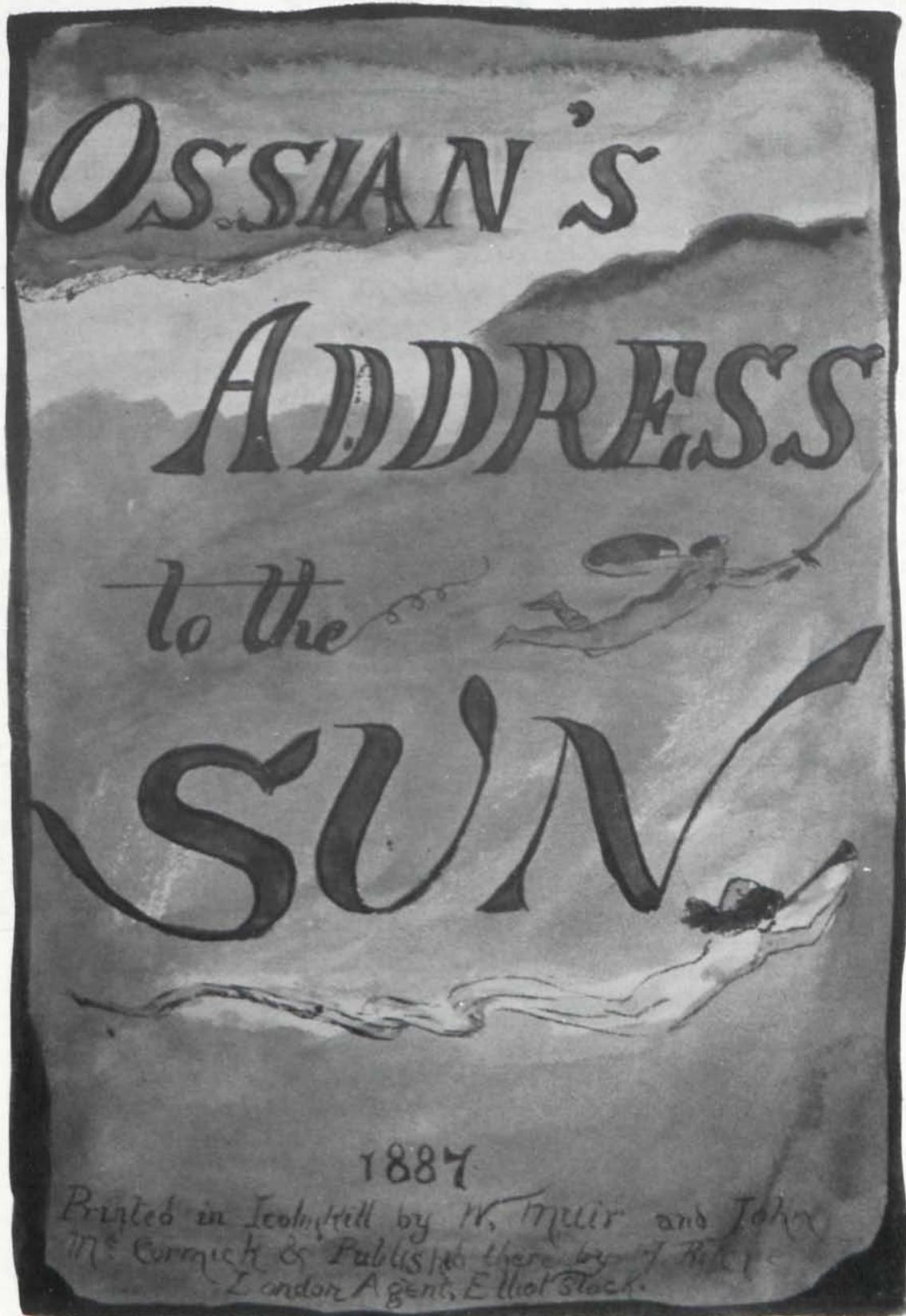


# Blake

AN ILLUSTRATED QUARTERLY  
VOLUME 27 NUMBER 1 SUMMER 1993



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# Blake

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AN ILLUSTRATED QUARTERLY

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Number 1

Summer 1993

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Cover: *Ossian's Address to the Sun* is a product of William Muir's second publishing venture: the Iona Press. Between 1887 and 1893 around a dozen small booklets were printed on Iona and hand-colored by girls on the island. (Reproduced by courtesy of the Trustees of the National Library of Scotland.)

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**G. E. BENTLEY, JR.**, of University College, University of Toronto, is seeing through the press the *Supplement* to his *Blake Books* (1977) and has undertaken responsibility for the annual "Blake and His Circle" checklist in *Blake*, for which he would greatly appreciate receiving information and copies, which will be gratefully acknowledged in private and in print.

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## "Blake ... Had No Quaritch" The Sale of William Muir's Blake Facsimiles\*

by G. E. Bentley, Jr.

Blake printed few copies of his writings, and even fewer of his poems were reprinted during his lifetime and long after his death.<sup>1</sup> When they were reprinted in the nineteenth century, the text was normally adjusted to Victorian sensibilities<sup>2</sup> and purged of its integral designs. For a century after Blake's death, few readers of Blake had any knowledge of the color and variety of Blake's designs which surround and elucidate and modify his poems. There was a color facsimile by Camden Hotten of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* in 1868, eight titles were reproduced in black-and-white in *Works by William Blake* (1876), and a monochrome facsimile of *Jerusalem* appeared in 1877, but there had been no facsimile of *Milton*, *There is No Natural Religion*, *All Religions Are One*, *On Homer*, *The Gates of Paradise*, *The Book of Ahania*, or *The Book of Los*, and only one copy (F) of one work (*The Marriage*) had been reproduced in color. Blake's works in the form he had intended them to be seen in, with colored designs integral to the text, were scarcely visible to the book-buying public until more than half a century after his death in 1827.

