October 1911, lot 18. Since this last point is demonstrably not true, and since copy R was lot 18 in the 1911 auction, there is no documentary evidence that White ever owned copy D. Unless Keynes and Wolf had some (unstated) evidence about White's purchase of the book in 1891, we are left with a gap in the provenance of copy D between its sale at Sotheby's London in 1888 and its sale from the Cortlandt Bishop collection at the American Art Association, New York, in 1938.

The at least temporary resurrection of *America* copy R is a most satisfying event in the recovery of Blake's artistic legacy. It gives one hope that other treasures may someday arise from the caverns of history's grave and find again an appreciative audience.

<sup>1</sup>G. E. Bentley, Jr., *Blake Books* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977) 106. Plate numbers and copy designations follow Bentley's enumerations.

<sup>2</sup>See Lange, "Two Forged Plates in *America*, copy B," and Joseph Viscomi, "Facsimile or Forgery? An Examination of *America*, Plates 4 and 9, Copy B," *Blake: An Illustrated Quarterly* 16 (1983): 212-23.

<sup>3</sup>Bentley, apparently relying on the facsimile, describes copy R as eighteen plates on eighteen leaves (89).

<sup>4</sup>Bentley (89) indicates that copy R "is water-coloured by Blake or by his wife" and includes notes on its coloring in his plate by plate descriptions. The error apparently resulted from confusing Muir's monochrome facsimile of copy R with his colored facsimile, printed from the same lithographic plates but tinted in imitation of copy A.

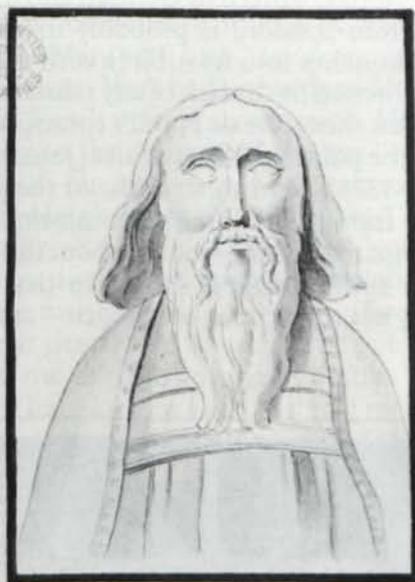
<sup>5</sup>Bentley (106) where the only other recorded stage in the sales history of the volume is its appearance in Quaritch's 1887 catalogue.

<sup>6</sup>The only obvious error is in the description of plate 5 as having "lines 38-41 . . . masked by Blake in printing." These lines are masked on plate 4.

<sup>7</sup>Geoffrey Keynes and Edwin Wolf 2nd, *William Blake's Illuminated Books: A Census* (New York: Grolier Club, 1953) 45.

## A New Blake from his Apprentice Years?

Martin Butlin



KING EDWARD III.

*From his Tomb in Westminster Abbey*

Attributed to William Blake, "King Edward III, from his Tomb in Westminster Abbey," 9.5 x 7.8 cm., c.1774. Archives and Local History, Victoria Library, Buckingham Palace Road, London.

It is not often that one finds what seems to be a genuine work by the artist in whom one specializes in one's own local library. However, thanks to Margaret Swarbrick and her colleague John Sargent in the Archives and Local History section of the branch of the Victoria Library in the Buckingham Palace Road, London, my attention was drawn to a pen and wash drawing of the head and shoulders of King Edward III from his tomb in Westminster Abbey, part of the Gardner Collection housed there.<sup>1</sup> This admittedly immature and rather crude work has sufficient points in common with Blake's early work in pen and wash to suggest that it could be a particularly early example, and it is of course related to two drawings of the same subject already attributed to Blake. Among the group of drawings from Basire's workshop done in preparation for Richard Gough's *Sepulchral Monuments in Great Britain*, now in the Bodleian Library at Oxford, is a view from above of the tomb of Edward III with the whole of his effigy and a drawing of the King's head and shoulders in an oval, as well as a side view of the complete tomb.<sup>2</sup>

There is however no proof that the Victoria Library drawing emanates from Basire's workshop. Its history

cannot be traced earlier than its presence in the vast topographical collection of John Edmund Gardner which was sold in 1910 by his son to Major Sir Edward Coates, Bart., MP, whose executors sold it at Sotheby's in a series of sales running from 26 February 1923 until 5 May and three subsequent days in 1924. This drawing was in lot 1636 on the eleventh day,<sup>3</sup> that is 1 May 1924, one of 43 items sold for £1. According to the sale catalogue the Gardner collection consisted of about 50,000 items illustrative of the history of London and was formed over a period of 50 years; where Gardner acquired this drawing is unknown.

One further factor, besides the similarities in general technique to Blake's early works and his probable association with other drawings of the same subject, is the fact that the drawing can be placed in sequence between the drawing of the figure shown full length, B42, and the finished oval drawing of the head and shoulders, B43. In the new drawing the hair is cut relatively short, leaving a space above the sloping shoulders, as in the full-length drawing; in the finished head-and-shoulders drawing King Edward is given longer, more flowing locks which reach down over his shoulders. The King's beard, rather spadelike in the full-length drawing, is again much more curvilinear in the finished head-and-shoulders drawing; in the Victoria Library drawing it is shown with much of the curvilinear character of the latter, though it is more freely drawn. This suggests that B42, the full-length drawing, which is closer to the actual tomb, was done first and that B43, the final oval head-and-shoulders drawing, was an idealized head abstracted from that on the tomb to form part of the series of similar portrait heads; the others, all in the Bodleian Library, show Henry III, Queen Eleanor, Queen Philippa, Richard II, and Queen Anne, B22, 25, 40, 46 and 47. In particular the head and shoulders of Richard II, B46, seen slightly from the side as opposed to the direct view from above of the full-length drawing of his effigy lying beside that of his queen, B44, is considerably "improved" and romanticized by Blake. The Victoria Library drawing of Edward III can hardly be called either improved or romanticized but could well have served as a springboard for the splendidly iconic and conceptualized finished head.

<sup>1</sup> Box 54, no. 25C (on a mount with five other works not by Blake). Pen (indian ink) and grey wash, image  $3\frac{3}{4} \times 3\frac{3}{16}$  in. (9.5 x 7.8 cm.), framing line  $4\frac{1}{2} \times 3\frac{13}{16}$  in. (11.5 x 8.1 cm) on paper  $5\frac{1}{16} \times 3\frac{13}{16}$  in. (13.4 x 9.7 cm.).

<sup>2</sup> Martin Butlin, *The Paintings and Drawings of William Blake*, 1981, I, 12-13, nos. 42, 43 and 41 respectively, repr. II, pls. 40, 38 and 39; henceforth referred to as B42, 43 and 41, the formula used for the other works mentioned in this article.

<sup>3</sup> "Tombs of Edward III, and Richard II, drawings, including a large and important drawing of the tomb of Edward III by J. Carter, in water-colour; various engravings, &c," 43 items.

Henry Fuseli's Letter of Enquiry  
to Paris on Behalf of  
Mary Wollstonecraft's Sister, Everina

D. H. Weinglass

Like the heroine of her novel *Mary, a Fiction* (1788), Mary Wollstonecraft delighted in "the society of men of genius," her particular favorites being "men past the meridian of life, and of a philosophic turn" (51). One member of this "rare genus," still unknown to her, although their paths were soon to cross, was Henry Fuseli. According to John Knowles this did not take place until the autumn of 1790,<sup>1</sup> although Mary's biographers generally seem to assume that she must have known

Fuseli from the time she became a full-fledged member of Joseph Johnson's circle.<sup>2</sup> Given the lack of documentation, a letter recently located in a Swiss collection may be considered as significant in helping to establish more firmly the date when their acquaintanceship began and under what circumstances.

Fuseli's letter, written in German and dated 15 January 1788 from London, is probably missing the first page for it launches into its subject with an abruptness merely heightened by the lack of any salutation. The collateral address sheet reveals Fuseli's correspondent to be his cousin, the painter and art dealer [Johann] Heinrich Füssli (1751-1829), residing in Paris. At the urging of an unspecified friend, Fuseli requests information on behalf of an unnamed young woman about the cost of a six-month stay with a suitable family in that city, which would allow her to improve her French—and her teach-



*William Tell Escapes from the Tyrant Gessler by Leaping Ashore from the Boat during the Storm* by Henry Fuseli, courtesy of Oeffentliche Kunstsammlung Basel Kupferstichkabinett.

ing prospects. The identity of the young woman is not far to seek. She is surely none other than Everina Wollstonecraft, the object of Mary's constant concern and of her frequently expressed desire in her letters of this period to "mitigate" her sister's fate ("could she catch the French accent I could easily procure her a reputable abode").<sup>3</sup> The friend would, of course, be Joseph Johnson, the liberal bookseller of St. Paul's Churchyard, who had behaved to Mary with such "tenderness and humanity,"<sup>4</sup> and to whom Mary had unburdened herself about Everina's and Eliza's precarious situation. He was clearly not only privy to the "schemes" she was "involved" in on their behalf, but actively sympathetic to their aims.

Indeed, Mary's letter of 17 January 1788 may be seen to presuppose a knowledge of Fuseli's enquiry written two days earlier. Not only does Mary now believe "I shall contrive for [Everina] to spend a few months in France," she is clearly also waiting to be put "out of suspense" as to the outcome of this initiative. She apparently did not have long to wait: within a month Everina was in Paris, settled in lodgings with "Mademoiselle Henry, Rue de Tournon, Faubourg St. Germaine."<sup>5</sup> Unfortunately Füssli's reply has not survived, although it may, in fact, have been the letter "from a kinsman who was residing with Mr. Rougemont banker at Paris," which Knowles found among Fuseli's papers together with an answer, but was unable to tell whether it was "only a rough draught or a fair copy."<sup>6</sup>

Fuseli's idiosyncratic capitalization has been retained but where appropriate single "-n-" and "-m-" have been doubled in conformity with modern German usage, e.g., "benan[n]te."

[Henry Fuseli to Heinrich Fuessli]  
 Tuesday 15 January 1788<sup>7</sup>

Ein Junges frauenzim[m]er deren Zwe[c]k ist Lehrerin der französischen Sprache in einer hiesigen Schule zu werden und die derselben schon etwas kundig ist, Wünschet für Sechs Monate zu Paris in einer Familie von Guten Leuthen *En pension* zu leben. berichten Sie mich ob 15 Guineen für die benan[n]te Zeit, Ihr, *Table & Logis* verschaffen können. Sie ist nicht reich — ein freund von mir, hörend dass ich bekan[n]te in Paris habe, hat mich gebeten, mich dessen zu erkundigen, und ich *bitte* Sie sich unter Ihren bekan[n]ten umzusehen, und werde es als einen Dienst *mir selber* erwiesen, betrachten.

ob Tell Hrn Guttenberge<sup>8</sup> gefalle oder nicht, weiss ich nicht; ich weiss aber, dass es nicht sehr Civil ist mich nicht wissen zu lassen ob ihr ihn empfangen habet oder nicht. lieben Sie mich.

H. Füsseli.

London 15 Jan<sup>y</sup>. 88.  
 baldige Antwort.

[Translation]

A young woman, who purposes to become a teacher of French in a school here and who is already somewhat familiar with the language, wishes to live in Paris for six months *En pension* with a good family. Let me know whether 15 Guineas will cover her *board and lodging* for this period of time. She is not rich —. A friend of mine, hearing that I had acquaintances in Paris, asked me to enquire about this, and I *beg you* to check it out among those you know and I will consider it as a service rendered *to me personally*.

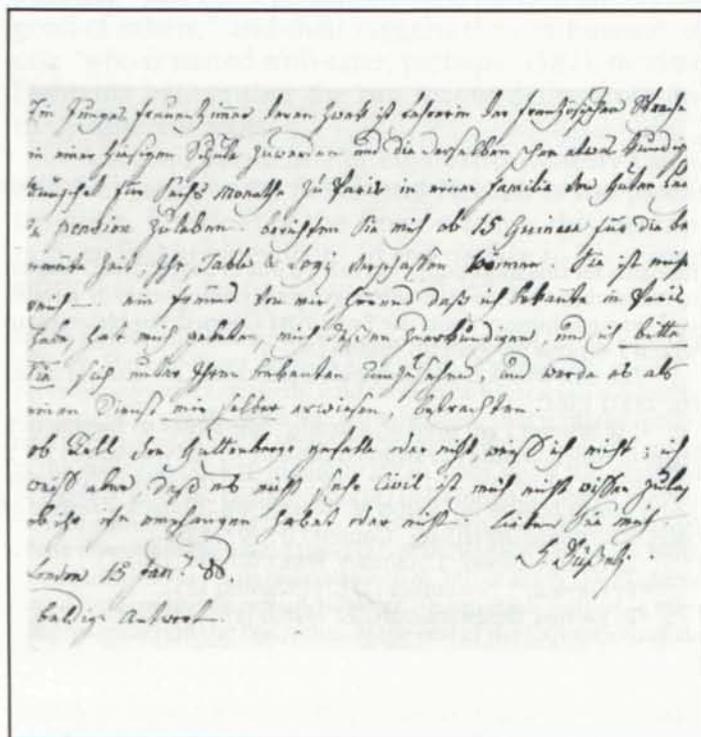
I don't know whether or not Mr. Guttenberg likes the [picture of William] Tell; but I do know it isn't very considerate of the two of you not to let me know whether you received it or not. Love me.

H. Fuseli.

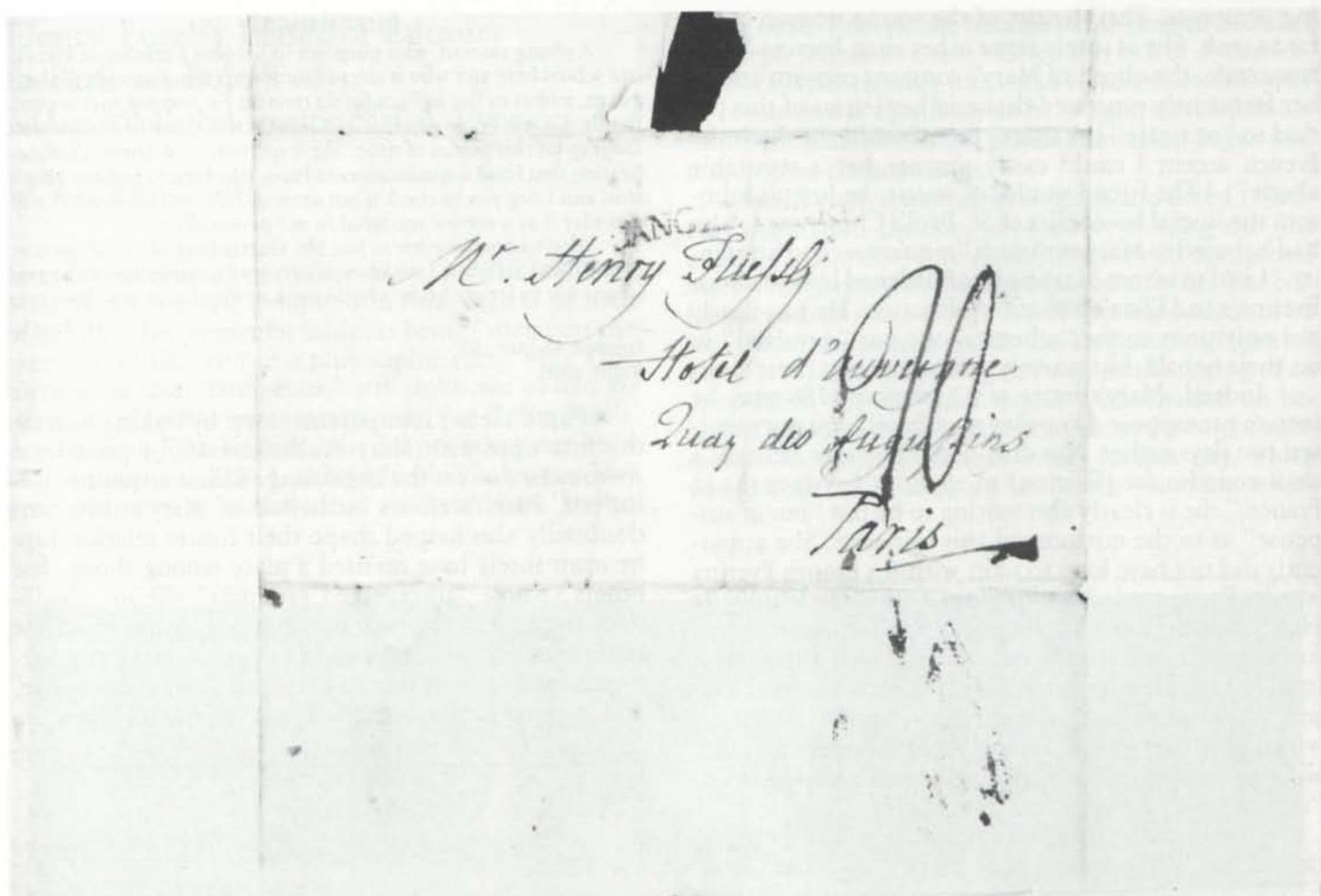
London 15 Jan<sup>y</sup>. 88.

Reply soon.

Fuseli's letter is important since, by linking him for the first time with Mary Wollstonecraft, it provides a *terminus a quo* for the beginning of their acquaintance. Indeed, Fuseli's efforts on behalf of Mary's sister undoubtedly also helped shape their future relationship; he must surely have merited a place among those "few others" whose "unexpected kindness" she so "thankfully recollected" a few months later.<sup>9</sup> At the least, the letter clarifies how Mary was enabled to make arrangements for Everina's stay in France at such short notice, and approximately how much money was involved.



Surviving page of Henry Fuseli's letter of 15 January 1788 (in German script) to his cousin, Heinrich Füssli, at Paris. Fuseli wrote very little after this date in German; but when he did so, he regularly used *Roman* rather than German script. Courtesy of Zentralbibliothek Zurich.



The address on the cover sheet of this letter is written in Fuseli's characteristic non-German hand. Courtesy of Zentralbibliothek Zurich.

Research for this short paper was carried out in Switzerland, August to November 1985, as part of a larger project supported by a travel and research bursary from the Swiss Arts Council Pro Helvetia, to whom I express my grateful thanks.