In 1884, William Muir set to work to make available colored facsimiles of Blake's works in Illuminated Printing. Working by methods similar to Blake's, he made lithographs (not copperplate relief etchings) of the outlines which he and his assistants printed and then colored by hand. Usually, of course, Muir used one original as the model for all copies of a facsimile title, rather than making each copy deliberately different as Blake generally

did. Altogether he reproduced 13 works in Illuminated Printing, generally in editions not exceeding 50 copies, and a few in more than one edition. His editions were larger than Blake's, though not much larger, and, until the Blake Trust began publishing Blake facsimiles in 1951, Muir's facsimiles were often the only color reproductions available. His color facsimiles of *Milton* (1886) and *The Song of Los* (1890) were the only ones for almost a century (1967 and 1975).

Muir generally finished half-a-dozen copies at a time, and sometimes the last copies were finished 30 or even 48 years after the first one. The number of colored copies of each title apparently varied from 18 (*Urizen*) to over 100 (*Innocence* and *Experience*, each in two editions). The history of the production and sale of the Muir facsimile provides an interesting indication of the popularity of Blake's works in the form in which he wanted his works to be seen.

About 1884, John Pearson & Co. issued a "PROPOSAL FOR THE PUBLICATION OF THE PROPHETIC BOOKS, AND THE SONGS OF INNOCENCE AND OF EXPERIENCE" "For Subscribers only, limited to 50 Copies"; "after this has been done *the materials will be destroyed*." Pearson issued the first copies of *Innocence*, *The*, *Visions*, and *Experience* in 1884 and 1885, but, as Muir reported, "When Mr. Pearson left business last March [1885] I arranged with his excellent successor Mr. Shepherd that Mr. Quaritch should be my agent."<sup>3</sup>

Muir's "Edition of the Works of Wm. Blake" consisted of:

Volume I (quarto)	Volume II (folio)
<i>Innocence</i> [D] (1884); [A] (1927)	<i>America</i> [R; A]
<i>The</i> [D] (1844); [?] (1927)	<i>Europe</i> [A, D, c] (1887); [D] (1931)
<i>Visions</i> [A] (1884); [?G] (1928)	<i>Urizen</i> [B] (1888)
<i>Experience</i> [U] (1885); [A, T] (1927)	<i>Gates of Paradise</i> (1888), uncolored
<i>Marriage</i> [A] (1885)	<i>Song of Los</i> [A] (1890) <sup>5</sup>
<i>Milton</i> [A] (1886) <sup>4</sup>	
<i>No Natural Religion</i> [A, L] (1886)	
<i>On Homer</i> [?C] (1886), uncolored	
Hayley, "Little Tom" (1886), uncolored	
"Appendix" of the "Order" of the <i>Songs</i> and "A Divine Image" ( <i>Songs</i> pl. b)	

Copies were apparently produced, or at least colored, as orders came in, and as late as 1921, according to Keynes's *Bibliography of William Blake*, copies of everything save the *Songs* were "still to be obtained." Indeed, some of the original versions were still for sale as late as 1936.

The firm of Bernard Quaritch continues to be one of the great antiquarian book firms, and they still have copies of the Muir facsimiles of Blake for sale, though these are now second-hand copies. They also have correspondence with Muir which is extremely interesting about the ways in which Muir made his facsimiles and when and for how much he sold them. Since the Muir facsimiles are now as rare as some of Blake's originals, it is worth making the most interesting of these records public.<sup>6</sup>

\* Mr. Keri Davies has generously allowed me to see his essay on Muir, coincidentally written at the same time as my own, and to improve mine on the basis of his.

LETTER 1

Muir's letter of 5 May 1919 makes it plain that he had printed a number of copies in advance of orders:

538 Romford Rd London E7  
5 May 1919

Messrs Quaritch Ltd  
Dear Sirs

In reply to your esteemed order of May 2 and to your Mr Mudies letter of May 3.

1) The facsimiles that I can still supply are

- The Act of Creation<sup>7</sup> 2 copies only
- America mono colour
- do coloured
- Europe
- No Natural Religion
- The Gates of Paradise
- Milton
- The Song of Los Price to be determined<sup>8</sup>
- The Book of Urizen Do
- A sybelline leaf (a single sheet)<sup>9</sup>

I have no other single sheets except — Little Tom which I still can supply[.]

2) I enclose a/c as Mr Mudie asks me to do . . .

Yours truly  
W<sup>m</sup> Muir

LETTER 2

In his letter of 4 October 1920, Muir gives a summary of his receipts from Quaritch for the Blake facsimiles thus far:

538 Romford Rd London E7  
Dr Mr Mudie

4<sup>th</sup> October 1920

I have been looking over my Ledger a/c with "Quaritch" since the beginning of the Blake facsimiles in 1885 and think that the following abstract of it, shewing value of deliveries each year, will interest you, *and give encouragement for the future?* Yours faithfully

W<sup>m</sup> Muir

Year	Value of goods delivered	Year	Value of goods delivered
1885	£415.16.0	Brought forwd	1503. 1.6
1886	564.18.0	1904	0. 0.0
1887	171. 3.0	1905	12.18.0
1888	98.14.0	1906	0. 0.0
1889	21. 0.0	1907	35. 3.6
1890	105.13.6	1908	2.14.0
1891	71. 5.0	1909	1. 2.6
1892	13.13.0	1910	9. 0.0
1893	21.0.0	1911	9. 0.0
1894	1.14.6	1912	43. 1.0
1895	0. 0.0	1913	0. 9.0
1896	0. 0.0	1914	23.17.0
1897	1. 1.0	1915	17. 2.0
1898	0. 0.0	1916	10. 4.0
1899	9.16.6	1917	31. 4.0
1900	3. 3.0	1918	7.13.0
1901	0. 0.0	1919	75.18.0
1902	0. 0.0	1920 <sup>10</sup>	93. 9.0
1903	<u>4. 4.0</u>		3   <u>1875.16.6</u>
Carried forward	1503. 1.6		<u>£625. 5.6</u> <sup>11</sup>
			£1250.11.0

Paid to Mr Muir Twelve hundred and fifty pounds 11/0!!! This is more (alas!) than ever Blake himself got.—He had no Quaritch[.]

## LETTER 3

One of the most interesting letters from Muir was written as a result of a letter of enquiry to Quaritch from Professor John Le Gay Brereton of the University of Sydney.