<sup>1</sup>*Life and Writings of Henry Fuseli* (London: Colburn and Bentley, 1831) 1:161.

<sup>2</sup>"Whenever I am tired of solitude," she writes to Everina in a letter to which Wardle has assigned the date [c. 15 November 1787], "I go to Mr. Johnson's, and there I met [?meet] the kind of company I find most pleasure in" Ralph M. Wardle, ed. *Collected Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1979) 166.

<sup>3</sup>To George Blood, 17 January 1788 (Wardle, 170).

<sup>4</sup>To Everina, 7 November [1787] (Wardle, 165).

<sup>5</sup>To Everina Wollstonecraft, 22 March [1788] (Wardle, 174).

<sup>6</sup>John Knowles to Heinrich Füssli, 27 July 1826 (Zentralbibliothek, Zurich, Ms. Lind. 73) (included in the revised and enlarged edition of my *Collected English Letters of Henry Fuseli* in press with the Swiss Institute for Art Research, Zurich).

<sup>7</sup>MS: Zentralbibliothek, Zurich, Ms. Lind. 73. Address: M<sup>r</sup>. Henry Fuessli / Hotel D'Auvergne / Quay des Augustins / Paris. Postmark: ANGLETERRE.

<sup>8</sup>The reference to Fuseli's lost painting, *William Tell Escapes from the Tyrant Gessler by Leaping Ashore from the Boat during the Storm* (Schiff 719), which had apparently been sent to Paris the previous year for Carl Gottlieb (or Gottfried) Guttenberg (1743-1790) to engrave, allows us to narrow the dating of the picture from [1780-1790] to [1780-1787]; Guttenberg's plate seems to have appeared in 1789.

<sup>9</sup>To Joseph Johnson [c. mid-1788] (Wardle, 178).

## The Reasons for "Urizen"

Sheila A. Spector

Since 1929, most critics have agreed with Dorothy Plowman that the name Urizen has Greek origins:

The name "Urizen" is, I believe, intended to indicate this. Taking it (as we are entitled to in the absence of proof that Blake intended otherwise) as derived from the Greek word . . . meaning "to bound" or "limit," with the cognate form "Uranus," signifying the Lord of the Firmament, or that first self-imposed setter of bounds whose rule became a tyranny that his own sons were impelled to break and supplant, we have a symbolic name conveying exactly that state described in the opening lines of the Preludium.<sup>1</sup>

While, as S. Foster Damon pointed out, "it is not certain that Blake knew Greek as early as 1793, when he first used Urizen's name,"<sup>2</sup> few question the likelihood that Urizen derives in some way from the Greek. Less recognized, however, is the possibility that Blake's coinage has Hebrew antecedents as well, since the earliest direct evidence we have that Blake knew any Hebrew at all comes from two indecipherable messages on illustrations for Young's *Night Thoughts*, begun in 1795. Yet, the entries in John Parkhurst's *An Hebrew and English Lexicon, without Points* (1762; 4th ed. London, 1799) that correspond to a Hebrew transliteration of the name so closely resemble Blake's characterization of Urizen that it is hard to imagine his not having consulted Parkhurst at some point in the early 1790s.

According to Parkhurst, the word *razon* is a verb meaning:

To poise or balance a thing by the hand, in order to feel whether it be heavy or not. . . . So the idea of the word seems to be, To weigh, balance, try, or examine carefully. Hence, as a participial N. masc. plur. . . . Counsellors, whose business it is to weigh and examine the expediency of public measures. . . . As a N. . . . A counsellor, according to some. . . . Der. Lat. *Ratio* — *onis*, whence *rational*, *rationality*, &c. Eng. *Reason*, &c. (679)

Parkhurst's gloss for *razon* is transferred almost verbatim to *The Book of Urizen*.<sup>3</sup> Not only is Urizen the counsellor—"Hidden set apart in my stern counsels" (4:8, E 71); weighing the expediency of public measures—"and on / This rock, place with strong hand the Book / Of eternal brass, written in my solitude" (4:31–33, E 72); but after the birth of Orc.

7. He form'd a line & a plummet  
To divide the Abyss beneath.  
He form'd a dividing rule;
8. He formed scales to weigh;  
He formed massy weights;  
He formed a brazen quadrant;  
(20:33–38, E 80)

As far as Parkhurst's English derivative is concerned, David V. Erdman points out that "The 'reason' in 'Urizen' has long been accepted."<sup>4</sup>

While it might seem possible to ascribe the Hebrew etymology to some kind of commonly available English source, the peculiarities of eighteenth-century Christian Hebraism not only make it unlikely that Blake derived these meanings of *razon* from any source other than Parkhurst, but also make plausible the assertion that Blake was not merely punning with the Greek/Latin/English cognates but, rather, applying the rules of contemporary linguistics. During the eighteenth century, a number of historical factors converged to produce a school of Christian Hebraism that rejected virtually all of the tenets of rabbinic Hebrew, replacing them with what are now recognized to be absurd manipulations of the language.<sup>5</sup> A major linguistic abuse was the assumption that all Hebrew words sharing the same phonetic base derive from the same root (like attributing all words containing the consonants *sng* to the same root—sing, singe, snag, snug, etc.). After collating words with identical roots, the would-be Hebraist contrived sometimes quite outrageous explanations for their relationship to each other. In the case of *razon*, Parkhurst's explanation is unique. In contrast, in *Critica Hebraea: or, A Hebrew-English Dictionary, without Points* (London, 1767), Julius Bate, Parkhurst's contemporary, interprets the first *razon* as "leanness, scantiness," the second as "prince," that is, "a person who lays himself out for the good of others," and then suggests the combination of one "who is wasted with cares, perhaps" (582); modern Hebraists believe that the two *razons* derive from entirely different roots.

A second peculiarity of eighteenth-century Christian Hebraism is the belief that Hebrew is the parent language. Revisions of the *Lexicon* reflect this assumption, as Parkhurst explains in the preface to his second edition (1778; reprinted in the 4th ed.),

In the former publication were added, at the end of the explanation of many Hebrew Roots, such *English* words as were either plainly or probably *derived* from them. And though no great stress was laid on this part of the work, yet it was apprehended, that it might tend to fix the meaning of the *Hebrew* in the learner's memory, and might at the same time entertain him to see so many words still preserved in *English*, from the common mother of all tongues, and set him upon new enquiries of this kind, both in our own and other languages; I have now considerably enlarged this *etymological* part of my Work, by the addition not only of many *English*, but of many *Greek*, *Latin*, and *Northern* words, which however I have often judged it more proper to insert in the body, than at the end of the Expositions of the *Hebrew*. (9)

Since, as far as I know, the specific derivation of the Latin *ratio* and English "reason" from the Hebrew root *razon* is found only in Parkhurst's *Lexicon*, it seems reasonable to infer that Blake consulted Parkhurst at some point before 1793.<sup>6</sup>

The rest of Urizen's name involves a third characteristic of Hebrew, the three-letter root. Because most Hebrew radicals are short, comprising three—or occasionally two—letters, Christian Hebraists usually sepa-

rated longer words from the rest, interpreting them as aggregates of shorter roots. Like most of his contemporaries, Parkhurst defined "pluriliterals" through a three-part process: he divided these longer words into their supposed components; he defined the components individually; and he explained how the components combine to produce a meaning appropriate for the biblical context. By analogy, Urizen can be interpreted as a compound of "Ur" and "rizen." According to traditional Hebrew, *or* is a common word meaning light, along with all of its metaphoric associations. To Parkhurst, however, the Hebrew *or* is much more complex:

- I. *To flow*. This is the idea of the word, though it occurs not as a V. simply in this sense, but as a N. . . . *a river, a flood*. . . .
- II. As Ns. . . . *A river, stream, or flux of water*. . . . Hence perhaps *Yar or Yare*, the name of a *river* in England, and *Jaar*, of one in Flanders.
- III. As a Participial N. . . . *The light*, so called from it's wonderful *fluidity*; for it is not only a *fluid*, but one of the most *active* and *perfect fluids* in nature. . . . No doubt . . . *Ur*, a city of the Chaldeans, whence Abraham was brought, . . . had it's name from the *light or fire* there worshipped. . . . As a V. . . . *To be light, shine, be enlightened*. . . . As a N. masc. plur. . . . *Lights*, that is, *streams or fluxes of light*, as is plain from the mention of the *solar, lunar, and stellar fluxes*. . . . As a N. [*Me'or*] *A mean of light*, . . . *a luminary, an orb*, which either *forms or reflects the light*, and so is in either case an *instrument of light*. . . .
- IV. As a N. masc. plur. . . . URIM and THUMMIM, *Lights and Perfections*, . . .
- V. As a N. fem. sing. . . . *The hole* which a serpent makes in the earth, q.d. *A light-hole*. . . .
- VI. Though *fluidity* or *flowing* be the natural condition and perfection of *water* and *light*, yet in other things to be *flowing, flux, or fleeting*, is an *imperfection* and an *evil*. . . . Hence . . . *To curse*, i.e. *to pronounce flux, fleeting, or transitory, or to wish to be so*. . . . *To make light of, treat as light or vile*, is a word of similar import. . . . As a Particip. . . . *Cursed*. . . . As a N. fem. [*me'erah*] *A curse*. (37-40)

This same cluster of meanings, from flux through light to curse, can be found in *The Book of Urizen*. Urizen was "Hidden set apart in my stern counsels," because "I have sought for a joy without pain, / For a solid without fluctuation / . . . strong I repell'd / The vast waves, & arose on the waters / A wide world of solid obstruction" (4:8, 10-11, 21-23, E 71-72). In chapter 3, Urizen is engulfed in flames: "In living creations appear'd / In the flames of eternal fury" (5:1-2, E 72); but as he goes on: "But no light from the fires. all was darkness / In the flames of Eternal fury" (5:17-18, E 73); until finally, "He in darkness clos'd, view'd all his race / And his soul sicken'd! he curs'd" (23:22-23, E 81).<sup>7</sup>

In *The Four Zoas*, Blake introduces a new Hebraic etymology for Urizen, "prince of light," an oft-repeated epithet ironically implying that the character is really a prince of darkness. As already mentioned, Bate defines *razon* as "prince," and in fact, "prince" is the universally accepted meaning of the word. Therefore, it is quite significant that while Parkhurst's glosses tend to be

chock-full of extraneous, extra-linguistic information, the word "prince" is noticeably absent from the entry for *razon*. This means that even though Parkhurst was likely Blake's original source for a Hebraic etymology of Urizen, at some point between coining the name in 1793, and beginning work on *The Four Zoas* in the late 1790s, he had access to another source, not necessarily better, just one containing meanings omitted by Parkhurst.

While we certainly cannot draw firm conclusions on the basis of a single name, still, this brief examination of the reasoning behind Urizen leads to several possible inferences regarding Blake's use of Hebrew. First, obviously, Blake must have begun experimenting with Hebrew earlier than 1795, probably as early as 1793, the date of *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, though possibly earlier. Even though Urizen does not assume his fully developed Hebraic characterization until *The Book of Urizen*, it is emblematically present in earlier works. In *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, Urizen is identified as the "counsellor" ("Creator of men! mistaken Demon of heaven," 5:3, E 48), whose light has been extinguished ("Religious dreams and holy vespers, light thy smoky fires: / Once were thy fires lighted by the eyes of honest morn," 6:14-15, E 49). Similarly, in *America*, Orc refers to "The fiery joy, that Urizen perverted to ten commands / . . . That stony law I stamp to dust: and scatter religion abroad" (8:3-5, E 54). In *Europe*,

Albions Angel rose upon the Stone of Night.  
He saw Urizen on the Atlantic;  
And his brazen Book,  
That Kings & Priests had copied on Earth  
Expanded from North to South.  
(11:1-5, E 64)

And in *The Song of Los*, after "Urizen faded,"

Adam stood in the garden of Eden:  
And Noah on the mountains of Ararat;  
They saw Urizen give his Laws to the Nations  
By the hands of the children of Los.  
(3:4, 6-9, E 67)

The second inference is that Blake's earliest source for Hebrew was Parkhurst's *Lexicon*. While by 1793, Blake did have available to him the rabbinically correct grammar and dictionary *Lingua Sacra* of David Levi (London, 1785-87), as well as a number of other Hebrew-English dictionaries compiled by Christians (not necessarily Hutchinsonians), none other than Parkhurst's contained the macaronic pun around which the name Urizen was formed, so apparently he did consult the most popular dictionary of his time, at least for this one name.<sup>8</sup> Finally, given the later inclusion of the new epithet "prince of light" for Urizen, it seems that Blake did not limit himself to Parkhurst.

When we add these inferences to what we already know about the non-Hebraic etymologies for names in Blake's myth, we can also form three hypotheses concerning Blake's process for naming characters. First, it seems likely that few, if any, of the invented names (excluding biblical names like Beulah) originated in the Hebrew. While Parkhurst's glosses for *or* and *razon* do include the meanings originally associated with Urizen, the assumption that Blake coincidentally combined the very two roots that comprise an appropriate Greek cognate is too far-fetched. Rather, he probably began, as Plowman suggested, with the Greek for horizon, and then sought an appropriate etymology in the parent tongue. The fact that Parkhurst lists no Greek equivalent for *razon*, even though the *Lexicon* normally included known Greek derivatives for Hebrew roots, also supports the contention that Blake began with the Greek and sought out Hebraic etymologies, not the other way around. Second, despite assertions by V. A. De Luca and Aaron Fogel to the contrary, the meanings of the names apparently are significant.<sup>9</sup> The fact that Blake did not depict Urizen in terms of the complete Hebraic etymology until *The Book of Urizen*, even though he had already used the name in *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, *America*, *Europe*, and *The Song of Los*, suggests that the definitions in Parkhurst were instrumental in shaping Urizen's later characterization. And finally, the new epithet "prince of light" indicates that even after the names were coined, Blake continued to seek out new meanings to invest his characters with new qualities, thereby enriching the symbolic dimensions of his myth. Therefore, as Parkhurst would have advised, we would do well to explore the parent tongue for the various meanings inherent in Blake's Bible of Hell.

<sup>1</sup>"Note" to the facsimile of *The Book of Urizen* (London: Dent; New York: Dutton, 1929) 17.

<sup>2</sup>*A Blake Dictionary: The Ideas and Symbols of William Blake* (1965; Boulder: Shambhala, 1979) 419.

<sup>3</sup>All Blake citations are from *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, ed. David V. Erdman, newly rev. ed. (Garden City: Doubleday, 1982), referred to as E.

<sup>4</sup>*Blake: Prophet against Empire*, 3rd ed. (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1977) 179 n. 9.

<sup>5</sup>For a more detailed discussion of the historical background, see my article "Blake as an Eighteenth-Century Hebraist" (*Bulletin of Research in the Humanities*, forthcoming).

<sup>6</sup>There are several reasons why Blake would choose Parkhurst's dictionary. As Leslie Tannenbaum notes, not only was it "the most widely read and respected Hebrew lexicon of the time," but its attitude towards Hebrew is based on the doctrine of John Hutchinson, an anti-Newtonian whose theories attracted Blake (*Biblical Tradition in Blake's Early Prophecies: The Great Code of Art* [Princeton: Princeton UP, 1982] 100, and 315-16 n. 56); also see Edward Larrissy, "Blake and the Hutchinsonians," *Blake* 20, (1986): 44-47.

<sup>7</sup>Bate, too, assumes that the words for light and curse are etymologically related (582). Also, in the second and third lines of *Tiriel*, the juxtaposition of the blind curser with his dying wife Myratana seems based on the same Hebrew root *or*, and its variant *me'or*: "With Myratana. once the Queen of all the western plains / But now his eyes were darkned. & his wife fading in death" (E 276). In Hebrew, the word *tana* means "one who gives, teacher," and compounded with *me'or*, "a means of light," suggests that while alive, Myratana was Tiriel's source of vision, but at her death, she became *me'erah*, the source of his curse. If this etymology is correct, then Blake could have begun using Hebrew as early as 1789.

<sup>8</sup>I am currently compiling *Christian Hebraism: A Source Book of English-Language Materials* (New York: Garland, completion date 1989), which will contain a comprehensive annotated bibliography of Hebrew sources available to Blake.

<sup>9</sup>See V. A. De Luca, "Proper Names in the Structural Design of Blake's Myth-Making," *Blake Studies*, 8 (1978): 5-22; and Aaron Fogel, "Pictures of Speech: On Blake's Poetic," *Studies in Romanticism*, 21 (1982): 217-242.

## The Origins of the William Blake Trust

### by George Goyder

In Sir Geoffrey Keynes's autobiography *The Gates of Memory*, the origins of the William Blake Trust are ascribed to the year 1948 and the desire to make a worthy facsimile of *Jerusalem*. This was not as it happens the beginning of the idea. More than two years earlier (1 November 1945) I drafted a letter to Dr. Thomas Jones asking that the Pilgrim Trust help in a project to reproduce Blake's engravings, paintings and prophetic books. As the text of the letter shows, our first priority was to reproduce the *Milton* series of drawings, secondly the Bible illustrations in tempera and watercolor, and thirdly, *Jerusalem*. Before mailing this letter I sent a draft to

Geoffrey which he returned with a few minor corrections. Dr. Jones replied asking for time to consider the matter, so on 4 June 1947 I wrote again mentioning my previous letter and this time put forward *Jerusalem* as our first priority as the unique copy of that book had meantime become available for reproduction.

The original objectives of the William Blake Trust were very broadly defined and at no time have its aims been abandoned. It is more a case of the Trust using the technical expertise of Arnold Fawcus and his Trianon Press to the best advantage. Now that the William Blake Trust has successfully completed the long-awaited *Job* engravings in their several states it might be thought that the Trust has fulfilled the task for which it was formed. This is not the case. Three of the four original aims of the Trust remain uncompleted and some have not even been begun. There is work aplenty for the Trust still to do.

November 1st, 1945.

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Dear Dr. Jones,

You kindly sent me a copy of the Annual Report of the Pilgrim Trust. I was struck with the help you are giving to the encouragement of literature and am prompted by it to put a suggestion to you which has been in my mind for some time.

William Blake is not only a great English poet but equally a great English painter - if not the greatest. His work is hardly known except to a small number of people. The reason is, I believe, partly that some of his best paintings are still in private hands such as those of Graham Robertson and Mrs. Stirling in this country, and Philip Hofer in America; partly because no adequate reproductions have been made.

In 1935 ~~John~~ <sup>The Pierpont Morgan Library</sup> undertook the reproduction of the three known coloured copies of the *Job*, together with the original pencil sketches and the engravings. This magnificent production in six sections enabled the student to see Blake's work in a form hardly distinguishable from the original works. I understand the price to the trade was 10 guineas a copy, and that the total expense of production was between £5,000. and £8,000. 300 copies were sold in America and 200 in England. By now the original outlay should have been recovered. If you have not seen the *Job* I would like to show you a set next time you are in London. Geoffrey Keynes, who is the leading authority on Blake, wrote the introduction, and in every way the work is superb. We owe a great deal to ~~Pierpont~~ <sup>The Pierpont Morgan Library</sup> for this enterprise.

My suggestion is that to encourage artists in this country and U.S.A. to study Blake (I believe there is no more inspiring master than Blake - he literally teems with

P.T.O.

inspiration), plans should now be made for reproducing the other great Blake series in the same way as was done for the Book of *Job* by Morgan and by the National Art Collections Fund for the Dante drawings.

My first priority is to reproduce the *Milton* series. Some of these are in Boston, some in the Huntington Library, and some at Cambridge. The series include *Paradise Lost and Regained*, *L'Allegro and Il Penseroso*, *The Nativity*, and *Comus*. It will be necessary to obtain the loan of the American originals and this will take time; hence the need to start now.

The second great work cycle never hitherto reproduced is the series of Biblical temperas illustrating the *Life of Our Lord*. All the paintings need putting together and reproducing in fine collotype, as used for the *Job*. When they are seen together the world may appreciate for the first time the glorious beauty and religious creativeness of this wonderful artist. You probably know some of Blake's paintings of *Christ's Life*, such as the *Infant John riding on the Lamb*. No more tender presentation of the God-head - Divine Humanity and Human Divinity - can be imagined. There is nothing else I know of in Western art since the Reformation which conveys such deep religious feeling in form, colour and composition, as do these temperas, some of the finest of which are still in private collections. Ruthven Todd's catalogue ~~will~~ <sup>will</sup> help in tracing these.

Thirdly, there is the magnificent coloured *Jerusalem* in the possession of Mrs. Stirling. Joseph Wickstead is still available to write the introduction for this book, but he is getting on in years and there is no young Blake scholar with the same understanding and learning.

Then there are the eighteen paintings illustrating Bunyan's *Pilgrims* which Lord Crews sold recently to America.

Progress <sup>the late</sup>

P.T.O.

- 3 -

They have been poorly reproduced in the United States, but the book is unobtainable in England.

It may be many months before Emery Walker & Co. can re-assemble their expert men, but it is not too early to start planning the undertaking.

Geoffrey Keynes tells me he would give all help possible in the project. I imagine the cost would be twice or three times as great as before the war. The outlay for the Milton series might, therefore, be £10,000. to £15,000. A ~~smaller~~ figure would cover the Biblical series. <sup>These</sup> are outside figures. As I understand ~~the~~ Morgan/Recoverd the whole of the outlay for the Job, the question for the Pilgrim Trust should be one of outlay rather than of expenditure. I am very anxious to interest you in the project, for I know of nothing else better calculated to inspire the present generation of artists and to link England and U.S.A. in creative amity than a noble and really worthy presentation of Blake's work to the public here and in America for the first time.

I should like to talk further with you about this together with Geoffrey Keynes, and will be grateful if you will let me know when you are coming to London.

Sincerely yours,

Dr. Tom Jones,  
The Pilgrim Trust,  
Harlech,  
N. Wales.

GAG:MB

11 AREWRIGHT ROAD, HAMPSHIRE, LONDON N.W.1  
HAMPSHIRE, ENGLAND

2 Nov 1945

My dear George,

I return your draft with some suggested alterations. I am not sure about the "first priority" - it would be much easier to get hold of the Jerusalem than any of the others.

Yesterday I secured my sixth

copy of Remember Me! It is, of course, different from the others?

I went to an interesting sale of pictures at Christie's today. You could have peopled your halls with handsome ancestors, flower pieces, bird pieces, etc. (mostly from Whaddon Hall) for the price of two shill. (or one) <sup>two</sup> affectionate Geoffrey

THE PILGRIM TRUST

FOUNDER: EDWARD S. HARKNESS

1 LOWTHER GARDENS

EXHIBITION ROAD, LONDON, S.W. 7

TELEPHONE: KENSINGTON 3665

CHAIRMAN: RT. HON. LORD MACMILLAN, G.C.V.O. SECRETARY: THE HON. J. F. A. BROWNE

8th November 1945

Dear Goyder,

I have read with much interest your letter about the Blake drawings, and fully share your sense of their great importance in the art life of this country.

The Trust is at the present moment deeply committed to the publication of several very expensive works. You may have seen the first volume of MEDIAEVAL WALL PAINTING; it is only the first of several volumes. Then we have RECORDING BRITAIN on the stocks, and RECORDING SCOTLAND to follow. The range of present costs is very high, and that is another reason why we should delay for a year or two sounding the Trustees on a project of this kind.

Yours sincerely,

Thomas Jones

George Goyder, Esq.

# REVIEWS

**William Bolcom, composer. *Songs of Innocence and of Experience, A Musical Illumination of the Poems of William Blake.* New York premiere at the Next Wave Festival. Brooklyn Academy of Music, 9-11 January 1987. Brooklyn Philharmonic, Lukas Foss, conductor.**

**Reviewed by Jackie Di Salvo**

BROOKLYN ACADEMY OF MUSIC  
HARVEY LICHTENSTEIN, *President and Executive Producer*  
and  
THE BROOKLYN PHILHARMONIC SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA  
LUKAS FOSS, *Music Director and Conductor*

present

*The New York Premiere performances of*

## SONGS OF INNOCENCE AND OF EXPERIENCE

*A Musical Illumination of the Poems of William Blake (1757-1827)*

by  
WILLIAM BOLCOM

performed by

**THE BROOKLYN PHILHARMONIC**  
LUKAS FOSS, *Conductor*

Sine Nomine Singers

The Brooklyn College Chorus  
*Prepared by Harry Saltzman, Conductor*

The Cathedral Choristers  
*Prepared by Donald Barnum*

SOLOISTS:

SARA ARNESON, <i>Soprano</i>	ALVIN EPSTEIN, <i>Speaker</i>
WILLIAM BROWN, <i>Tenor</i>	LESLIE GUINN, <i>Baritone</i>
DAVID CALDWELL, <i>Vocalist</i>	DORIS MAYES, <i>Mezzo-Soprano</i>
BOBBY CAVANAUGH, <i>Boy Soprano</i>	JOAN MORRIS, <i>Mezzo-Soprano</i>

DIANE RAGAINS, *Soprano*  
Steven J. Mercurio, *Assistant Conductor*  
Greg MacPherson, *Lighting Designer*  
Danny Kapilian, *Sound Designer*

Opera House

Brooklyn Academy of Music  
Friday, January 9, 1987, 8 p.m.  
Saturday, January 10, 1987, 8 p.m.  
Sunday, January 11, 1987, 2 p.m.

Duration: Approximately 3 hours  
There will be one intermission.

After hearing the piper piping again in William Bolcom's symphonic rendering of Blake's *Songs*, one rereads them as what they always were: a cantata with human voices joining a chorus of birds and beasts and all nature providing orchestration.

On the "Echoing Green" the skylark, thrush, and "merry bells" ring in the morning; a "Cradle Song" lulls an "infant joy," and beetles hum through the "silent delight" of night. The lamb trumpets in call and response to the ewe's "tender reply," inspiring the shepherd's tongue to his own psalm of praise. Correspondingly, "when voices of children are heard on the green," the green woods, the air, the dimpling stream, the meadows, the grasshopper, and the painted birds all add their various strains to the cosmic "Laughing Song;" a fly dances to an intoxicated rhythm, and the nightingale, the lark, and the crowing cock punctuate the pervasive "Infant noise."

### SONGS OF INNOCENCE

#### Part I

INTRODUCTION  
William Brown

THE ECCHOING GREEN  
Chorus

THE LAMB  
Diane Ragains

THE SHEPHERD  
Leslie Guinn

INFANT JOY  
Children's Choir  
Doris Mayes

THE LITTLE BLACK BOY  
David Caldwell

#### Part II

LAUGHING SONG  
Madrigal Choir

SPRING  
William Brown  
Chorus and Children's Choir

A CRADLE SONG  
Sara Arneson

THE NURSE'S SONG  
Joan Morris

HOLY THURSDAY  
Madrigal Choir  
Chorus

THE BLOSSOM  
Diane Ragains

INTERLUDE (Orchestra)

THE CHIMNEY SWEEPER  
Bobby Cavanaugh  
Women's Chorus

THE DIVINE IMAGE  
Joan Morris

### Part III

NOCTURNE (Orchestra)

NIGHT  
William Brown

A DREAM  
Sara Arneson

ON ANOTHER'S SORROW  
Chorus and Children's Chorus

THE LITTLE BOY LOST  
Bobby Cavanaugh  
Chorus and Children's Chorus

THE LITTLE BOY FOUND  
David Caldwell

INTERMISSION

SONGS OF EXPERIENCE: Volume I

#### Part I

INTRODUCTION (Orchestra)

HEAR THE VOICE OF THE BARD  
Leslie Guinn

INTERLUDE (Orchestra)

EARTH'S ANSWER  
Diane Ragains

#### Part II

NURSE'S SONG  
Joan Morris

THE FLY  
Children's Chorus  
Women's Chorus

THE TYGER  
Chorus

THE LITTLE GIRL LOST  
Leslie Guinn  
Madrigal Choir

THE LITTLE GIRL FOUND  
Madrigal Choir  
Chorus and Children's Chorus

In counterpoint to this joyful melody, a darker theme weaves its "notes of woe." The "sobbing, sobbing" of the urban robin and sorrowful wren mingle with the chimney sweeper's "weep, weep," the "infant groan" and orphans' "trembling cry." The harlot's bawdy taunt and the dirge of a "Soldiers sigh" sound in the cacophony of London streets where, amid a vast moaning chorus around the altar of industrial slavery, weeping parents deliver piteously shrieking children to the roar of furnaces and din of clanging hammer and anvil, the drumming heartbeat of this tigerish city.

Beyond both the spontaneous cries of life, of pleasure and pain, and the mechanical rhythms of grinding mills, the Bard creates songs that reverberate with the harmonious thunder of the multitudes. The "School-Boy," torn from the sweet accompaniment of lark and huntsman's horn, has been forced to "Sit in a cage and sing," and priests, muttering their pious rounds, have

manacled every throat and voice in a stifled squawk. But, the poet troubadour of streets and lanes continues to call forth a vibrant ale-house chorus to raise up his hymn to the "human form divine."

We know from J. T. Smith that Blake composed tunes for his poems which "he would occasionally sing to his friends" and that "his ear was so good, that his tunes were sometimes most singularly beautiful and were noted down by musical professors." Allan Cunningham informs us that when Blake created, "As he drew the figure, he meditated the song which was to accompany it, and the music to which the verse was to be sung, was the offspring too of the same moment," but since he "wanted the art of noting it down, . . . we have lost melodies of real value."<sup>1</sup>

Blake's great visual art might distract us from all this music in his songs, but it is clear why many modern composers have tried to bring aspects of his rich and var-

Part III

THE CLOD AND THE PEBBLE  
William Brown

THE LITTLE VAGABOND  
Joan Morris

HOLY THURSDAY  
Diane Ragains

THE POISON TREE  
Alvin Epstein

THE ANGEL  
Sara Arneson

THE SICK ROSE  
Doris Mayes

TO TIRZAH  
Chorus

SONGS OF EXPERIENCE: Volume II

Part IV

THE VOICE OF THE ANCIENT BARD  
Leslie Guinn

MY PRETTY ROSE-TREE  
Men's Chorus

AH, SUN-FLOWER  
Madrigal Choir

THE LILLY  
William Brown  
Chorus

Part V

INTRODUCTION (Orchestra)

THE GARDEN OF LOVE  
William Brown

THE LITTLE BOY LOST  
Bobby Cavanaugh  
Madrigal Choir  
Chorus

A LITTLE GIRL LOST  
Diane Ragains  
Leslie Guinn

INFANT SORROW  
Madrigal Choir

VOCALISE  
Chorus

Part VI

LONDON  
David Caldwell

THE SCHOOL-BOY  
Bobby Cavanaugh

THE CHIMNEY-SWEEPER  
Madrigal Choir

THE HUMAN ABSTRACT  
Leslie Guinn

VOCES CLAMANDAE  
(Orchestra)

A DIVINE IMAGE  
David Caldwell  
Ensemble of Soloists and  
Choruses

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NOTES BY THE COMPOSER

(These notes were written for the Stuttgart premiere January 8 and 9, 1984; they are slightly revised for this performance.)

Ever since I was 17, when the reading of William Blake was to make a profound difference in my life, I have wanted to set the entire *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* to music. Several songs were actually completed in 1956—the opening, revised, of the *Songs of Innocence* and *The Sick Rose* are survivors of that time—and the work remained in my mind until 1973, when I moved to Ann Arbor to teach at the University of Michigan. I felt that I could thus simplify my life enough to be able to realize the cycle I had dreamed of for so long.

Most of the work was completed in the years 1973, 1974, 1979, 1980, 1981 and 1982; the opening of the *Songs of Experience* was fully sketched in 1966 and several of the major songs date from the early and middle 1970s. The largest problem was the form the entire setting would take. It could not be a standard opera, and the stopping and starting that constantly bedevils the oratorio form would prove fatal for 46 poems over an evening.

The final ordering of the *Songs* left by Blake, as will be seen, is quite different from the one I had become used to in my earliest reading. In the 1880s William Muir, an artist very involved with the revival of interest in Blake's engravings and paintings, actually printed some of Blake's works from the original copper plates and then (as Blake and his wife Catherine did) hand-colored them, although not to my mind as interestingly or vividly as Blake himself did. In Muir's edition of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1888) I found by chance in the appendix an ordering of the *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* that Blake had presumably left for the use of his wife should anyone want a further printing of the *Songs*, which had been one of the few of his engraved works that had had any sale. (No one evidently asked for a Catherine Blake copy.) This ordering, new to me, gave what I had needed in trying to find an overall shape to the work: a series of arches, in both subject and emotion, that marked off the piece into nine clear movements, each inhabiting a certain spiritual climate and progressing ever further in "Shewing the Contrary States of the Human Soul."

For those who are used to the ordering of the poems in the Oxford or Modern Library editions, it should be mentioned that these orderings derive from only a few of the printings Blake did that are somewhat consistent in that respect. Blake changed the ordering of the poems in practically every printing during his lifetime, even trading poems from *Innocence* to *Experience* and vice versa. With slight changes I have used Blake's last ordering in my piece; I had always wanted to end the evening with "A Divine Image," which Blake had engraved and then rejected for the *Experience* cycle, and I revised the order of the last Part to accommodate the poem.

The Blakean principle of contraries:

"without Contraries is no progression. Attraction and Repulsion, Reason and Energy, Love and Hate, are necessary to Human existence" (*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*) would also dominate my approach to the work, particularly in matters of style. Current Blake research has tended to confirm what I had assumed from the first, that at every point Blake used his whole culture, past and present, highflown and vernacular, as sources for his many poetic styles. Throughout the entire *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, exercises in elegant Drydenesque diction are placed cheek by jowl by ballads that could have come from one of the songsters of his day; it is as if many different people were speaking, from all walks of life, each in a different way. The apparent disharmony of each clash and juxtaposition eventually produces a deeper and more universal harmony, once the whole cycle is absorbed. All I did was to use the same stylistic point of departure Blake did, in my musical settings.

If I could say that any one work of mine has been the chief source and progenitor of the others, I would have to say that this is it. My fascination with the synthesis of the most unlikely stylistic elements dates from my knowledge and application of Blake's principle of contraries, and I have spent most of my artistic life in pursuit of this higher synthesis. In this work, through my settings, I have tried my best to make everything clear. I have used music in the same way as Blake did line and color, in order to illuminate the poems.

William Blake is to me the most urgent of poets. What he says is as immediate as ever, but particularly to us. He came from an epoch of social change as total as ours, and we can learn from him in the time of our deepest human crisis, that of whether or not we will survive as a planet. With clear and unjudging vision Blake saw where the human race was heading; it could be argued that the *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* may be the clearest explanation we have of what forces have brought us to this frightening impasse. If there is any solution, it is only through acceptance and understanding of our own nature, and if I have caused a more careful listening of Blake's message, then my work over a span of twenty-five years will not have been in vain.

WILLIAM BOLCOM

ied symphony to our ears. Benjamin Britten, Ralph Vaughn Williams, Virgil Thomson, and Samuel Adler have all set groups of the *Songs* to music. Ben Weber wrote a *Symphony in Four Movements on the Poems of William Blake* (1950). Ellen Raskin set some of *Innocence* to guitar for children, and Allen Ginsberg recorded his harmonium chants. Wilfred Mellers began but never completed the entire cycle; John Sykes (1909–62) finished thirty seven songs.



1. From above: The Brooklyn College Chorus, Sine Nomine Singers and the Brooklyn Philharmonic Orchestra performing William Bolcom's *Musical Illumination of Songs of Innocence and Experience* at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, 11 January 1987. (The St. James Cathedral Choristers, a children's choir, is not visible here.) Courtesy of T. Brazil.

At this "Enormous Labor," no one has been more tenacious than William Bolcom, who spent twenty-five years setting all forty-six poems for his *Musical Illumination of the Poems of William Blake*, a massive megascoring requiring as many as 200 singers and 100 musicians. Running almost three hours, this neo-Mahlerian "Symphony of a Thousand," twice as long as Beethoven's ninth symphony, is a monumental montage of lyrics for an epic Blake. After previous renditions in such radically different venues as the Stuttgart Opera, Chicago's park concerts, and the University of Michigan where Bolcom teaches, the *Songs* had its successful New York premiere in January 1987 at the Brooklyn Academy of Music's avant garde Next Wave Festival with Lucas Foss conducting the Brooklyn Philharmonic. Although no recording is yet planned due to the costs of assembling such forces, some further performances, probably in Europe, are projected for 1988.