London  
Mess<sup>rs</sup> Quaritch  
Dear Sirs

31 March 1922

I thank you for sending me Prof Brereton's letter of 20<sup>th</sup> Feby which I return enclosed.

I heartily appreciate Prof Brereton's kind words. This is all I need say about what is past.

The following remarks will, I hope, enable Prof Brereton to understand why original Blakes differ so much [from one another]—I mean originals of the Songs, Thel, Visions, Heaven & Hell [, *The Song of*] Los, Urizen &c &c—

The fact is that Blake took impressions from his copper plates (plates etched in *relief* for the Songs. —Etched in *intaglio* for the other books<sup>12</sup>) with what I can only call a *skilful carelessness*.

I think that sometimes he did not even use a press, but got the impression by rubbing the paper placed on the inked plate.—The back of a table spoon used as a rubber does very well—<sup>13</sup> If the spoon is soft metal such as silver you must put a second sheet above the one to be printed, to take the marks left by the spoon—Therefore the prints so obtained often were, *as prints*, of very poor quality, but that was what Blake wanted, or was contented with, for their imperfections left him free to colour them and draw on them just as his fancy (often stimulated by these very imperfections) led him to do at the moment. Let me give examples.

1) Let Prof Brereton take a first [1863] or second edition of Blakes Life by Gilchrist [1880], and look at the sixteen impressions from Blakes own plates at the end. (Songs of Inn & Exp) —turn to the first plate of the "Ecchoing Green" —observe the back ground behind the oak— You can make nothing definite of it.— Well in one Copy that I have seen (I think it was Mr Linnells) the indefinite touches of that back ground are developed into a *crowd* of active little figures at play.<sup>14</sup> In the same copy the large flower of the page [of] "Infant Joy" was bright blue instead of scarlet as usual,<sup>15</sup> and there were *no doubt* other variations.

2) In most copies of the *title page* of Visions of the Daughters of Albion there are indefinite patches of light, or light rays, (some of both) in the bottom right hand corner.— Well — in one copy these patches and rays become a terrific group of sheeted ghosts rising out of an abyss—<sup>16</sup>

3) In the case of Thel that Prof Brereton asked about, I have no doubt that the reason why Blake gives the back of the nymphs head in the *Brit. Mus.* Copy just was that the profile did not print at all (or else was blurred by too much ink) in that case, So Blake coloured it as the back of the head — to save trouble.<sup>17</sup>

*Urizen* contains even more startling variations than any of the above, and I have no doubt that many variations would be found in almost *any two* copies of any coloured work if carefully looked for. I mean actual variations in drawing — variations often *allowed* or often *suggested* by *technical* imperfections in the printed foundation.

As far as I have *noticed* (I have not looked with care— Indeed have not looked at all for this purpose — but) as far as I have *noticed* the Folio engraved books Los, Europe, America, are free from these variations in drawing. Probably because the large plates could not be printed from in the free and easy way possible with little plates — but this is only a pious opinion that I attach no importance to.

Again thanking Prof Brereton for his kind words, and relying on your transmitting my thanks to him I am

Yours faithfully  
W<sup>m</sup> Muir

P.S. The following may interest Prof Brereton if he (or any of his students) care to try colour printing *a la* Blake as described by Gilchrist, who however is not able to give workable directions for the preparation of the necessary medium with which the colours have to be mixed. Blake calls the method "Fresco." — see Gilchrist[.]

Receipt for "Blakes Medium" *as made and used by W Muir* [.] Make (say) half a pint of a solution of good common glue in water[,] a *sollutio*<sup>18</sup> so thin that it will just *not* set into a jelly at say 70° Fahr — to this add from 1/4<sup>th</sup> to 1/2 pint of Copal Varnish.<sup>18</sup> Shake well together. You thus form an *emulsion*. Mix your dry powder colours with it. In drying the paper the emulsion breaks up, and gives Blakesque effects. By this means only can y[ou] copy "Los" [.]<sup>19</sup>

W M<sup>20</sup>

## LETTER 4

Some of the information in Muir's letters throws invaluable light upon the history and variants in individual copies of Blake's works in Illuminated Printing, as in that to Quaritch's agent Mr Mudie of 26 July 1922:

538 Romford Rd London E7

26 July 1922

Dear Mr Mudie

*Urizen* N<sup>o</sup> 15 is correct — *only 14 were done previously*— I have not seen Mr Keynes['] book<sup>21</sup> — I do not think I gave him any information — I have no recollections of doing so. I do remember his calling twice or thrice, and spending time in looking over our "first copies", and chatting — He may have got a wrong impression from some chance remark— N<sup>o</sup> 14 was delivered to Mr Quaritch on 31 Dec<sup>r</sup> 1907[,] the receipt is signed by yourself, the one before that was N<sup>o</sup> 13 on 15 May 1899 signed E.H.W.

The wife mentioned to you when she handed you the book that page 4 (the man amidst black flames) does not occur in any other *Urizen*.<sup>22</sup>—I got it from a volume of scrap "Blakiana" which I purchased for £80 from the first Mr Quaritch, and sold some years afterwards to Mr MacGeorge of Glasgow.<sup>23</sup> It makes the text of *Urizen* complete *for the first time*.—If you compare pp. 3 & 5 (read from 3 to 5, omitting 4) you get the ordinary text. The hiatus is obvious.

I think you told me that this copy (N<sup>o</sup> 15) is going to Mr Newton [in] Philadelphia[.] It will be amusing to see if he noticed the new page *without having had his attention called to it*—He should certainly observe it for he has an Ellis & Yeats—If he asks for explanations you are now in a position to give them[.]

Yours truly  
W<sup>m</sup> Muir

LETTER 5

On 17 February 1936, Muir wrote with a summary of all his dealings with Quaritch, identifying the day on which each copy was sold. The accounts suggest that Quaritch wished to keep on hand a few copies of at least the more popular works and that Muir colored them as Quaritch sent him orders.

538 Romford Road  
Forest Gate E,7  
17<sup>th</sup> Feb<sup>y</sup> 1936

Mess<sup>rs</sup> Quaritch, Ltd.  
Dear Sirs

I regret that my indolence is about to cause you inconvenience. I hope the following narrative will prevent this.

In March 1884 I arranged with John Pearson of 46 Pall Mall that I would produce 50 facsimiles of Blake's works from such originals as we could get the use of. These facsimiles to be an edition limited to 50 copies for subscribers found by M<sup>r</sup> Pearson. These subscribers were purely imaginary, but the phrase was used to prevent the enterprise falling into the clutches of Public Libraries such as the Bodleian who have a legal right to a gratis copy of everything "published".

The work proceeded merrily till 27<sup>th</sup> April 1885 when M.<sup>r</sup> Pearson suddenly retired owing to ill-health. By that time M<sup>r</sup> Pearson had sold 25 [*i.e.*, 35] copies of "Thel"[,] also 12 copies of "The Visions of the daughters of Albion"[,] 8 Copies of "The Songs of Innocence" & 9 copies of "The Act of Creation". Then M<sup>r</sup> Bernard Quaritch appeared upon the scene, took over the enterprise & sold everything else.

He took them as follows:—

1885				
11 <sup>th</sup> May	"Daughters of Albion	Nos. 13 & 26 to 36	inclusive	
15 <sup>th</sup> "	"Songs of Innocence"	Nos. 6, 14, 20 & 24 to 32	"	
18 <sup>th</sup> "	6 "Act of Creation"	Nos. 10 to 15	"	
23 <sup>rd</sup> "	6 "Act of Creation"	Nos. 16 to 21	"	
28 <sup>th</sup> July	6 "Songs of Innocence"	Nos. 33 to 38	"	
1885		(page) 2		
7 <sup>th</sup> Aug <sup>t</sup>	12 "Songs of Experience"	Nos. 1 to 12	inclusive	
10 <sup>th</sup> Sept.	6 "Songs of Experience"	" 13 to 18	"	
24 <sup>th</sup> "	4 " " " "	" 19 to 22	"	
6 <sup>th</sup> Oct	4 "Songs of Innocence"	" 17, 39, 41	" [ <i>sic</i> ]	
" "	6 "Thels"	" 36 to 41	"	
9 <sup>th</sup> "	2 "Songs of Experience"	" 23 & 24	"	
" "	6 "Daughters of Albion"	" 23 & 37 to 41	"	
30 <sup>th</sup> Nov	2 Songs of Experience	" 25 & 26	"	
" "	12 Marriage of H. & H.	" 1 to 12	"	
24 Dec <sup>r</sup>	6 " " " "	" 13 to 18	"	

1886				
8 <sup>th</sup> April	18 "Miltons"	" 1 to 18	"	
12 <sup>th</sup> May	3 Marriage of H. & H	" 19, 20, 21	"	
" "	2 "Miltons["]	" 19, 20	"	
" "	3 "Songs of Innocence"	" 42[,] 43, 44	"	
17 <sup>th</sup> "	3 "Miltons"	" 21, 22, 23	"	
" "	3 Songs of Experience	" 27, 28, 29	"	
25 <sup>th</sup> "	12 "No Natural Religion"	" 1 to 12	"	
1 <sup>st</sup> June	3 Natural Religion	" 13, 14, 15	"	
1 <sup>st</sup> July	4 " " "	" 16, 17, 18, 19.	"	
3 <sup>rd</sup> "	1 "Songs of Innocence["]	" 48	"	
" "	2 Songs of Experience	" 31, 32	"	
3 <sup>rd</sup> Aug	3 Songs of Innocence	" 45, 46, 49	"	
" "	2 No Natural Religion	" [28 <i>del</i> ] 20, 21.	"	
4 <sup>th</sup> "	2 Marriage of H & H.	" 22, 24	"	
" "	4 Miltons	" 25, 26[,] 27, 28	"	
11 <sup>th</sup> "	1 Songs of Experience	" 30	"	
" "	1 Songs of Innocence	" 47	"	
" "	1 Marriage of H. & H.	" 23	"	
8 <sup>th</sup> Sept	1 Milton	" 24	"	
" "	4 No Natural Religion	" 22, 23, 24, 25	"	
21 <sup>st</sup> "	3 Songs of Experience	" 33, 34, 35	"	
27 <sup>th</sup> Oct.	3 " " "	" 36, 37, 38	"	
" "	3 Marriage of H. & H.	" 25, 26, 27.	"	
1886		(page) 3	nos.	
9 <sup>th</sup> Nov	5 Thels	42[,] 43, 44, 45, 46	inclusive	
" "	5 Daughters of Albion	42, 43, 44, 45, 46	"	
" "	3 Marriage of H & H.	25 <sup>a</sup> [,] 26 <sup>a</sup> [,] 27 <sup>a</sup>	"	
" "	12 plates of "Little Tom"		"	
7 <sup>th</sup> Dec	3 "Songs of Experience"	39-40, 41	"	
9 <sup>th</sup> "	1 Act of Creation	22.	"	
18 "	1 Marriage of H & H	31	"	
" "	2 Songs of Experience	42, 43.	"	
1887				
16 <sup>th</sup> Feb <sup>y</sup>	3 America	1, 2, 3	"	
22 <sup>d</sup> "	6 " "	4 to 9	"	
15 <sup>th</sup> Mar	7 " "	10 to 16	"	
20 <sup>th</sup> April	3 " returned	17, 18, 19	"	
27 <sup>th</sup> May	1 No Natural Religion	26	"	
" "	1 Act of Creation	9	"	
31 <sup>st</sup> "	2 Daughters of Albion	4 [ <i>i.e.</i> , 24?], 47	"	
" "	2 Thels	20, 25 [ <i>i.e.</i> , 30, 35?].	"	
28 <sup>th</sup> June	3 Songs of Experience	44, 45, 46	"	
11 <sup>th</sup> July	3 America	20, 21, 22	"	
10 <sup>th</sup> "	2 No Natural Religion	27, 28	"	
20 <sup>th</sup> Oct <sup>r</sup>	2 Act of Creation	25[,] 26	"	
" "	2 Little Toms		"	
29 <sup>th</sup> "	12 Europe	1 to 12	"	