Bolcom, now forty-eight, began playing the piano at three, reading music at five, and attending university

classes at eleven. He reports that, upon first encountering Blake at age seventeen in 1956, he "felt an immediate kinship" and set to music then the "Piper's Song" that opens the piece.<sup>2</sup> Throughout the 60s and 70s, while working as a teacher, composer, and piano player, he continued orchestrating the poems in what he hoped would be, like Blake's illustrations, an "illumination."

The composer cites Blake as precedent for his own attempt to combine the classical and the popular. After getting a graduate degree from Stanford, becoming a Rockefeller and Guggenheim fellow, and studying with the French composer Darius Milhaud, he wrote "serious" modern music in the prevailing dissonant mode—a few symphonies, eight string quartets, piano etudes. Then in 1963 Bolcom dropped out to write an off-Broadway "opera for actors," *Dynamite Tonight*, with Arnold Weinstein, discovered a gift for ragtime piano, wrote his *Ghostly Rags*, collaborated with Eubie Blake and began composing his *Unpopular Songs*, using classical techniques in pop styles and influencing such rock groups as Pink Floyd. After teaming up professionally and personally with mezzo-soprano, Joan Morris, (they walked down the aisle in 1975 to a ragtime *Wedding March* played by ninety-six-year-old Eubie), he became best known as her accompanist. They soon gained renown for bringing American popular music to classical labels and concert halls with wit, charm, and artistic seriousness. After earning a Grammy nomination for *After the Ball*, a collection of pre-1920s tunes (Nonesuch) which topped the classical charts, they followed with anthologies of vaudeville songs, Civil War era ballads, songs by Gershwin, Kern, Rodgers and Hart, and cabaret tunes, many by Bolcom, recorded on two live albums, *Black Max* and *Lime Jello* (RCA)—fourteen recordings in all. Bolcom never entirely stopped writing more formal modernist music, however, and the week of the Blake premiere also saw both a concert of popular songs with Morris and a performance of his violin concerto at Carnegie Hall. Soon after, the St. Louis Symphony would perform his *Fourth Symphony*, developed around an extended setting of Theodore Roethke's "The Rose." In preparation for setting poetry to music, Bolcom had studied at the University of Washington with Roethke, whose use of old poetic forms such as the villanelle parallels Bolcom's own mining of traditions. Here the main musical influence was the composer Charles Ives whose celebration of popular American idioms and emphasis on accessibility would influence such diverse other composers as Kurt Weill, Virgil Thomson, Leonard Bernstein, Lukas Foss, George Rothberg (whose writings Bolcom edited), David Del Tredici and Peter Schickele.

However, the confidence and theory for this eclecticism, according to Bolcom, came from Blake: "Blake

used his whole culture, past and present, highflown and vernacular as sources for his many poetic styles" with "elegant Drydenesque diction placed cheek by jowl by ballads that could have come from the songsters of his day . . . as if many different people were speaking, from all walks of life." The *Songs*, Bolcom's most ambitious attempt at synthesis, which he alternately calls a symphony-oratorio or cantata and compares to song cycle, opera, glee club concert, and rock album, pushes traditional composers' incorporation of folk motifs to new limits. Bolcom complains that "some composers have become so concerned with being one-pointed. You can become imprisoned that way. Bach and Mozart constantly brought some of the pop music of their day into their music." What differentiates Bolcom's work from more traditional borrowers, like Dvorak, who work classical embellishments on stolen snippets of popular melodies, is that Bolcom eschews such classical reworking and allows each vernacular style its own character. Instead, he explores the contrasts which result from letting rock and folk jostle alongside dissonant twelve-tone chorales. He attributes his "fascination with the synthesis of the most unlikely stylistic elements" to his knowledge and application of Blake's principle that "Without Contraries is no progression." In his wide variety of musical settings, he seeks to mirror the scope of Blake's work itself so "the apparent disharmony of each clash and juxtaposition eventually produces a deeper and more universal harmony, once the whole cycle is absorbed."

In order to achieve this range, avoid tedium and give maximum color to the lengthy work, he employs a massive panoply of musical forces in a three ring circus



2. Lukas Foss conducting the Brooklyn Philharmonic with boy soprano Bobby Cavanaugh performing "The Chimney Sweeper" from *Innocence*. Courtesy of T. Brazil.

whose spotlight shifts among a full oratorio chorus, a children's choir, madrigal group, nine soloists (two sopranos, a classical and a pop mezzo, tenor, baritone, boy soprano, rock singer and narrator), as well as a huge amplified orchestra with organ, euphonium, the usual winds in triplicate, flugelhorn, electric violins, a large percussion and brass ensemble, including two saxophones, and a rock band with electric bass and guitar. Bolcom hopes ultimately for a multi-media presentation with Blake's relief etchings projected during performances, and perhaps, even costumes and dance, but this has not yet proved possible although elaborate programs have included select plates.

He has found his order for the texts in one of the last of Blake's reorderings (indicated in a late letter, perhaps to Butts, E 772), a version existing in only one copy. Bolcom, having discovered the plan in the appendix to William Muir's 1880 facsimile of *The Marriage*, arranged the *Songs* into three parts, I for *Innocence*, II and III for *Experience*. Altering only the final sequence (to build to the restored "Divine Image"), he divided each part into three groups of varying numbers of poems as "a series of arches, in both subject and emotion, that marked off the piece into nine clear movements, each inhabiting a certain spiritual climate and progressing ever further in "Shewing the Contrary States of the Human Soul." While he sees "a sort of plot in the canon," with its three sections as a progression from childhood to adulthood to maturity, equal musical attention is given the nine song groups as contrasting vocal-symphony movements.

Within that mosaic structure attention is focused on the segueing of one song into the next, their sometimes jolting contrasts, and the orchestrated pauses between movements. Through these musical contrasts and developments Bolcom tries to reflect those of Blake's poems. All the oppositions between and within texts yield, however, to the symphony's main contrast between the atonal dissonant complexities of abstract modernism and the more straightforward melodies of various popular genres.<sup>3</sup> Bolcom's sequence offers him marvelous opportunities for such progress through contrast and reveals Blake's belated principle of organization as truly inspired.

The opening group provides a strong and upbeat introduction to *Innocence*. In a manner typical of the piece throughout, we hear a confusing, loud, polytonal, orchestral cacophony out of which a song eventually emerges with its own vision, as here the tenor lifts the piper's song, a simple tune to flute pipe and tambourine in bright three-quarter-time swing. The chorus follows with "The Echoing Green" in lilting, folksy triple-time with gorgeous choral echoes set off by country fiddle, chimes, and gong. The shock comes when "The Lamb" completely abandons this pastoral primitivism for the

first of what will be several atonal, operatic soprano pieces through which Bolcom tries to express the more visionary and unearthly Blake of such angelic visitations as "A Dream" and later, *Experience's* "An Angel." We are, however, brought thumpingly back out of the clouds with a kind of "Home on the Range" country-western "Shepherd" baritone solo with fiddle. The children's choir appropriately initiates "Infant Joy's" chromatic duet with a maternal mezzo over orchestral chords.

The movement then culminates in a soft-rock, electric jazz "Little Black Boy," whose drumming beat is intended to underscore Blake's ultimately nonassimilationist celebration of the boy's essentially black, sun-inflamed soul. In "Night the Ninth" of *The Four Zoas* Blake puts the "New Song" of apocalypse into the voice of an African slave in a remarkable musical prophecy of the Afro-American liberation of modern popular music. Bolcom's mild, folksy rock is performed here, however, by an overwhelmingly white chorus and orchestra. We were listening to it in the middle of black and Caribbean Brooklyn, whose street kids, chanting in repetitive fury from fire escapes and street corners in a Blakean populism of their own, have merged rhythm and rhyme to make it the rap center of the universe. Sensing here a missed opportunity, I wished the composer had ventured further beyond white popular idiom than a little ragtime and modified reggae into more Blakean spiritual-erotic ranges of gospel, rhythm and blues, or soul.

He tends, rather, to put Blake's wildness into orchestration and things like the fortissimo conclusion of the madrigal sextet's "Laughing Song" which opens the next movement. This section also includes the melodious lullaby of "Cradle Song" and in waltz time to guitar the first of Morris's delightful "Nurse's Songs," the work's only strictly musically paired poems. Gratified desire then yields to the angry exuberance of a "Holy Thursday" carol with horns by madrigalists and chorus, a neat choice for the liturgical-pop thundering of Blake's multitude. "The Chimney Sweeper" explicates such ferocity as that suppressed in its contrastingly pathetic recitation of the sweepers' plight against the whining euphonium of a sentimental music hall tune while an angelic chorus and clarinet enacts the sweeper's fantasy liberation. But, the set ends hopefully in F-major piety with "The Divine Image," serenely hymned by Morris. Part III of *Innocence* is a mostly classical and modernist movement, far less to my taste, though it introduces the Romantic "Night," nicely through a meditative "Nocturne" whose instrumental trill, pluck, and rattle bring us Blake's birds, beetles and crickets. In the shrieking soprano fluttering of "A Dream," the orchestral clamor and clanging cymbals of "On Another's Sorrow" and the completely dissonant "Little Boy Lost," the text is completely lost, only to be recovered in the folk tune of "The Little Boy Found."

The opening of *Experience* continues the post-Schoenberg mode for "The Voice of the Ancient Bard" and "Earth's Answer." The second movement is more enchanting. Beginning with a "Nurse's Song," rendered less bouncy and more plaintive by the addition of woodwinds and harp, Bolcom then places Blake's "Tyger," not against "The Lamb," but the preceding "Fly," a sad, haunting evocation of human contingency sung to skitish rhythms by the children's and women's choruses. "The Tyger" then confronts us with the harrowing forces with which such frail beings must contend in a shouted speech-song mostly by male voices. Bolcom, who said he tried "to make everything clear," both submits here to the poem's insistent beating and breaks its familiarity by putting two beats on each first syllable "Ty-y-ger Ty-y-ger



3. Joan Morris and William Bolcom, courtesy of Shaw Concerts, Inc.

bur-ur-ning bright" against a wild rumbling percussion. The group then concludes with a romantic Mahlerian rendition of "Little Girl Lost" and "Found," its straightforward five note melody first relayed acappella between male and female choruses, then, by the time it has taken us to the kingly lion's hallowed ground, rounded out with rich harmonizing. When the "spirit arm'd in gold" appears, it is encompassed by harmonious orchestration as well, until finally "The Tyger's" dread is resolved with the Blakean vision of the "sleeping child / Among tygers wild" of its rapturous conclusion.

The next three movements continue these contrapuntal styles: "The Little Vagabond"'s lusty barroom fox trot against the soaring Fs and F sharps above high C of "The Angel" 's frigid maid, scored to be performed "Silvery, like a princess in an ice-palace" and "A Poison Tree"'s grim narration against the ominous chords of an atonal piano. The flower group moves from a pretty bar-

bershop "Rose Tree," to the sighing echoes of "Ah! Sunflower" and the complex, chromatic setting of "The Lilly," making in its own way the piece's strong argument against finding an illusory simplicity in Blake's lyrics. The penultimate movement drowns the complaint against childhood repression of "The Garden of Love," "The Little Girl Lost" and "Infant Sorrow" in its disharmonies, but the *Carmina Burana*-like "A Little Boy Lost" with boy soprano and chorus drives it home with scary rhythm to a bit of melody picked up, appropriately, from "Holy Thursday."

Finally, we move toward an apocalyptic finale through the felicitous concluding cluster. The "mind-forg'd manacles" denounced by a rocking "London" are analyzed in "The Human Abstract." Such spiritual oppression is further exemplified in "The School-Boy"'s lyric plaint against a stultifying education and "The Chimney Sweeper"'s denunciation of religion, its tambourines, gong and drum brush capturing the child's wretched gaiety in what could be either a festive Elizabethan procession or a prison march. These contraries of human self-creation-become-self-destruction sharpen in the slow reggae finale whose terrible vision that "Cruelty has a Human Heart" is sung in cheerful full throated vigor to a too singable, too swingable tune passed with mounting energy from rock singer to full chorus and orchestra. Since you can't get the tune out of your head for days, the ironies continue to unsettle.

Bolcom claims he learned such juxtaposition from Bob Marley, to whom the song is dedicated, and that, in this dark age, he wanted to end the cycle in celebration, but one is equally reminded of our culture's hedonistic dance of death on the brink of every kind of economic, political, and ecological catastrophe. Ultimately, this prophetic element is what Bolcom, who spent the 60s studying in California and Paris, says draws him to Blake: "Blake is the most urgent of poets. He came from an epoch of social change as total as ours, and we can learn from him in the times of our deepest crisis. Blake saw where the human race was heading; it could be argued that the *Songs of Innocence and Experience* may be the clearest explanation of what brought us to this impasse." The solution he hopes to promote is a greater "acceptance and understanding of our own nature" through "a more careful listening to Blake's message."

I'm not sure quite how to assess his achievement. Is this the new American masterpiece that some critics have called it? Is it Blake? Which Blake? I feel too musically inexperienced to venture a judgment. The eclecticism and the Neo-Romanticism seem right; one wants the range of heaven and earth, common and sublime that Bolcom attempts. I loved the lyricism, and he has a way with melody that certainly gets you singing those very different "Divine Image" songs. As a whole, however, the piece, written over twenty-five years, may be overwhelmed by its own variety; motifs don't return often,

or, at least, I couldn't hear the continuity. Thus, unity seems to rest on its most repeated and pervasive style, the post-Schoenberg, post-Berg abstractions and dissonance. I'm not sure what this angst-ridden mode brings to Blake finally; perhaps it articulates some of the alienation, ambiguity, and indeterminacy so prominent in recent readings of Blake. Or is it just what a serious modern composition must sound like?

As for the vernacular, its effect is weakened by Bolcom's political-aesthetic decision to use mostly classical voices, and I felt that sometimes it was the wrong vernacular. Bolcom's popular idiom is mostly the milder, nostalgic kind, old folk tunes or turn of the century ballads. His rock made me want something funkier, harder — Pink Floyd, indeed. Though it's intriguing to imagine Blake as their bond, there's nothing in Bolcom so rebellious as "We don't want no education; We don't want no thought control" (Pink Floyd, *The Wall*). And where is the Dionysian? For me, it is still Ginsberg who captures Blake's prophetic seriousness in his passionately committed incantations. I heard Ginsberg get a college auditorium chanting as a fierce refrain, the "Merrily, merrily we welcome in the year" of "Spring"'s erotic pastoral which, he promised us, sung with sufficient conviction, could resurrect the 60s utopian dream. It has never failed to teach my students more in ten wild minutes about Blake's contraries than any other introduction. What Ginsberg's chants or the Labour Party's bellowing of Parry's "Jerusalem" capture is that Blake's poetry must be sung so it can be taken into our yearning bodies and filled with our hearts' desires.

Even so, it is not just Ginsberg's but probably two, three, many Blakes that we are wanting and that all these furiously composing musicians like Bolcom will continue to give us. We have been absorbing the lesson of Blake's "composite art" as providing, in the mutual commentary of picture and text, not a more definitive interpretation, but more interpretive possibilities. This aesthetic, W. J. T. Mitchell has commented, demands creative participation, almost as if we must intuit missing poems Blake could have written to go with the pictures.<sup>4</sup> Well, there is missing music to go with the engraved poems, and composers like Bolcom remind us that Blake's *Songs* bequeath to us an even greater freedom, leaving to the ongoing "wonders Divine of Human Imagination" the interpretive music to which they will be sung.

<sup>1</sup>G. E. Bentley, Jr., *Blake Records* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969) 457, 482.

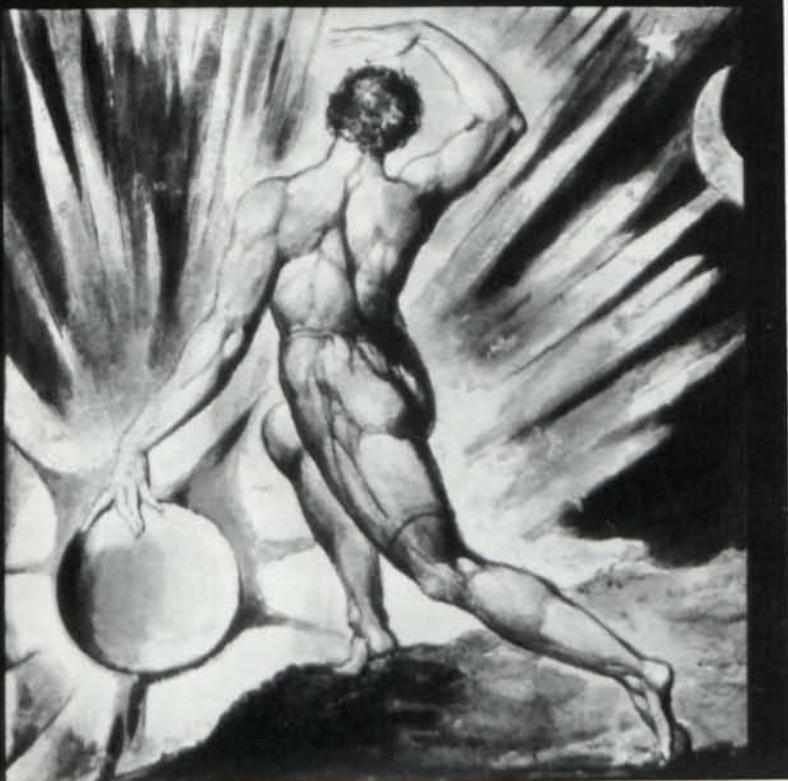
<sup>2</sup>Quotations from Bolcom are drawn from his "Program Notes," other materials made available to me by the composer and comments reported in such media as the *Village Voice*, *New York Times*, and *New Yorker*.

<sup>3</sup>I was assisted with the music by Daniel Goode, a composer of New Music and professor at Rutgers University.

<sup>4</sup>W. J. T. Mitchell, *Blake's Composite Art: A Study of the Illustrated Poetry* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1978), 8.

# BLAKE AND SWEDENBORG

## Opposition Is True Friendship



Harvey F. Bellin and Darrell Ruhl, eds.  
*Blake and Swedenborg: Opposition Is True  
 Friendship.* New York: Swedenborg  
 Foundation Inc., 1985. 157 pp. \$8.95.