1888				
21 <sup>th</sup> Mar	6 Urizen	1 to 6	"	
1 <sup>st</sup> May	2 Act of Creation	27, 28		
5 <sup>th</sup> "	5 Urizen	7 to 11	"	
4 <sup>th</sup> Sept	6 Gates of Paradise	1 to 6	"	
15 <sup>th</sup> "	1 Gates of Paradise	7		
10 <sup>th</sup> Oct.	1 " " "	8		
19 <sup>th</sup> "	1 " " "	9		
1889				
9 <sup>th</sup> May	2 Gates of Paradise	10, 11		
" "	1 Marriage of H. & H.	35		
21 <sup>st</sup> Oct	1 Act of Creation	29		
1890				
25 <sup>th</sup> Aug	1 Thel	47		
1890		(page 4)		
30 <sup>th</sup> Aug	1 Thel	No. 42 [i.e., 32?]		
" "	1 Daughters of Albion	" 48		
" "	1 Gates of Paradise	" 12		
5 <sup>th</sup> Sept	4 Songs of Experience	" 47, 48, 49, 50	inclusive	
" "	1 America	" 19		
" "	1 Europe	" 13		
" "	1 Marriage of H & H	" 32		
" "	1 Milton	" [11 del] 30		
" "	1 Gates of Paradise	" 13		
8 <sup>th</sup> "	3 Thels	" 48, 49, 50		
15 <sup>th</sup> "	3 Daughters of Albion	" 3, 49, 50		
12 <sup>th</sup> Nov	1 Gates of Paradise	" 14		
24 "	5 Song of Los	" 1 to 5	"	
12 <sup>th</sup> Dec	1 Gates of Paradise	" 15		
1891				
23 <sup>rd</sup> Jan	5 Song of Los	" 6 to 10	"	
" "	10 Homers Poetry	—		
9 <sup>th</sup> Feb	1 Europe	" 30		
" "	1 America	" 21		
" "	1 Marriage of H & H	" 33		
3 <sup>rd</sup> June	2 Los	" 11, 12		
" "	1 Milton	" 24		
" "	1 Gates of Paradise	" 16		
" "	2 Little Toms	"		
16 <sup>th</sup> Dec	1 Los	" 13		
1892				
21 <sup>st</sup> Mar	1 Los	" 14		
28 <sup>th</sup> April	1 Marriage of H & H.	" 34		
12 <sup>th</sup> Aug	1 Los	" 15		
1893				
21 <sup>st</sup> Feb.	1 Urizen	" 12		
4 <sup>th</sup> Mar	2 Marriage of H. & H	" 35, 36		
10 <sup>th</sup> "	1 " " "	" 37		
12 <sup>th</sup> June	1 Los	" 16		
1894				
20 <sup>th</sup> July	1 Act of Creation	" 30		
1894		(page 5)		
4 <sup>th</sup> Jan	1 Act of Creation	No 31		
1899				
15 <sup>th</sup> May	1 Urizen	" 13		
" "	1 Gates of Paradise	" 17		
" "	1 Homers Poetry	"		
" "	1 Little Tom	"		
1900				
28 <sup>th</sup> April	1 Marriage of H & H.	" 37		
1903				
12 <sup>th</sup> Jan.	1 Act of Creation	" 32		
1 <sup>st</sup> Oct	1 Marriage of H & H	" 38		
1905				
3 <sup>rd</sup> Mar	1 " " "	" 40		
30 Mar	1 Gates of Paradise	" 18		
" "	1 America	? 22		
1907				
18 <sup>th</sup> Mar.	1 Marriage of H: H.	" 41		
24 April	1 " " "	" 42		
" "	1 Milton	" [29 del] 31		
" "	1 Act of Creation	" 33		
27 <sup>th</sup> May	1 America	" 23		
31 <sup>st</sup> Dec.	1 Urizen	" [45 del]-?14		
" "	1 Europe	" 30		
1 "	1 Little Tom	"		
" "	Homers Poetry	[no number]		
1908				
1 <sup>st</sup> Feb	1 Sybilline Leaf	"		
" "	1 Little Tom	"		
20 "	1 Act of Creation	" 34		
4 <sup>th</sup> Mar	1 Act of Creation	" 35		
1909				
25 <sup>th</sup> Mar	1 Act of Creation	" 36		
" "	2 Little Tom	"		
16 <sup>th</sup> May	1 Act of Creation	" 37		
29 <sup>th</sup> Sept	1 " " "	" 38		
1910		(page 6)	No.	
17 <sup>th</sup> Feb	2 Acts of Creation	" 39, 40		
7 <sup>th</sup> Sept	1 No Natural Religion	" 29		
11 <sup>th</sup> Nov	2 Marriage of H. & H.	" 43, 44		
1911				
24 <sup>th</sup> Jan	1 No Natural Religion	" 30		
17 <sup>th</sup> Feb	1 Europe	" 31		
6 <sup>th</sup> Mar	1 Gates of Paradise	" 19		

1912			
15 <sup>th</sup> Jan	1 Europe	" 32	
27 <sup>th</sup> Feb	1 copy page 53 Jerusalem		
29 <sup>th</sup> Mar	1 Sheet 'To the Queen'		
" "	3 pages of Urizen—"Old Man with book" [pl. 1?]		
	"Corruption" [pl. 8?] & "Retreating figure" [pl. 27?]		
28 <sup>th</sup> April	1 Songs of Experience	No. [no number]	
1 <sup>st</sup> May	1 Leaf "To the Queen"		
1 <sup>st</sup> July	2 Acts of Creation	" 41-42	
2 <sup>nd</sup> Sept.	1 Gates of Paradise	" 20	
19 <sup>th</sup> "	1 Europe	" 33	
" "	1 Marriage of H. H.	" 45	
7 <sup>th</sup> Oct	1 " " "	" 46	
24 <sup>th</sup> "	2 No Natural Religion	" 31-32	
1913			
18 <sup>th</sup> Aug	4 Little Toms		
15 <sup>th</sup> Dec	1 Gates of Paradise	" 21	
1914			
15 <sup>th</sup> April	1 America	" 24	
14 <sup>th</sup> Sept	1 America	" 25	
" "	1 do.	" 22	
28 <sup>th</sup> Oct	1 Europe	" 34	
" "	1 No Natural Religion	" 34	
1915			
4 <sup>th</sup> Mar	1 No Natural Religion	" 35	
12 <sup>th</sup> April	1 Marriage of H & Hell	" 47	
26 <sup>th</sup> "	1 Milton	" [2 del] 32	
19 <sup>th</sup> June	1 America	" 26	
1916		([page] 7)	
25 <sup>th</sup> Jan	1 Act of Creation	No 46	
14 <sup>th</sup> Aug	1 No Natural Religion	" 37	
9 <sup>th</sup> Nov	1 Marriage of H & H.	" 48	
11 <sup>th</sup> Dec	1 America	" 27	
1917			
20 <sup>th</sup> Jan	1 No Natural Religion	" 38	
29 <sup>th</sup> "	1 " " "	" 39	
23 <sup>d</sup> Feb	1 Marriage of H. H.	" 49	
" "	1 America	" 28	
" "	1 No Natural Religion	" 40	
26 <sup>th</sup> Mar	1 America	" 29	
28 <sup>th</sup> May	1 " "	" 30	
4 <sup>th</sup> June	1 Act of Creation	" 47	
16 <sup>th</sup> July	1 Marriage of H & H	" 50	
16 <sup>th</sup> Nov	2 Little Toms		
1 <sup>st</sup> Dec	2 " "		
1918			
16 <sup>th</sup> April	1 Songs of Experience	" [no number]	
" "	1 Act of Creation	" 48	
1919			
2 <sup>d</sup> May	1 Milton	" [30 del] 33	
" "	2 Little Toms		
12 June	1 Milton	" [31 del] 34	
" "	1 Europe	" 31	
27 <sup>th</sup> "	1 Europe	" 35	
" "	1 No Natural Religion	" 41	
" "	1 Act of Creation	" 49	
14 <sup>th</sup> Aug <sup>1</sup>	1 Ancient of Days	" 50	
" "	1 Innocence & Experience (Ellis & Yeats)	[no number]	
4 <sup>th</sup> Sept	1 Innocence & Experience (Ellis & Yeats)		
" "	1 Europe	" 36	
" "	1 No Natural Religion	" 42	
9 <sup>th</sup> Sept	3 Gates of Paradise	" 22, 23, 24	
4 <sup>th</sup> Dec	1 " " "	" 25	
" "	1 America	" 32	
1920		([page] 8)	
15 <sup>th</sup> Jan	1 Los	No 17	
19 <sup>th</sup> Feb	1 Los	" 18	
5 <sup>th</sup> Mar	1 Milton	" [32 del] 35	
25 "	1 America	" 33	
" "	1 Gates of Paradise	" 26	
22 <sup>d</sup> April	1 America	" 34	
" "	1 " "	" 35	
" "	1 No Natural Religion	" 43	
6 <sup>th</sup> May	1 Songs Innocence & Experience (Ellis & Yeats)	[no number]	
13 <sup>th</sup> May	1 page of Thel		
3 <sup>d</sup> June	1 Europe	" 37	
8 <sup>th</sup> July	1 Milton	" [33 del] 36	
22 <sup>d</sup> "	1 No Natural Religion	" 44	
5 <sup>th</sup> Aug	1 Thel 2 <sup>d</sup> edition	" 1, 2	
4 <sup>th</sup> Sept	1 America	" 36	
" "	1 Thel 2 <sup>nd</sup> edition	" 3	
27 <sup>th</sup> Sept	1 Los	" 19	
" "	1 Thel 2 <sup>nd</sup> edition	" 4	
2 <sup>d</sup> Dec	2 " " "	" 5, 6	
26 <sup>th</sup> Oct	2 " " "	" 7, 8	
16 <sup>th</sup> Dec	2 " " "	" 9, 10	
1921			
3 <sup>rd</sup> Feb.	2 " " "	" 11, 12	
24 <sup>th</sup> Feb.	1 No Natural Religion	" 4, 5 [i.e., 45].	
" "	1 Thel 2 <sup>d</sup> edition	" 13	
17 <sup>th</sup> Mar	2 " " "	" 14, 15	
15 <sup>th</sup> April	2 " " "	" 16, 17	
13 <sup>th</sup> May	2 " " "	" 18, 19	
2 <sup>d</sup> June	1 " " "	" 20	
16 <sup>th</sup> Aug	1 Europe	" 38	
16 <sup>th</sup> Sept	1 Milton	" [34 del] 37	
22 "	2 No Natural Religion	" 46, 47	
8 <sup>th</sup> Nov	3 " " "	" 48, 49, 50	