Reviewed by Inge Jonsson

The subtitle of this anthology, "The Sources of William Blake's Arts in the Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg," is more precise about its contents than its allusive title.

The subtitle has the virtue of reminding us of the demonstrated connection between Blake's poetry and engravings and the theosophical writings of Emanuel Swedenborg.

This does not come as a surprise, and apart from some introductory surveys the anthology presents very few articles that have not been published elsewhere. A good starting-point is Morton D. Paley's paper "A New Heaven Is Begun: Blake and Swedenborgianism" (15-34), which is not only the first but also the best contribution to the book. There are in all thirteen surviving books in which Blake made notes, and among those, three had been written by Swedenborg: *Heaven and Hell*, *Divine Love and Wisdom* and *Divine Providence*.

The first Swedenborgian conference in London in 1789, in which Blake and his beloved Catherine registered among the participants, was the only assembly we know him to have attended. Of similar importance are Blake's attacks on Swedenborg in his marginal notes in *Divine Providence* and the satire *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. When dealing with a well-informed critic like Blake a negative reading often indicates influences as interesting as those emanating from the submissive attitude of a follower.

The conference in April 1789 unanimously accepted forty-two theological theses; they are available in a later section of the anthology. Thus it is easy for the reader to find out what Blake could accept at that time as a foundation for his creed. It is a matter of course that he firmly believed in man's free will, but Paley emphasizes that he also accepted Swedenborg's famous *Nunc licet*, "That Now it is allowable to enter intellectually into the Mysteries of Faith" (*Vera Christiana Religio*, n. 185).

Obviously Blake had already strained the meaning of Swedenborg's words in a direction that did not correspond to the intentions of the master. Paley takes one of the marginal notes in *Heaven and Hell* as an example. According to Blake's reading, hell becomes something negative, a kind of mistake for heaven, which is of course in line with his own passionate conception of unity but not in accordance with Swedenborg's thinking. In a similar way Blake tried to stress the unifying elements of Swedenborg's doctrine of correspondence restraining everything that separates nature from the spiritual world: i.e., an attitude toward reality which later he was to express by the wonderful metaphor of looking *through* the eye but not *with* it.

As Paley correctly observes, Blake had no reason for attacking Swedenborg as a representative of a doctrine of predestination "more abominable than Calvin's." In a number of texts Swedenborg firmly repudiated all ideas of a divine predestination. God is omniscient, however, knowing the final destination of all individuals, but this should not prevent man from making use of his *liberum arbitrium*. From an omniscient point of view it may be impossible to divide between predestination and prediction but not from a human one, and man's free will is a basic element in Swedenborg's theology.

But Blake found this well-known method of dealing with the theodicy problem unacceptable, and there were other reasons which forced Blake to dissociate himself from the New Jerusalem of the Swedenborgians and to build his own. First Paley mentions the attitude to the French revolution. For Blake, the upheavals in France were a cause for rejoicing, but the New Church people were anxious to condemn them completely. Some internal conflicts made Blake indignant, e.g., the expulsion of a number of members, among them two remarkable

Swedes, Carl Bernhard Wadström and August Norden-skjöld, because of a controversy about Swedenborg's view of concubinage presented in *De amore conjugiali* (1768). The rather macabre opening of Swedenborg's tomb in 1790, or more precisely the motivation for it, had a similar effect on Blake. As Paley reports, he fiercely alluded to these events in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*.

However, this formidable satire does not represent Blake's last words about Swedenborg. On the contrary, Paley shows very convincingly that there are many Swedenborgian influences to be found in Blake's later works, in details as well as in general evaluations. The list given in *Jerusalem* of the books of the Bible, which contain the internal sense of the Word, is exactly the same as the one Swedenborg established. Swedenborg also inspired Blake's view of history as a series of "churches" more or less in a state of decomposition, and gave him the fancy piece of information that the oldest Word is preserved in Great Tartary. Swedenborg himself referred to his angelic interlocutors, but a skeptical reader probably prefers a number of contemporary texts as possible sources for this statement, which of course cannot be scientifically verified.

Following Paley's learned essay is a survey of a more popular kind written by one of the editors. Bellin's way of presenting the relations between Swedenborg and Blake indicates that the author is a prominent TV-producer with a keen eye for what is dramatically and pictorially efficient. Blake's art contains many qualities of that sort and Bellin's contribution includes a number of impulses for the analysis of the artist's Swedenborg inspiration. The author lays the main stress on the doctrine of correspondence as a liberating as well as a structuring force in Blake's attempt to visualize his ideas of a psychic universe, and this seems generally reasonable. But when it comes to details Bellin hardly succeeds in dealing with the wide gap between the rationalistic factors of Swedenborg's own presentation of the doctrine and Blake's distinctive mythology. On the other hand, he certainly exaggerates Swedenborg's contributions as a scientist, which is as characteristic as understandable in most Swedenborgian contexts. The rather unfortunate effect of this apologetic attitude is that Swedenborg will be seen as a less problematic, and consequently less interesting, author than he becomes if one tries to understand him as representing some esoteric trends in eighteenth-century thinking.

In one of his footnotes Paley refers polemically to Kathleen Raine's book *Blake and Tradition* (1968). Her chapter on *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience* is reprinted in the anthology, but Paley's critical reference concerns a neoplatonic interpretation in a later part of Raine's book. However, the platonic tradition has been invoked also in this chapter, where Swedenborg's

"symbolism" is presented as a variation of platonistic thinking. This is certainly true of all "symbolic" languages in European philosophy, but this very fact makes precise distinctions more important. Even if Raine is of the same opinion, she has put almost all emphasis on Swedenborg's rather arbitrary methods for interpreting Holy Writ. The most fascinating elements of Swedenborg's thinking are not given their due attention, e.g., that the doctrine of correspondence represents a substitute for the mathematically conceived universal language of which some of his greatest predecessors in the seventeenth century had been dreaming. Swedenborg's visions bear the stamp of decades of scientific work and daring speculations within the framework of contemporary science about the hidden structure of nature. In Raine's view "there is no literary value in Swedenborg's symbolism, and nothing could be less poetic than the 'visions' of that sage," but she has presented most unsatisfactory reasons for her evaluation. On the contrary, Swedenborg's works as a whole display deep intellectual and emotional qualities resulting in a personal combination of enlightened rationality and romantic forebodings. Blake must have felt the intensity behind Swedenborg's systematic rigidity, and he reacted in the same manner as so many other artists and poets: sometimes he found these qualities attractive and inspiring; on other occasions he was repelled by the master's conventionalities in concepts and style.

The second contribution to the anthology by Kathleen Raine is a lecture held in Paris in 1985 called "The Human Face of God." Her subject here is the concept of God in Swedenborg's and Blake's works in comparison with Jung's *Answer to Job*. From a literary point of view this lecture is interesting as an attempt to prove that the influence of Swedenborg appears to have been stronger in Blake's later works than in those from the 1790's. Since this is a hypothesis contradictory to the mainstream of Blake scholarship it should be considered. But the argumentation here can hardly be regarded as well founded. In order to prove the hypothesis a much more penetrating analysis of Swedenborg's and Blake's use of the concept "the Divine Human" will be necessary. Still, Raine's edifying discourse contains many valuable impulses for future research.

The second section of the anthology, "Historical contexts," includes the report of the London conference in 1789 mentioned above and a study by Raymond H. Deck, Jr. of Charles Augustus Tulk (originally published in *Studies in Romanticism* 1977). This is a solid historical account of one of Blake's nineteenth-century patrons, who probably had some importance for the artist's later opinions of Swedenborg. Tulk's parents took part at the London conference in 1789, but their son preferred to remain outside Swedenborgian sectarianism. Still, he

was well read in the master's writings, and he was also one of the founders of a society for printing and publishing these works in 1810. As the Swedenborg Society, this association has done great work in promoting information about them and is still doing so.

Tulk was a gentleman of independent means, who devoted his time to politics and his reading of Swedenborg. He also supported William Blake in different ways. It was probably their common friend John Flaxman who enticed Tulk to buy some of Blake's works around 1815. In February 1818 he lent Coleridge a copy of the poet's *Songs*, and the learned critic immediately identified some essential Swedenborg influences in them. On a later occasion he also arranged a meeting between Coleridge and Blake. The author has also given convincing reasons for the attribution of an article in 1830 to Tulk, which describes this encounter: "Blake and Coleridge, when in company, seemed like congenial beings of another sphere, breathing for a while on our earth; which may easily be perceived from the similarity of thought pervading their works."

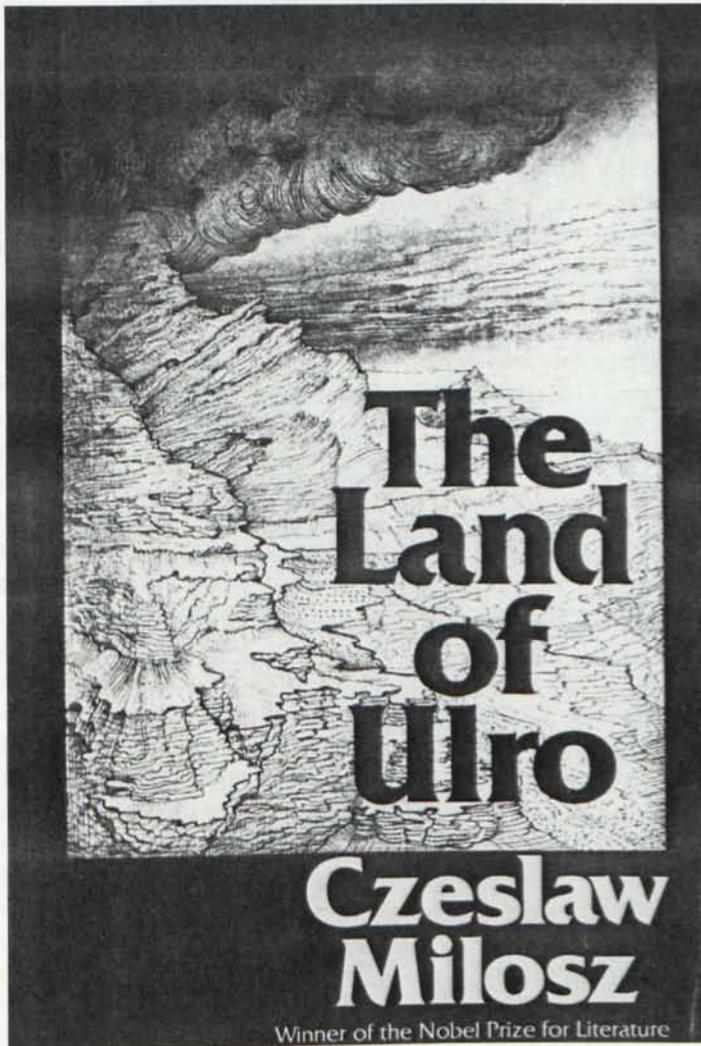
The concluding section of the anthology is called "Swedenborgian Postscripts." It consists of two articles and one lecture by New Church men, who illustrate different attempts at explaining Blake's complicated relations to Swedenborg from their particular point of view. In that respect they outline a reception history, to which this beautiful anthology itself is the latest contribution. The question marks in its margins should not discourage anyone interested in William Blake's art from reading this book. It certainly deserves many readers both within and outside of the New Church tradition, where the artist has caused many sorrows but also great pride.

Czeslaw Milosz. *The Land of Ulro*. Trans. Louis Iribarne. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1984. vii + 287 pp. Hard cover \$17.95/paper \$9.95.

Reviewed by Tadeusz Ślawek

This book, whose title must unfailingly attract attention of all Blakeans, opens in a series of familiar, almost Derridean, hesitations. The reader learns from the first sentence of the preface that he is no more than an intruder in the world of the book, and if he wishes to indulge in the act of reading it is only at his risk: "Dear

Reader, this book was not intended for you, and I feel you should be forewarned before you enter its bizarre tangle" (v)—even Sterne and Derrida would have spared remarks like that till the moment when they had already let the reader well into their mazes.



The speaking voice, however, which announces the book in a highly assertive manner ("My decision to write *The Land of Ulro* was an act of perfect freedom . . .," v) is not exempt from general indecision: what was started as a probing of personal, "maverick" pleasure turns out to be a disquieting search for identity. The assertive tone has been only a brief romance with the tradition of the preface where one knows, announces, and establishes relationships with past epochs and works; the mode of Milosz's book itself is interrogative ("Who was I? Who am I now, years later, here on Grizzly Peak, in my study overlooking the Pacific?" 3). "Dear Reader" who will take up *The Land of Ulro*: you are in an alien territory that is a labyrinth (*Lasciate*

*ogni speranza*), and the voice that leads you is that of a ventriloquist.

The task of the (dear) Reader is, however, more Romantic than Dantean: it is less to study the philosophical pattern of existence and more to penetrate the principle of one's identity. The book then is in part Wordsworthian in its attempt to trace the "Growth of a Poet's Mind" so that we shall finally see that the identity of the voice questioned in the first sentence is secured again on the last page by a reference to a Romantic concept of memory: "By recalling that the boy and the poet — 'catastrophist' and the old professor in Berkeley are the same man . . ." (275). If it is true that the book is a "tangle," then it is equally true that it has its own "principle" (275), which saves it from chaos and which is conterminous with a continuity of the human self. In the same way as the young boy from Lithuania and the old professor in Berkeley are one person (despite the meanders of life defying understanding: "I do not understand my life . . ." 4), the book is — like Blake's *Songs* — both "childish and adult, both ethereal and earth-bound" (275) (despite its "chimerical kingdoms" of allusions and digressions).

The Sternian/Derridean attitude of the preface resolves in the Platonic Care which saturates the whole book. This Care is Platonic, not Heideggerian, because unlike the Care in *Sein und Zeit* it is not destined to be a mode of man's rootedness in Being, but as in *The Laws* it is animated by the sense of the moral duty which one has in the face of culture and in the name of culture. The (dear) reader from his ostracized position of a total stranger and intruder in Milosz's world passes through a more sympathetic territory where the author, the reader, and humanity are purged by the waters of understanding. "Reader, be tolerant of me. And of yourself. And of the singular aspirations of our human race" (275). Reader (notice, how Care eliminates a formulaic "dear"), it is true, we have studied my idiosyncratic tastes and family relations, but we have done so in order to see how our Care enables us to participate in something larger than a mere individual self.

This "something larger," which goes beyond narcissistic introspection, Care bodies forth in culture. In Milosz's philosophy, which is predominantly a philosophy of culture, Nature plays the role of a gothic villain: it is either invisible but subtly pulls the strings, or manifest and then cataclysmic and indifferent in its destructive force ("Nature's reckless indifference . . .," 37). Thus a series of readings of particular authors that Milosz offers in his book is organized by two principles: that a human freedom is a freedom of intellectual growth in a library, and that this library necessarily has to define itself against the external world of Nature. We should be careful not to confound Milosz's and Borges's

versions of the library: the latter is so extensive that, in effect, it offers no choice and no freedom, the former is a library of masterpieces ("basic texts") where the choice may seem haphazard or even absurd, but it is never meaningless.

"I insist on the freedom, on my right to browse at will among the basic texts that are the inheritance of centuries . . ." (159). Although unlike Borges's Library of Babel Milosz's shelves always shelter meaning, the path of the reader is no less labyrinthine: Gombrowicz, Dostoyevsky, Mickiewicz, Oscar Milosz, Stanislaw Brzozowski, Swedenborg, Simon Weil, Shestov, Blake. Also unlike the Library of Babel Milosz's maze of books has a thread, a sparkle of hope which turns the archives of pure *écriture* into the memoirs of human mind. As Milosz confesses: "That thread is my anthropocentrism and my bias against Nature" (159).

We begin to see the first reason why Blake became a haunting presence in Milosz's book: the critique of Nature (spelled characteristically to emphasize, through capitalization, its Manichaeic power) is inevitably aimed at a certain version of the Romantic philosophy represented by Rousseau, one of the three chief villains of Blake's philosophical mythology, who "prescribed it [Nature] as the cure for a corrupted civilization" (160). Culture, Milosz seems to be saying, will always benefit more from the drugs of Plato's rather than Nature's Pharmacy. The way to a recovery from the crisis does not lead to a nostalgic look backward towards the Golden Age but to a bold analysis of the future. A diatribe against Nature must necessarily open a discussion of the sense of human time.

There seem to exist two types of literature, one which is easier to detect and name and which, almost diabolically corrupted, still turns out to be its own caricature when one faces the unfathomable abysses of human history. Milosz calls this tradition "dark" and quickly defines his response to it as "hostile" (38). No names are mentioned, but a few pages later Milosz hints at Kafka, Beckett, Sartre, and Ionesco (42) as if unwilling to leave us in the dark. Milosz's unfavorable response to this literature is grounded in his disbelief and mistrust of Nature: "dark" literature probes the nature of man and pretends to achieve shattering effects whereas its "naturalness" thus obtained is but a parody of, as Blake would put it, "Real Existence." To deal with Nature in this manner inescapably winds up in certain cheapness of effect, ". . . its [dark literature's] mockery, sarcasm, and profanations have seemed cheap to me when compared to the power of Evil that is within every man's experience" (38).

The other type of literature is more difficult to name but can be described as "anthropocentric," i.e., based not so much on the idea of man as the measure

of all things, but on man as a possible hope for all things. The difference between these two statements measures the gap separating the old version of Greek and Roman humanism (no longer possible in the light of human past), and a new mutation of humanist lore grounded in a careful and tending attitude towards human future. This millenarian thread in the weave of culture is what links all the diverse writers Milosz presents in *The Land of Ulro*. Of Gombrowicz he says that he staked his future "on the next spin of the wheel, on mankind's future course" (23). The reading of Dostoyevsky hinges upon a note from his journals maintaining that "All depends on the next century" and a powerful eschatological belief in a perfect, final harmony "after civilization" (54). Oscar Milosz, a hermetic "French poet born a subject of the tsarist Empire, one-quarter Italian on his grandmother's side . . . half Jewish on his mother's . . ." (75), shared with Dostoyevsky and Gombrowicz a profound rebellion against the ages of "wholesale trivialization" (206) and was right, according to his nephew writing *The Land of Ulro*, "not to expect anything of his contemporaries or of their sons" (206), and to look in his cabalistic meditations, in the last decade of his life, for the regenerated man of the future. It is this hope that is the mode of the future because the anthropocentric vision of philosophy that pumps the blood into Milosz's book is dominated by the Swedenborgian principle "that Heaven, the sum of myriads of personal heaven-projections, is Man-shaped" (145), and the evolution of man's religious sentiments seems to coincide with that of Dostoyevsky's: from man-God to God-man (54).