1922		([page] 9)			
3 <sup>rd</sup> Feb <sup>y</sup>	1 Milton		No [35 del] 38		
16 <sup>th</sup> "	1 Urizen title page [i.e., pl. 1] <sup>24</sup>				
" "	2 " page 23 [i.e., pl. 21]				
" "	1 " page 22 [i.e., pl. 20]				
" "	1 Urizen page 5 [i.e., pl. 14]				
" "	1 " " 9 [i.e., pl. 10]				
9 <sup>th</sup> May	2 Thel [2nd Edition]		" 21, 22		
24 <sup>th</sup> July	1 Urizen		" 15		
17 <sup>th</sup> Aug	1 " page 5 [i.e., pl. 4]				
14 <sup>th</sup> Sept	1 Milton		" [36 del] 39		
8 <sup>th</sup> Dec	1 Urizen		" 16		
1923					
9 <sup>th</sup> Mar	2 Americas		" 37, 38		
17 <sup>th</sup> May	1 Urizen		" 17		
1 <sup>st</sup> Aug	1 Europe		" 39		
27 <sup>th</sup> Sept	2 Song of Los		" 20, 21		
15 <sup>th</sup> Oct	1 America		" 39		
15 <sup>th</sup> Oct	1 " rich colouring		" x 40		
1924					
24 Mar	1 [i.e., 2] Thel [2nd Edition]		" 23, 24		
15 <sup>th</sup> May	1 Urizen		" 18		
20 <sup>th</sup> Aug	1 Europe		" 40		
18 <sup>th</sup> Sept	1 Europe		" 41		
20 <sup>th</sup> Oct	1 America rich colouring		" 40 x		
1925					
11 <sup>th</sup> May	1 America rich colouring		" 41		
" "	2 Gates of Paradise		" 27-[28]		
" "	1 Little Tom coloured				
22 <sup>d</sup> June	1 Europe		" 43		
27 <sup>th</sup> Aug	1 "		" 44		
" "	2 Little Toms				
28 <sup>th</sup> Oct	1 America richly coloured		" 42		
1926					
23 <sup>d</sup> Mar	1 Europe		" 45		
1926		([page] 10)			
29 <sup>th</sup> April	2 Thels [2nd Edition]		No 25, 26		
18 <sup>th</sup> Aug	2 Little Toms				
" "	1 Europe		" 46		
" "	1 Milton		" [37 del] 40		
27 <sup>th</sup> "	1 Europe		" 47		
" "	2 Thels [2nd Edition]		" 27, 28		
27 Sept	1 Europe		" 48		
" "	2 Thels [2nd Edition]		" 29[,] 30		
7 <sup>th</sup> Dec	1 Europe		" 49		
" "	1 America rich colouring		" 44		
1927		Centenary Edition			
12 <sup>th</sup> Jan.	6 copies Songs of Innocence	" 1 to 6			inclusive
" "	1 " of Experience	" 1			
18 <sup>th</sup> "	6 Songs of Innocence	" 7 to 12			
" "	3 " " Experience	" 2, 3, 4			
17 <sup>th</sup> Feb <sup>y</sup>	6 " " Innocence	" 13 to 18			
11 <sup>th</sup> Mar	6 " " "	" 19 to 24			"
8 <sup>th</sup> April	7 " " "	" 25 to 31			"
16 <sup>th</sup> May	5 " " "	" 32 to 36			"
24 <sup>th</sup> June	5 " " "	" 37 to 41			"
22 <sup>d</sup> July	5 " " Experience	" 5 to 9			
11 <sup>th</sup> Aug	5 " " "	" 10 to 14			"
30 <sup>th</sup> Sept	5 " " "	" 15 to 19			"
4 <sup>th</sup> Oct	2 Song of Los	" 23, 24			" [sic]
19 <sup>th</sup> "	4 Songs of Experience	" 20 to 23			
4 <sup>th</sup> "	" " " "	" 38 [all sic]			
24 <sup>th</sup> Nov	5 " " "	" 24 to 28			"
1928					
4 <sup>th</sup> Jan	5 " " "	" 29 to 33			"
7 <sup>th</sup> Feb	5 " " "	" 34-[35, 36, 37, & 39]			
13 <sup>th</sup> Mar	5 " " "	" 40 to 44			inclusive
3 <sup>rd</sup> April	1 Europe	" 50 [circled]			
2 <sup>d</sup> May	5 Songs of Innocence	" 42 to 46			inclusive
1928		([page] 11)			
2 <sup>d</sup> May	1 page no 2 of Daughters of Albion no.				
24 <sup>th</sup> "	4 copies of Songs of Innocence	47, 48, 49, 50			
2 <sup>d</sup> Aug	2 " America	" 45, 46,			
3 <sup>d</sup> Sep	6 Songs of Experience	" 45 to 50			inclusive
" "	5 Daughters of Albion	" 1, 2, 3, 4, 5,			
8 <sup>th</sup> Oct	5 " " "	" 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 [last circled]			
26 <sup>th</sup> Nov	1 Songs of Innocence	}			sent for review
" "	1 Song of Experience				review
1929					
12 <sup>th</sup> Mar	1 America richly coloured	47.			
29 <sup>th</sup> April	1 [sic] ditto monochrome	48 [circled]			
" "	2 Miltons	39, 40 [i.e.] 41-2			
" "	3 Ancient of Days	1, 2, 3			
4 <sup>th</sup> June	1 Daughters of Albion	3			
" "	5 Act of Creation	4, 5, 6, 7, 8.			
12 <sup>th</sup> Nov	5 Songs of Innocence	51 to [57 del in a circle to]			
		55			inclusive
1930					
30 <sup>th</sup> Oct	1 Gates of Paradise	29			
" "	2 Thel [2nd Edition]	31, 32 [circled]			
16 <sup>th</sup> Dec	2 Europe	1, 2 [circled]			
1939 [sic]					
1935					
3 May	2 Gates of Paradise	30, 31 [circled]			

538 Romford Rd London E7 18 Feby 1936

The foregoing pages contain a detailed account of *all* my dealings with the House of Quaritch up to date. You can make what use of them you choose. I have at the moment Blake facsimile stock as over leaf

Yours faithfully

W<sup>m</sup> Muir

[page 12]

18 Feby Mr Muir's Stock

4 Songs of Experience

[2 Miltons *del*] ord Feb 36

Mr Muir then said he had 4 or 5 uncoloured but some may be imperfect

Your orders will oblige

Yours [?] try [?]

W<sup>m</sup> Muir

[In the second hand:] Milton. ?No. of copies done. Mr Muir's figures give: 1-18, 19-20, 21, 22, 23, 25, 26, 27, 28, 24, [11, 24, *del*] 29, [24, *del*] 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 39, 40, & 2 in hand = [44*del*] [42 *del*] 41

Muir's own figures for his sales to Pearson (1884-85) and to Quaritch (1885-1936) may be summarized as shown in Table 1.

Notice that the copies were not always sold in strict numerical order. Further, some numbered copies are not accounted for in this list: *Europe*, No. 14-29; *Marriage*, No. 39; *Songs of Innocence*, No. 9-13, 15-16, 18-19, 21-23, 40, 50; *No Natural Religion*, No. 33, 36; *Visions*, No. 14-22, and 25. There are also some duplicate or extra numbers for *America* (3 copies), *Europe* (1), *Marriage* (3), *Songs of Experience* (2), and 2nd Edition (5), *Songs of Innocence* (1), and 2nd Edition (6), and *Visions* (3). For at least the first editions, 50 copies of each were promised, but fewer than 50 copies were sold for most titles: *America* (48), *Urizen* (18), *Gates of Paradise* (31), Hayley's "Little Tom" (36), *On Homer* (12), and *Song of Los* (24). The maximum number of complete sets of "The Edition of the Works of Wm. Blake" by "The Blake Press at Edmonton" was 12, though they seem never to have been sold as sets. Probably there are considerably fewer complete sets which could be found today.