Still the adjective "Manichaeic" makes its appearance far too frequently in this book to be incidental. Man is not only a domain of hope but also of despair torn schizophrenically between his angelic and satanic elements. It is at that moment when Nature creeps back into Milosz's literary and philosophical readings: his argument against the "dark" writing is founded not only upon the "cheapness" of its effects but, first of all, upon the fact that "it comes *naturally*, in a way, to a part of the human spirit I regard as inferior" (my emphasis, 244). Despair and blasphemy are then cheap, easy, and natural while hope and future, the future of the new man, are "artificial," difficult, and painstaking, in a word — aesthetic. We can see now that in Milosz's universe, as in Blake's, there is an immediate link between future, hope, and art on the one hand, and the chance for overcoming the crisis which started some time in the eighteenth century on the other.

What is at stake in Milosz's interpretation of the crisis is precisely the future of man. To the humble question of the amazed and depressed reader, "What does it all mean?" the last chapter of the book offers this straightforward answer:

This much can be said: that Blake's land of Ulro is not a fantasy if we ourselves have been there; that since the eighteenth century something, call it by whatever name one will, has been gaining ground, gathering force. And all who have sought exit from the 'wasteland' . . . have been, in my opinion, justified in their endeavor, more, are worthy of admiration, even if their efforts ended in failure and were bought at the price of various 'abnormalities.' (269)

This long quotation shows that, for Milosz, Blake matters less as a master of words and more as a poet-thinker who codes in his writings some basic existential elements which must be rediscovered by those who are in search of exit from the predicament in which humanity has been locked for two centuries. Hence Milosz reads Blake and his longer poems as a work of the author who "engaged the 'scientific world-view' in a fundamental dialogue" (158). From Newton to Jacques Monod, one of whom Milosz quotes as the founding father and the other as a prodigy of the land of Ulro, the crisis can be defined by two processes: one, a growing gap between religion and science; two, a reflection of this situation in the inner structure of the human being whose ability to believe and to know splits to form two separate channels of cognition. In Milosz's philosophy the crisis is summarily represented as a more and more thorough invasion of culture by Nature, as the intrusion of what is easy and cheap upon what is difficult and aesthetic, of a sudden surfacing of the base and inferior which unexpectedly masters the language of symbols. In this diagnosis there are hidden skirmishes with Freudianism ("how could I make pretensions to 'sincerity,' I who go around in a corset, all self-discipline on the inside?" 12), Beckett ("Man has been mired in Ulro by the successes of science . . . but the ultimate proof of the crippling power of Ulro . . . lies in the passivity of those vegeto-animals, those pale Elysian shades that are its literary 'figures'" 244-45), but the main war is waged against Nature. Hence it is Swedenborg and Blake who determine the main front line of the battle: "Swedenborg was well aware that Nature, perceived as a system of mathematical relations, had begun to usurp God in the minds of the educated" (140). Similarly, Blake "did not approve of Nature" (160), working towards the future transfiguration of man who would be in a position to save Nature from suffering. Blake fits then the Manichaeic pattern of Milosz's philosophy in that in his own thinking Blake emphasized the antagonisms of double nature (the Outward and the Inward Eye), and good God and the monstrous miscreator of the universe (Urizen as Blake's reading of the Valentinian Achemoth, the monstrous offspring who, expelled from the pleroma, became the ultimate origin of the created world).

In the first part of his diagnosis of the modern crisis of thought Milosz retraces familiar Eliotic paths: T. S. Eliot's "dissociation of sensibility" located in the seventeenth century is moved a hundred years later and redressed as a conflict of science and faith. But the remedy offered by Milosz does not come from Eliot's Pharmacy; it is a result of his life-long studies of philosophy and literature as well as his "leftist" sympathies. Milosz needs the tradition of Swedenborg, Blake, and Oscar Milosz to demonstrate that the way out of the dilemma is in a reformed notion of science, in making the scientific compatible with the poetic. It is not a coincidence that the 60s, the most promising and most ungratified of all the decades of the twentieth century, also appear in Milosz's book. The remedy that he prescribes for man, the dweller of the wasteland, is first of all the cure of vision by metaphor and symbol; Milosz, the old professor from Berkeley, knows "that the battle was decided not by discourses and disquisitions, not by faith or heresy, but by visions of the universe . . ." (224). Thus, one may repeat after Blake that "if the doors of perception were cleansed . . .," but one should not stop short of going to the next stage of Blake's thought and say that the way towards this cleansing must involve imagination. The science which at one moment in his meditation Milosz ascribes to Copernicus and Newton (226), evokes a vision of a static and immovable universe where man is a homeless being. The sense of unification Swedenborg was talking about is achieved at the price of man's alienation, which is measured by man's inability to situate himself. The drama of the wasteland is a story of space that cannot shelter and protect, in the same way as the time of Ulro is that of the archaic past bereft of the future. Milosz's Ulro is the land of Newtonian space which, as Alexandre Koyré describes it, "broke down the barriers that separated the heavens and the earth . . . and unified the universe. . . . It did this by substituting for our world of quality . . . the world of quantity, of reified geometry, a world in which . . . there is no place for man."<sup>1</sup>

It is to the "visionary reformers of science, whether it be Goethe, Blake, or [Oscar] Milosz" (240) that Milosz's philosophy turns to in search of the exit. Characteristically enough, so that the spirit of the 60s would never slip away from our reach, Einsteinian physics is also included among the poetic and philosophical groping for the Way. Fritjof Capra has already shown that the Tao of physics is an important path to get us out of the maze of the wasteland; hence Milosz is fully justified not only in reporting to us Oscar Milosz's enthusiasm for the physics of relativity but also in musing on how "humbly respectful" he had been when he met Ein-

stein at Princeton (226). Einstein liberates imagination, i.e., man is able again to think a meaningful topography, a topography where the symbolic dimension gathers diverse areas to form a significant image. This gathering, itself symbolic in its etymology (*symbolein* means "to grow together")—let us note parenthetically that here we have one of very infrequent moments in Milosz's thought where it gets close to the philosophy of Martin Heidegger—brings about a true unification. Not the one when Nature usurps the place of the sacred, but the unification which is actualized in response to the most basic human need: the compulsion to situate all things. This argumentation points at two facts: first, that the land of Ulro is a territory that cannot be mapped and where things are scattered in a chaotic way (very much like the map of the world from Lewis Carroll's *The Hunting of the Snark* which consists of "a perfect and absolute blank"); if so, then there can be no more pressing task than organizing space, not in the static manner of science but in the active way of imagination. Both in Oscar Milosz and in Blake, the author of *The Land of Ulro* is looking for the indications that would bring us closer to imagination, i.e., to reshaping and restructuring the paradigm of our thinking, since imagination is treated not "as something incidental to sensory perception but as its prime condition" (200).

We have seen so far that in the perspective of Milosz's book Blake matters as one of a few visionary scientists who dared to undermine the dominating image of the world, a philosopher of the future transfiguration of man and an organizer of symbolic space. We ought not to forget, however, that Blake is not the main figure of the book; this place having been reserved for Milosz's uncle and Parisian mentor Oscar Milosz. We are justified then in our asking about the role of Blake in a carefully cast drama of the two centuries of Western intellect that Milosz sketches in *The Land of Ulro*. For Milosz, Blake is one of the key figures of European culture not so much for what his poetry can offer as it calls for an ultimate effort of interpretation and undivided attention ("... what sort of poet is Blake if not even a five-hundred page glossary of his symbols . . . is adequate to elucidate the esoterica in his *Prophetic Books*, paintings and engravings?" 32), but for what Blake's reading can contribute to the understanding of other texts and other writers. Blake's texts seem to be, for Milosz, one of the few master texts of culture indispensable to anyone who wishes to respond to the primal urge to "situate things." Blake's defense of "Minute Particulars" against violent assaults of the Universal comes to Milosz's assistance during his wrestling with Gombrowicz. The problem of Gombrowicz's writing—to what extent a human individual can be saved or made compatible with the ever growing pressure of the

general—seems to refer not only to this Polish émigré writer. Throughout *The Land of Ulro* Milosz repeatedly asserts that he wants "to ensure that his words correspond to reality" (245), to say "something about matters I regard as urgent" (187), thus combining the aesthetic with the ontological bias. Common mistakes, the tyrannies of words, are as a matter of fact only failed ontologies. If Gombrowicz overcomes the restraints of traditional humanism and philosophical subject-object division by questioning the independence of the individual, by removing the ego to the conceptual background and placing in the foreground the undefinable and untraceable pattern of relationships between individuals and groups, if Gombrowicz—like so many other modern writers—was advising humanity not to say "I assume" but rather "it is assumed by/for me" (42), if then we live—as Heidegger puts it concisely—in the epoch of the end of humanism, it is Blake who brings back, through his defense of the "Minute Particular," ethical security according to which an individual can still be made responsible for his deeds.

To protect "Minute Particulars" against the assaults of the Universal is to defend man who situates things in the space of symbols. As in Gombrowicz's space of endless reproductions of ritualistic gestures, so in the cosmic abysses of the longer poems a complicated system of mythology is woven to make a protective veil against the brutality of the non-symbolic mass. "First there was *Homo sapiens*, later *Homo faber* and above all, in our time, *Homo ritualis*" (44)—in this somewhat Yeatsian passage Milosz reveals another Blake who looks for the way out from the wasteland through symbols and rituals of mythology no longer cheap and easy but difficult, dramatic, and individual.

At this point there seems to lie the existentialist connection of Blake's thought which Milosz, however, does not pursue—a decision hardly surprising in the light of his hostility towards "dark" literature. The paradox of faith, as described by Søren Kierkegaard in *Fear and Trembling*, is anchored precisely in the act of resignation through which the individual becomes larger than the universal but which defies even the aesthetic and expressive potential of tragedy by the power of difficulty, distress, and dread. Blake's taking up philosophical arms in defense of "Minute Particulars" is then an act of viewing religion not as an institutionalized way of "saying things" but as a passion where man needs a power larger than himself but through which man reasserts his individuality that dooms him to loneliness. What Kierkegaard says of the man of faith can very well describe Blake's position: "A man can become a tragic hero by his own powers—but not a knight of faith. When a man enters upon a way . . . of the tragic

hero, many will be able to give him counsel; to him who follows the narrow way of faith no one can give counsel, him no one can understand. Faith is a miracle . . . for that in which all human life is unified is passion, and religion is a passion."<sup>2</sup>

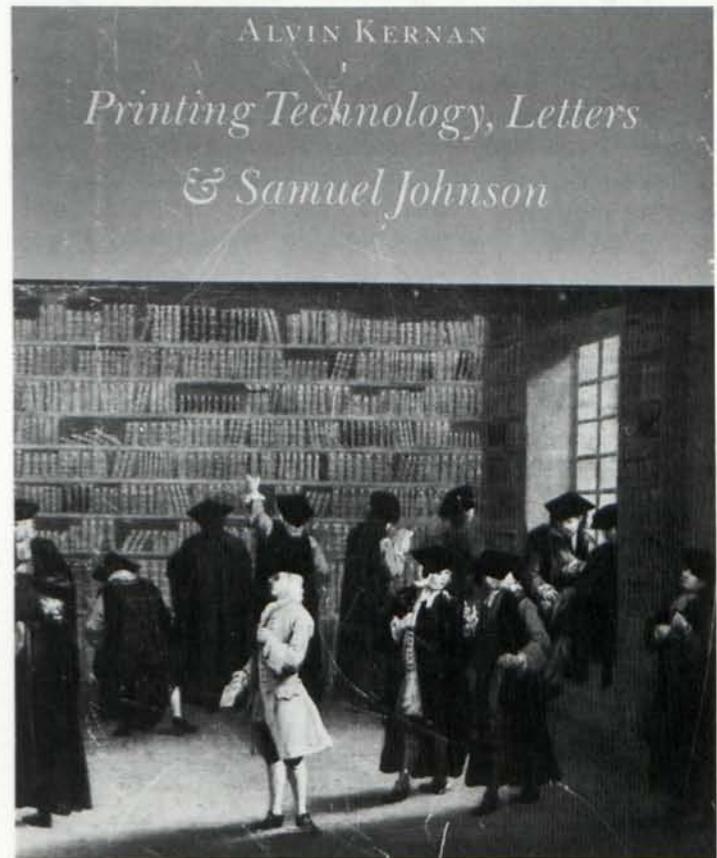
Through the effort towards mythological ritualization Blake becomes a particularly important buffer zone against chaos in the time of the gradual fading of Christian symbols in the West. It is this revitalization of Christianity that allows for a comparison between Blake and Dostoyevsky. What is at stake here is something much more fundamental than a reading of *The Brothers Karamazov* through the Blake tetrad (Fyodor—Tharmas, carnality; Dmitri—Luvah, passion; Ivan—Urizen, suffering intellect; Alyosha—Urthona, imagination). For Milosz, *The Brothers Karamazov* is a part of the same strategy with which intellect tries to replace the eighteenth-century God, Deus absconditus, the perfect Clockmaker, by the God-man, God who is not "a mathematical diagram." At one moment in his analysis Milosz even risks a sociological hypothesis: the withdrawal of Christian myths leaves space for bizarre cults ("The California of Far Eastern and satanic cults is an illustration of what happens when Christianity 'abstains'" 186). The guess may be wrong, but it again opens the same "urgent" question about the exit from the land of Ulro. If the exit is possible at all, it must be unconcealed through symbols and imagination and not through the literalist vision of science. Through what Theodore Roszak calls the "Rhapsodic Intellect" which is nothing else but the ability, to a large extent lost or to say the least threatened through the withdrawal of Christian mythology, to view the world as a reflection of a higher reality, a collection of symbols that tell us their drama which is, the sooner we realize it the better, the drama of human condition. Blake is so precious to Milosz because nowhere else in the recent history of culture do we find a more strenuous and heroic effort to bring home to man the truth of humanity as homo symbolicus.

<sup>1</sup>Alexandre Koyré. *Newtonian Studies* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1965) 23.

<sup>2</sup>Sören Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling and the Sickness unto Death*, trans. W. Lowrie (Garden City: Doubleday/Anchor Books, 1954) 77.

Alvin Kernan. *Printing Technology, Letters & Samuel Johnson*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987. xvi + 357 pp., 5 illus., bibliography. \$29.50.

Reviewed by Nelson Hilton



Though it mentions Blake only twice in passing, this stimulating book brings a welcome base to our evolving consideration of the most distinguishing aspect of Blake's project, his self-published "Illuminated Printing." "Even Milton and Shakespeare could not publish

their own works," Blake notes in the 1793 prospectus; "This difficulty has been obviated by the Author of the following productions now presented to the Public; who has invented a method of Printing . . . which combines the Painter and the Poet." Kernan's book helps us place this radical innovation in a social context, making the most significant difference between Blake's work and the rest of literature again its most meaningful difference.

Caxton, the Authorized Version, and the first Folio notwithstanding, it was during the eighteenth century that England became a print society, and the consequences of "the interiorization of technology" (Marshall McLuhan's phrase) were profound and pervasive, altering the nature of consciousness itself. Indeed, only the breaking down of print-based letters in our emerging postindustrial and electronic culture forces upon us the necessary distance and concern to formulate our earlier transformation.

For Kernan, Samuel Johnson exemplifies the new professional role offered the writer by print culture. Usually seen as "a Roland, the last defender of the old neoclassic values," here Johnson, especially in Boswell's mythic image of him, appears "a bearer of the new, an epic figure of the Aeneas type in uneasy transition between two cultural worlds" (22) and stands as the founding instance of "the romantic cult of authorial personality" (149). Johnson's notorious authoritativeness, besides masking his own at times despairing nihilism, "matched exactly the needs created by print technology and by a medium that provided an increasingly baffling surplus of information, much of it contradictory, all of it confusing and unsettling in its multiplicity and novelty" (150). As Kernan points out elsewhere, "Libraries of the time seldom exceeded 50,000 volumes . . . but this was a bibliographic magnitude sufficient to change the society's conception of knowledge" (242).

At the beginning of the century, anxiety over the changing conception of knowledge is expressed in the conflict of the Ancients against the Moderns, as in Swift's *Battle of the Books*. This anxiety modulates into satire on the modern invention of printing and its modern creations, the hacks and dunces, most evidently in *A Tale of a Tub* and the *Dunciad*. For (rather, In) all their typographic exuberance both works reflect a thoroughgoing condemnation of the changes being wrought by the brave new world of print, "in Pope's view the end of polite letters and ultimately of civilization" (9). But for Kernan, "The most moving and instructive records of the change in letters appear, however, in the lives of those writers like Defoe, Savage, Goldsmith, Smart, and Samuel Johnson who actually lived in the world of Grub Street and experienced without protection the full impact of print on the life of writing" (17). Here Kernan evokes a gallery of troubled souls not exactly (like Blake's

Cowper's Blake) "mad as a refuge from unbelief," but caught between "the breakdown of traditional poetic roles" and their own efforts "to make themselves something other than laborers in the book factory" (85). Smart's bookseller, we are reminded, bound the poet to a 99-year contract. Kernan concludes that "the extreme intensity and imagination these poets [poets including also Chatterton, Macpherson, and Cowper] expended to make an acceptable, a liveable, poetic role for themselves, however mad the actions may now seem, serve to suggest, startlingly, the degree to which human feelings and existential values are involved in a radical change in the social arrangements of letters" (87). Only Johnson, in this view, chose "to be openly a modern" (88) and to enjoy (evidently despite his frequent despair) the satisfactions of being "a proud and efficient professional" (97).

Johnson's mastery of (and by) print logic appears in his most typographically ambitious production, the *Dictionary*, which embodies, materially and conceptually, that logic's characteristics of "multiplicity, systematization, and fixity" (54). Marking an interesting complication in the argument, Kernan observes that the "popular success and extraordinary usefulness of the *Dictionary* guaranteed the general acceptance in the long run of its central idea that the great writers and their books determine the language" (199). The establishing of "the great writers," still more evident in Johnson's last major (and, as usual, commissioned) project, *The Lives of the Poets*, can be seen as a response in the realm of imagination to this "new, and during the eighteenth century increasingly normal, condition in which author and reader were isolated from one another [and which] was the primary form the first literary crisis took in the world of letters" (221). (This crisis, discussed in the chapter on "Reading and Readers: The Literary Crisis of the Eighteenth Century" is not the one we associate with the mechanics of reading but concerns "The Writer's Audience in a Print Culture.")

This fundamental literary crisis opens "romanticism's continuing problems with authenticity in the modern print world" (90). Correlating with the decay of civic humanism mapped in John Barrell's recent book (*The Political Theory of Painting from Reynolds to Hazlitt*, Yale 1986) and the onset of "literary loneliness in mid-eighteenth-century England" seen by John Sitter (in his book with that title, Cornell 1982), Kernan suggests that "As identity based on social existence waned, it was replaced with a belief—probably encouraged by reading books in privacy—that authentic being could be realized only in intense self-awareness and consciousness" (125). Hence romanticism and the accompanying creation of "literature" (and, eventually, literature departments) out of "letters." The following

memorable sentences on this development can stand for the vision and cogency to be found throughout Kernan's book:

The rejection of capitalist society and its rationalistic thought in favor of older idealized felt values of community and imagination ironically provided romantic literature with a firm, though not a centrally important, place in modern culture as the defender in art of certain "higher" values and more humane ways of feeling. But this strategy, insofar as it was ever planned, had its costs, for it involved literature in a fundamental social contradiction by placing its aesthetics and metaphysics in direct opposition to its actual social circumstances. This rub has been felt heavily and consistently in ways that are revealed by the persistently difficult relationship of romantic literature and print technology. (294)

And hence, at last, one is tempted to add (though Kernan does not), Jacques Derrida and his conception of "grammatology," "a general science of writing" born "during a certain period of the world's history (beginning around the eighteenth century)" (*Of Grammatology*, trans. G. C. Spivak, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1976, 27).

In this context of "the social construction of letters in the age of print" (314), Blake's practice carries a deep burden. Blake literally took more care with and of writing than any other author, and this care—the concept extends to Heideggerian *sorge*—is his authentication, together with the many playful games he shares on the conventions of "print logic." Enacted on the etched, illuminated, and self-published page and in the unrelenting attempt to co-ordinate the infinity of minute particulars, this care seems to me what Blake has most to teach. It is somewhat more than being "a proud and efficient professional." The quality of "authenticity" is, no doubt, itself relative to a culture in turn determined by changing modes of technology/production; but what humanist author other than Blake will so profit by the diffusion of video disk and high resolution monitor?

No book is perfect. The howler on page 185 which has Johnson's mother dying "while he was working on the *Dictionary*" is a disquieting reminder of the slips awaiting one "who has not written on Johnson before" (xi), and especially in a book so concerned with printing technology one is struck by a page like 129, where over half of the thirty-four lines end in hyphens. But this is trifling. Alvin Kernan has written an engaging and provocative book for anyone concerned with print and letters in eighteenth-century England; with printing, bookselling, readers, and writers in eighteenth-century London; with making the writer's role in a print culture; with creating an aura for literary texts in print culture; with the place and purpose of letters in print society; with the social construction of romantic literature (introduction and chapters 2, 3, 5, 7, 8) and a host of collateral topics—a book, in short, for almost every reader of this journal.

**James King. *William Cowper: A Biography*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1986. xiv + 342 pp. \$35.00.**

**Reviewed by Donald H. Reiman**

James King, who with Charles Ryskamp has prepared the distinguished five-volume edition of *The Letters and Prose Writings of William Cowper* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979–1986), has now written the biography of Cowper that grows naturally out of his research for the *Letters*. Though it would overstate the case to call his biography definitive, King has given us a sane, balanced, and serviceable overview of Cowper's life and career as a poet that will undoubtedly be the volume to turn to in the foreseeable future.

King writes well enough, and he has organized his material in the only way that a biography of Cowper—who lived a life with few events but many moods—can be written, treating some topics chronologically and others thematically. He centers some of his fifteen chapters (and numbered subdivisions of others) on the meager outer events of Cowper's life, while devoting others to sketches of Cowper's friends and accounts of his sustained periods of composition, the reactions of contemporary readers, and a modern assessment of his achievements. The index to the volume is both usefully organized and accurate.

After chapters on Cowper's childhood and early schooling ("Berkhamsted and Westminster") and his ill-fated love for his cousin Theodora Cowper (a romance that, in the end, William Cowper broke off, in spite of clear signs of affection from Theodora and approval from her father), King takes up Cowper's decade as a London lawyer, wit, and beau, which ended with his breakdown and suicide attempts of 1763. The fifth and final section of chapter 3 tells how the position offered to Cowper through the patronage of his uncle Sir Ashley Cowper, father of Theodora and Harriot (later Lady Hesketh), turned into a competitive test with a man to whom the particular post had earlier been promised and how, under the strain of facing this test—as well as the strain, King suggests, of Cowper's knowledge that his rival was in the right—Cowper suffered his first nervous breakdown.

In attempting to explain both Cowper's periods of mental illness and his withdrawal from commitment to Theodora and, later, to Mary Unwin, King argues that Cowper was psychically wounded in early childhood by the death of Ann Cowper, his mother, at the age of

thirty-four (in the month of William's third birthday), six days after she gave birth to John, her sixth child and the only one besides William who survived early infancy. Using a tactful psychoanalytic approach to explain Cowper's periods of depression and attempts at suicide in terms of threatened or actual repetitions of this primary loss, King does not pursue the line over-rigorously and, in fact, fails to note that some of William Cowper's obvious distance from his brother John may have originated directly from feelings that John had not only displaced him as the family infant, but may have seemed responsible for their mother's death. It is not clear to me exactly how Ann Cowper's death relates to her son's fear of competition for the clerkship at the House of Lords, but it might be connected with his failures in earlier competitions with his brother John, who was chosen to go to Cambridge and became a don there, after William had been shunted into a less prestigious (and less congenial) legal career.

## WILLIAM COWPER

*A Biography*

James King



DUKE UNIVERSITY PRESS DURHAM 1986

The next three chapters, which rely heavily on Cowper's letters and *Adelphi*, his spiritual autobiography, examine his first mental illness and recovery, his friendships with the Unwins and the Rev. John Newton, his life with Mary Unwin at Olney, and the writing and publica-

tion of the *Olney Hymns* and "*Poems* (1782)." On pages 57-61, in chapter 4, King again sketches his central thesis—that Cowper's mental breakdowns (as well as many of his positive decisions) should be viewed as reenactments (or as his attempts to avoid the reenactment) of the loss of his mother. Yet Cowper speaks several times in his letters about another basic hang-up—his fear of travel—that seems to me to have little directly to do with the parental loss but something, perhaps, to do with the death of Morley Unwin as the result of a fall from his horse—a "providential" demise that permitted Cowper to live with the widowed Mary Unwin as his new "mother." (This incident may also be relevant to the grotesque humor of Cowper's ballad about John Gilpin's terrifying ride.)

Similar groupings of three chapters treat: Cowper's friendship with Lady Austen (who may also have wanted Cowper to marry her), *The Task*, and the ascendancy of his cousin Harriot, now Lady Hesketh (chapters 7-9); the move to Weston Underwood and his relations with the Throckmortons, the arrival of Cowper's Norfolk cousin Johnny Johnson, and Cowper's "heroic" work on his translation of Homer (10-12); and, finally, the start on his edition of Milton, his new friendship with William Hayley, Mary Unwin's physical and Cowper's mental deterioration, the move to Norfolk, and the sad final years before his death in 1800 (chapters 13-15).

Having read the full range of Cowper's letters and *Adelphi* for earlier reviews in *Blake*, I expected—or, at least, hoped for—something more from his biography. My enthusiasm for King's achievement is tempered, not by my awareness of any glaring factual errors, or by any strong disagreements with his speculations, judgments, or conclusions. I cannot help feeling, however, that Cowper's was a more complex personality, with more impressive intellect, talent, and presence than James King—and most other modern readers—have found in him.

King may have cut Cowper a size smaller than he actually was by pursuing a policy of limitation that narrows the focus from William Cowper in his times to William Cowper as an individual in his human relationships. Thus, King never mentions Cowper's strong political opinions or reactions to contemporary events, such as his outbursts against the colonies during the American Revolution, his attacks on those who rioted against authority in England, or his changing feelings toward the French Revolution. There is only passing mention (mainly in connection with Lady Hesketh's Tory politics) of Cowper's clearly stated Whig principles and no word of how those beliefs may have affected his relations with either such Whigs as Hayley or with the hardnosed Tory Lord Chancellor Thurlow (his former London friend). Nor does King mention that such a political bias, as well

as literary differences and rivalries, may partly explain Cowper's affinity for Milton and his criticism of Pope and Dr. Johnson.

Cowper's own evangelical religious experience is, inevitably, a major subject, but there is little mention of his sympathy for the Roman Catholics (aroused by his friendship for the Throckmortons) and his hopes for the lifting of the Catholic disabilities (another Whig cause). Even Cowper's modest—though lastingly influential—efforts on behalf of the abolition of the slave trade are diminished in King's account. On the other hand, knowing Cowper chiefly through his own writings, I found most helpful King's detailed account of Cowper's last years (1792–1800), when his deep depression prevented him from writing many letters. From the letters and manuscript accounts and poems by Lady Hesketh, John Johnson, and others who knew Cowper in Norfolk, King has woven a skillful narrative that conveys both the grimness of Cowper's debilitated state and the brave and selfless efforts of Johnson and others to restore to him a modicum of happiness. (This impressive fresh picture suggests that those unfamiliar with Cowper's letters may find King's biography as a whole more satisfying than I do.)

Throughout the biography, King follows a strategy that—though it enjoys the recommendation of Leon Edel and other master biographers—seems to me to be fundamentally mistaken. He tries to tailor the life of a very diverse and complicated human being to a simplified central (Freudian) pattern. As an African sculptor may reshape all the parts of the human body to echo the central motif of a barrel that the figure is holding, so King uses and reshapes all the events of Cowper's life to recapitulate Cowper's loss of his mother. By centering on this single theme (though it is certainly not as external as the barrel), the Freudian biographer runs the risk of eliminating other shapes of the life that are attributable to less elemental human feelings and experiences—emotional conflicts arising from Cowper's later relations with his father, stepmother, and brother John; his classical education and legal training; his theological and political views; and other cultural and personal influences. As I have indicated, some of these could be related to his feelings for his lost mother: even Cowper's strong feelings that the American colonies should not be permitted to secede *might* have been triggered by an extended, political fear of separation of mother country and offspring colony! But to reduce all of Cowper's opinions and springs of action to such elemental forms would risk a loss of credibility for the central thesis itself. Instead, the Freudian biographer chooses to ignore or deemphasize those aspects of the subject's experience that do not obviously fit the major thesis, thereby simplifying and, inevitably, distorting the biography.

All who are not true believers in one or another psychological dogma will agree that the human mind and its development are far more complex and mysterious than any single theory now available to us can accommodate. Cowper's failure to marry, despite several favorable opportunities to do so, and his final fears of abandonment by God are likely to be explained a century hence by a new theory of biochemical imbalances that will render the psychoanalytical theories now current as much out of date as the religious explanations current among the Evangelicals in Cowper's day now seem to us. The best course for the biographer (as for the editor) may be, then, not to try to simplify and summarize the subject's life in a neat bundle, with a bow pre-tied by Freud, but to lay out the complexities and contradictions of the subject's experience—with generous quotations from the individual and those who knew him best (the primary evidence on which the biographer's judgments rest)—and then to hazard an interpretation as *a possible*—not *the only*—interpretation. Such a course may leave a biography shaggier and less manicured than a thesis-driven reformulation of the evidence, but it will be truer to the lives that people have to lead who do not arrange their actions according to a psychology of humors, the ruling passion, or the conflicts arising during early sexual development. Biographers should suggest the possibility of a psychological mainspring to the life, or to major aspects of it, deriving their thesis from the subjects' central early experiences, but they should rely on the events to which the subjects themselves recurred and evidence provided by the people who knew them during their lifetimes, rather than upon abstractions from later theorists, arrived at on the basis of analyzing other—and, I daresay, quite different—subjects in different cultural environments.

Among literary biographies that I have worked with closely over a period of years, the one that holds up best is Leslie A. Marchand's three-volume *Byron: A Biography* (1957; now, sadly, out of print). With all the rich scholarship and criticism on Byron that has followed—including the work from which Marchand himself has corrected a few points in his one-volume *Byron: A Portrait* (1970), Marchand's fullscale treatment presents more evidence (accurately) and allows the complexities of the characters and the events to unfold more fully than in any other single literary biography I know, thereby giving readers the clues they need to explore beyond even the considered judgments of the master biographer himself. King could retort that publishers will no longer grant the biographer the luxury of three volumes even for Byron, much less for Cowper; and I would simply say that with Cowper's less eventful (and more meagerly documented) life, the single volume would suffice, if he had not resorted to the artificial limitation of the Freudian master-key.

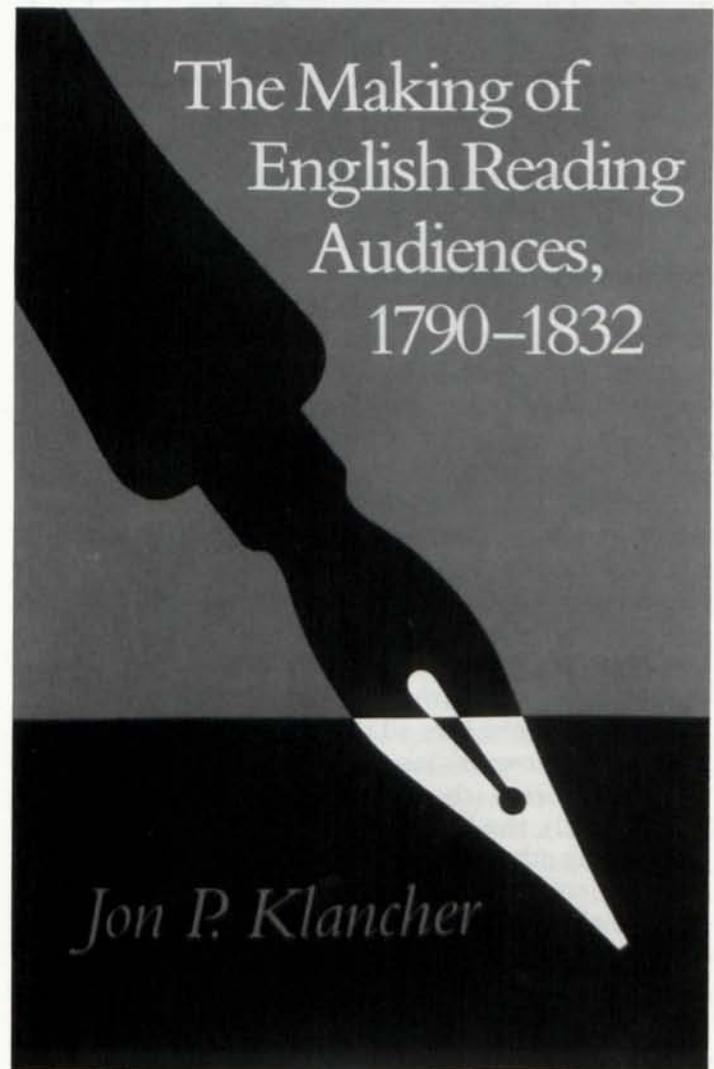
If we are, in our age, limited to psychological explanations, we can at least begin with the premise that several elements and events in Cowper's life were important. Besides the death of Ann Cowper, these included William's obvious rivalry with his brother John, with Thurlow, and with Morley Unwin. There were sociological influences, such as the residual feudal system under which Cowper grew up and which was the mainstay of the Cowper family through its power, patronage, and privilege. (On page 59, King comments critically on Cowper's dependency on others to maintain his style of living, but Cowper and the friends who patronized him would have seen nothing in the least wrong with this, so long as he expressed the gratitude proper to a dependent.) Cowper's objections first to the American and later to the French Revolution may have grown out of a fear that reform at home (as advocated by the English supporters of both overseas outbreaks) would mean the end of the privileged positions that he and his patrons enjoyed. King's biography, while certainly the reference volume to consult on Cowper's life, should be read by students of the period along with the larger panoply of evidence found in his poetry and letters. For nonspecialist teachers and students, King's *William Cowper* provides an adequate view of the life—if not the times—of a very significant writer.

Jon P. Klancher. *The Making of English Reading Audiences, 1790–1832*. Madison & London: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987. xi + 210 pp. \$25.00.

Reviewed by David Simpson

If there is in the current fashion for something called history any potential for a genuinely new set of approaches to literary criticism, and for a redefinition of how we go about constructing historical periods, then Jon Klancher's book deserves attention both as prototype and performance. It may be one of the most important books written on romanticism for a good many years, but its exposition signals such a drastic reconceptualization of what romanticism was that it is likely to remain ignored by those still hooked on the major writers and the more readily memorialized events. While Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Shelley are dealt with substantially and quite brilliantly, Blake and Byron are only briefly mentioned; Keats, Crabbe, and Austen not at all. Klancher

is concerned with the "still largely unknown world of text-making" (ix) that he finds in the periodicals, travel diaries, and political tracts of the period. The book is no mere catalogue of the illustrious unread, and indulges not at all in the rhetoric of the "strangely ignored" or the "regrettably unknown." It proposes "four strategically crucial audiences" as variously addressed and created by non-fictional prose outside the realm of high literature, as we have come to know it: "a newly self-conscious



middle-class public, a nascent mass audience, a polemical radical readership, and the special institutional audience—what Coleridge called the clerisy" (4). The new periodical writing, beginning in the 1790s, is seen to dramatize "the discontinuity of publics" (44). There is no assumption of a unitary audience, whether actual or potential; the readership is selected, and selects itself, according to clearly recognized divisions of class and interest. In his convincing demonstration of this state of

affairs, Klancher should have succeeded in preempting once and for all any easy reference to *the* reader or *the* audience, of the kind that features in so much literary criticism, and in almost all reader-response criticism.

Klancher offers no easy overviews about the degree to which these subcultural audiences did or did not exist before they were addressed or created by the tracts and journals here discussed. He suggests that the working class "could not spontaneously generate its own discourse" (101), a common though I think questionable assumption. E. P. Thompson, whose famous title is boldly adapted over into Klancher's own, would surely want to query this. Klancher is clear that the idea of a radical public was to a significant degree a middle-class idea, the bogeyman of a bourgeois public that was then itself reciprocally reconstituted as "self-consciously dominant" by the radical writers (99). But this book is not, thank goodness, limited by the now fashionable idea of history as a series of merely discursive figments or projections emanating from semiotically enclosed or paranoid imaginations. It is refreshingly distant from the current tendency to read history as "the unfolding of the empire of signs," and adamant in its belief that "signs constitute strategies in real wars" (7). Equally timely in terms of the present debate within historical criticism is Klancher's sense of the active function of subjective agency. The fact that a reader is "constructed within a certain audience" does not make him an "automaton." Quite the contrary: the experience of "colliding social languages . . . demands choice" (12). Along with its distinctly original contribution to the study of romanticism, the book thus also demonstrates against the "postmodern bourgeois liberalism" of Rorty, Fish, and Geertz, and disputes the habit of reading back "our current, sign-saturated condition onto historical cultures for whom the relation of signs to social practice was vastly different from our own" (177).

The specific analyses of tracts and journals are brilliantly incisive. Klancher shows the rhetorical maneuvers by which, for example, James Anderson's *Bee* seeks to reconstitute the post-1789 reading public as a body prospectively "without social differences" (24), a society within which every reader may become a writer. *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, founded in 1817, sets itself the task of "imperializing mental energy" (55), refining and extending Anderson's techniques by its emphasis on "the abstracting power of will" (57). The book does not simply describe the styles and strategies of these various journals and their radical counterparts—*The Gorgon*, *The Black Dwarf*, the *Political Register*, and so forth—but also looks into the circulation figures and the subscriber lists. Discourse and rhetoric do not simply make history, but interact with other forces in the empirical world.

There is one major metaphorical distinction informing Klancher's account of the perceived differences between radical and liberal-bourgeois models of printed communication: that between "dissemination" and "circulation." The radical text disseminates, it "propagates principles without circulating meanings" (110). The liberal text, for example that of Arthur Young, also claims principles but employs a "deliberate hesitancy" to persuade its reader to endorse the conclusions that the writer himself pretends to approach skeptically (112–13). Here, "reader couples with writer in a common movement toward hard-won judgment" (113). Dissemination is aggressive, or can be presented that way by its enemies; it floods through "interstices of the social network, into the social cracks of the ancien régime." Circulation, on the other hand, presents itself as the product of an inductively expanding consensus: "in this motion, a cultural profit accrues. Circulation . . . secretes the reading habit from every pore" (34). When principles and theories disseminate, they can be made to seem to dramatize the distance between writer and reader; the Paineite commitment to a common, consensual reason from which such principles emanate can be ignored as the style is made out to be authoritarian. Circulation, on the contrary, explores, suggests, defers, and incorporates, raising no challenges and causing no confrontations.

I am not sure that "dissemination" and "circulation" are quite the most felicitous metaphors for describing what Klancher is talking about here. The first term especially does not quite capture the tone of authoritarianism of which the radicals were accused. There are also moments in his account where Klancher tends to write as if the radical texts really were disseminating in this manner, whereas it makes more sense to me as a description of what their opponents accused them of doing. The presentation of reason as tyranny was the familiar tactic of the conservative and liberal press. Aside from these small problems with emphasis and vocabulary, however, what Klancher is describing is important and suggestive. It helps explain, for example, the various attitudes toward the metropolis characteristic of the period. The radicals were often accused of metrocentrism (my coinage), of using London in the way that the Jacobins were said to have used Paris, as a place from which to disseminate sedition. The circulatory style, conversely, claims a more symbiotic relation between the capital and the provinces, its messages passing through the body of the nation and only picking up meaning as they do so. The drama of the prophetic books, one might say, has to do with the Urizenic attempt to replace circulation by dissemination.

A bit more of the standard sort of historical information might help fill in the picture here. It is my understanding, for example, that it was the radical journals

that were most often located in the provinces, in the cities and towns of the midlands and the north. They might, then, have operated in more demonstrably circulatory ways than their opponents (with the notable exception of Arthur Young). At these points, Klancher's fourfold scheme is best treated as a suggestive rather than a definitive paradigm. Its divisions need to proliferate rather than remain. What, for example, was the difference between the provincial and the metropolitan radical journals, between those based in a dissenting rather than an artisan audience? To what degree did they overlap?

Gentle reader, I perceive how patiently you've waited: where does Blake fit into this scheme of things? One can see why Blake does not figure much in this book, given the difficulty of characterizing the variety of Blake's composite art, both verbal and pictorial. But an attentive reading of Klancher's argument offers some fascinating clues. He shows convincingly that our present interest in the "writerly text" in general has blinded us to the degree to which various romantic writers were seeking to construct specific reading communities through the experience of different kinds of obscurity or difficulty. The ideal reader of Coleridge was invited to emerge from the dark passages of the philosophical sublime into a "spiritual institution" (163) made up of a new aristocracy of mind and soul. Conversely, the style that is marked by a constant "mooring and unmooring of the sign" without ever coming to a point of rest is characterized by Klancher as the property of a middle-class readership marked by "perpetual self-displacement," by "tirelessly remapping its textual terrain," and by a "hunger for permanent reinterpretation" (75). This class cannot disseminate, for it has no fixed place, either radical or aristocratic, from which to speak. It cannot stop circulating, for it has no place to come to rest. This

model describes not only large segments of the modern literary-critical enterprise but also a host of romantic wanderers, ironists, and skeptics. Blake does not seem to like disseminators: one law for the lion and ox is oppression, even if that law be the law of radical reason. Is Urizen then a parody as much of the radical demagogue as of the reactionary tyrant? Is the Blakean proclamation of the positive power of contraries a formulation of Klancher's manifold readership? Is there a foreseeable end to the wranglings and renominations of angels and devils, or will it go on forever? This book gives us many hints about how to go about building up a new historical vocabulary for understanding Blake, who may well belong to the group which it defines as the "foundational" writers of the period, acknowledging "in the intense friction of their language the pressure of contrary readings and resistant texts" (117).

One could, as always, ask for more. The major omission, in my view, is Klancher's failure to take account of gender, not because it is now fashionable to take account of gender, but because of the evidence in Richardson, Fielding, Wollstonecraft, Opie, and elsewhere that class distinctions in the readership were also qualified by distinctions between the sexes. These days one complains much more frequently that gender-based accounts take no notice of class, but the point must stand both ways. This is, however, a fine and important book. As one who has himself, in *Irony and Authority in Romantic Poetry* (London: Macmillan, 1979), made far too much use of a hypostatized "reader" without sensing the limiting and various conditions under which romantic texts had projected or invited that reader, I find Klancher's book, along with Jerome McGann's *The Romantic Ideology* and the long-standing admonitions of my good friend John Barrell, an apt corrective to any residual tendency to worship that "textual hero" (177).

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## QUERY

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"Folly is the cloke of knavery."

Morton D. Paley

I had always thought of this Proverb of Hell as originating in *The Marriage*. However, Walter Scott in *Waverley*, in speaking of Davie Gellately, says: "Davie had no mind to explain, and had wit enough to make his folly cloak his knavery. . ." (Andrew Hook, ed., Penguin, 1972 [116]). This seems too close for coincidence, and so there must either be a common source or an intermediary source, unless we assume that Sir Walter had been conversing with Blake's Devils. Does anybody know?

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## NEWSLETTER

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### COLERIDGE SUMMER CONFERENCE

The Friends of Coleridge in Somerset will be holding the first Coleridge Summer Conference from 25 to 28 July 1988, in Nether Stowey, Somerset, England. This is the first conference held in this region, within one hundred yards of Coleridge Cottage, and at the center of the Quantock countryside which influenced the major poetry of Coleridge and the early writing of Wordsworth. The main speakers will include Coleridge scholars Jack Stillinger, K. M. Wheeler, and Peter Larkin, and the distinguished local historian Robert Dunning. If you wish to submit a proposal for a conference session or a paper on Coleridge or related areas of the romantic movement please contact Dr. David S. Miall, Coleridge Summer Conference 1988, The College of St. Paul & St. Mary, The Park, Cheltenham, GL50 2RH, England. For further information contact Mrs. Rosemary Cawthray, Coleridge Cottage, 35 Lime Street, Nether Stowey, Bridgwater, TA5 1NQ, England.

### BLAKE ON BRITISH TELEVISION

David Worrall, associate editor for Britain, has informed us that Tobias Churton is preparing a television program on Blake for Channel 4 and Border Television. We will provide further information as we receive it.

### NEWS FIT TO PRINT . . .

In its newsletter section *Blake* wishes to report timely and relevant information. But we depend on readers to supply us with the information. The newsletter can give free notice of upcoming exhibitions, calls for papers, plays, new fellowships, conferences, and so on. If you have information of interest to our readership, please send it to *Blake*. All news items are chosen at the editors' discretion.

### THE ENGLISH BOOK IN THE AGE OF ROMANTICISM

This year's series of Pforzheimer Lectures on Printing and the Book Arts addresses the world of the English book in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

These lectures, all at 6 p.m., include:

- *Technology, Audience, and Authorship in the Romantic Age*  
Donald H. Reiman, 21 April
- *Ruskin and the Romantic Roots of Book Conservation*  
Paul N. Banks, 28 April
- *Some Remarks on Early 19th-Century Printing and How a Newfangled Article Became Associated with "The Assassination of Dentatus"*  
David Pankow, 5 May
- *Bibliophily and Bibliomania in the Romantic Era*  
Bernard McTigue, 12 May
- *The Romantic Reader and His Books*  
Richard D. Altick, 18 May
- *Neo-Classicism and the English Book: A Revolution in Typography, Illustration, and Bookbinding*  
Nicolas Barker, 26 May
- *The Beginnings of the Private Press in England*  
Francis O. Mattson, 2 June

For further information, call 212/930-0855, Monday-Friday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., or contact the New York Public Library, Public Education Program.

## NARRATIVE UNBOUND

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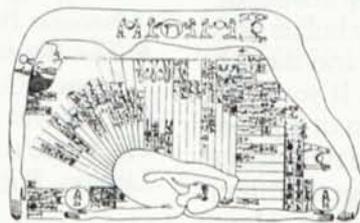


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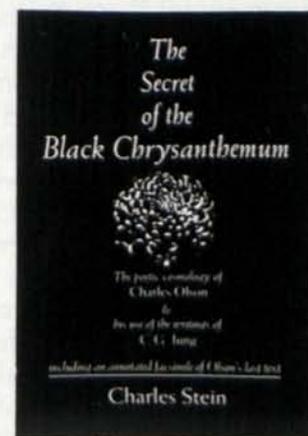
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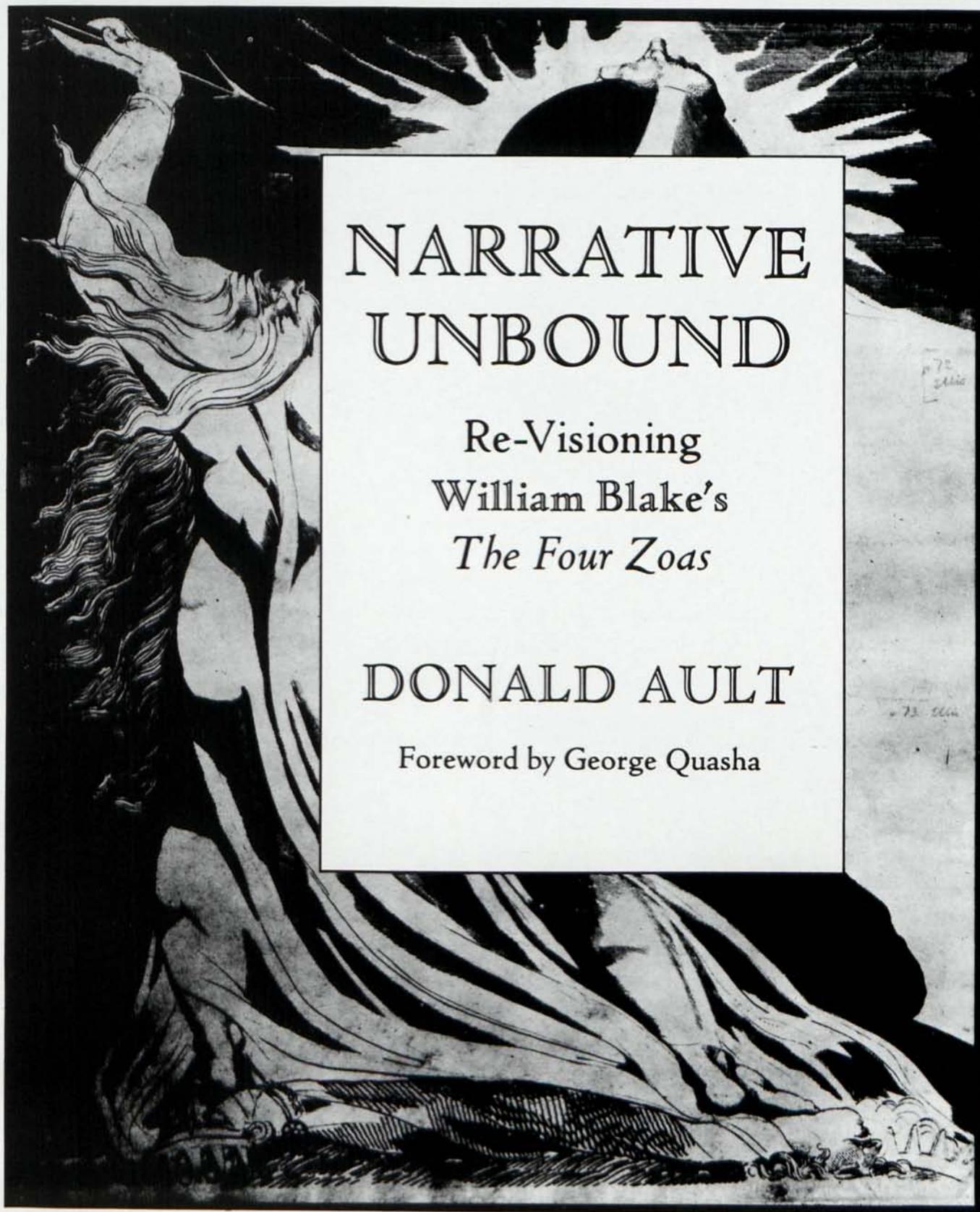


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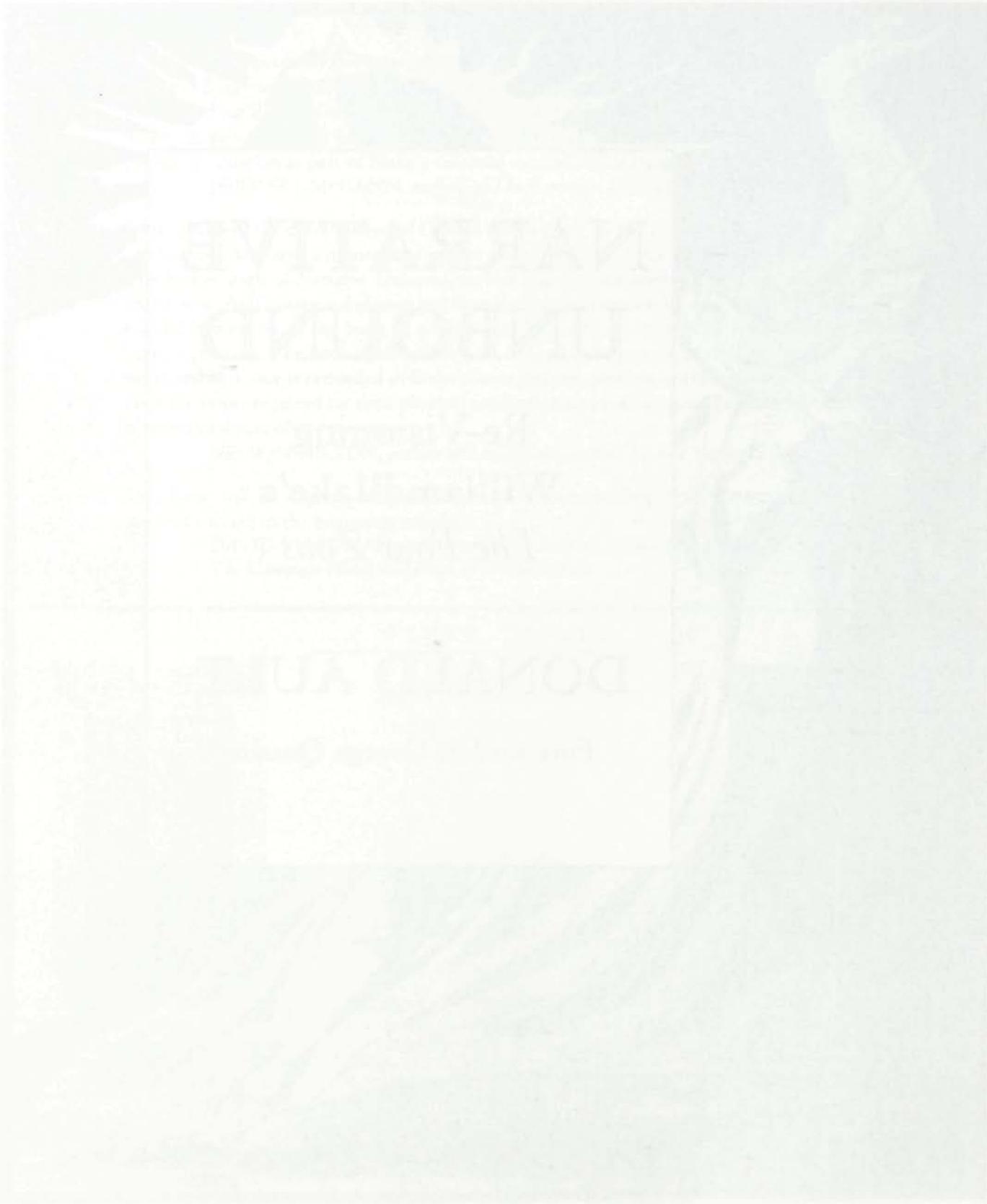
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