<i>Volumes I and II</i>		
Title	Dates of Sale	Numbered Copies Sold
<i>America</i> <sup>25</sup>	(1887-1928)	1-48 (17-19 returned, 19 resold) + duplicates of 21, 22, 40; "richly coloured" 1923 ff.
<i>Book of Thel</i>	(1884-90)	1-50
<i>Book of Thel</i> (2nd Edition)	(1920-30)	1-32
<i>Europe</i>	(1887-1928)	1-13, 30-50, + duplicate of 30
<i>Europe</i> <sup>26</sup> (2nd Edition)	(1930)	1-2
<i>First Book of Urizen</i> <sup>27</sup>	(1988-1924)	1-18 (N.B., not limited to 15 or 25)
<i>Gates of Paradise</i> <sup>28</sup>	(1886-1936)	1-31
Hayley, "Little Tom" <sup>29</sup>	(1886-1926)	36 unnumbered copies, one in 1925 colored
<i>Marriage</i> <sup>30</sup>	(1885-1917)	1-38, 40-50, + 25a, 26a, 27a
<i>Milton</i> <sup>31</sup>	(1886-1929)	1-42, + 2 colored and 4-5 uncolored in stock in 1936
<i>On Homer</i>	(1891-1907)	12 unnumbered copies
<i>Song of Los</i> <sup>32</sup>	(1890-1927)	1-24
<i>Songs of Experience</i> <sup>33</sup>	(1885-90)	1-50, + 2 more in 1912, 1918
<i>Songs of Experience</i> (2nd Edition)	(1927-28)	1-50, + 1 for review + 4 in stock in 1936
<i>Songs of Innocence</i>	(1884-1928)	1-8, 14, 17, 20, 24-39, 41-49, + duplicate of 6
<i>Songs of Innocence</i> (2nd Edition) <sup>34</sup>	(1927-28)	1-55, + 1 for review
<i>There is No Natural Religion</i>	(1886-1921)	1-32, 34-35, 37-50
<i>Visions of the Daughters of Albion</i>	(1884-90)	1-13, 23-24, 26-50, + 3 bis
<i>Visions of the Daughters of Albion</i> <sup>35</sup> (2nd Edition)	(1928)	1-10 + 3 bis
<i>Miscellaneous Plates Not in Vol. I-II</i>		
"Act of Creation"	(1884?-1929)	1-22, 25-42, 46-50, + a duplicate of 9 <sup>36</sup>
"Ancient of Days"	(1920)	1-8
Jerusalem pl. 53	(1912)	1 unnumbered copy
<i>First Book of Urizen</i> pl. 1, 8, 27	(1912, 1922)	2 unnumbered copies of pl. 1, 1 each of the others
<i>Ibid.</i> , pl. 1, 10, 14, 20-21	(1922)	1 unnumbered copy of each + 1 of pl. 14
<i>Songs of Innocence and of Experience</i> "(Ellis & Yeats)"	(1919-20)	3 unnumbered copies
"To the Queen" <sup>37</sup>	(1912)	2 unnumbered copies
<i>Visions of the Daughters of Albion</i>	(1928)	1 plate

Table 1.

These detailed letters from William Muir to Quaritch are extraordinarily interesting to anyone concerned with the development of Blake's reputation and the reproduction of his works in Illuminated Printing. In future, any extended consideration of the Muir facsimiles of Blake or Blake facsimiles in general will have to consider these letters.

A comparison of the success of William Blake in selling his works in Illuminated Printing in the 38 years from 1789 to his death in 1827 and of William Muir in selling facsimiles of these works in the 52 years from 1884-1936 indicates that Muir was far more successful than Blake, though the genius of the two men is incomparable (see Table 2).

Blake's comparatively slight success as a salesman of his own works arose in part, of course, because he had to create virtually unaided a market for his strange (i.e., unfamiliar) works. Muir had greater success in selling some-

	<i>America</i>	<i>Theb</i>	<i>Europe</i>	<i>Urizen</i>	<i>Gates</i>	<i>Marriage</i>	<i>Milton</i>
Blake*	15	16	11	8	14	9	4
Muir**	51	82	37	18	31	52	49
	<i>Song of Los</i>	<i>Experience</i>	<i>Innocence</i>	<i>No Natural Rel</i>		<i>Visions</i>	
Blake*	5	29	50	0 <sup>38</sup>		17	
Muir**	24	107	93	48		54	

\* (surviving copies)

\*\* (copies sold)

Table 2.

what approximate facsimiles of the same works because, by 1884 when he issued his first proposals, Blake's reputation had been firmly established in the biographies of J. T. Smith (1828), Allan Cunningham (1830), and especially Alexander Gilchrist (1863, 1880), in the critical eulogies of Swinburne (1868), and others, and in editions such as those by Sheperd (1874), and Rossetti (1874 et seq). But there is, I think, more to it than this.

Blake complained to Dawson Turner on 9 June 1818 that "I have never been able to produce a Sufficient number

for a general Sale by means of a regular Publisher[.] It is therefore necessary to me that any Person wishing to have any or all of them should send me their Order to Print them."<sup>39</sup> However, Muir apparently worked in the same way that Blake did, coloring (and perhaps even printing) a few copies at a time, and Muir was far more successful than Blake was, even though his facsimiles are not nearly so beautiful as Blake's originals. Surely the explanation, at least in part, is that, as Muir said, "Blake . . . had no Quaritch."

<sup>1</sup> See the table of Blake's Poetry Reprinted in Conventional Typography before 1863 in *Blake Books* (1977) 74-75.

<sup>2</sup> D. G. Rossetti was unrepentant for his "rather unceremonious shaking up of Blake's rhymes [in Gilchrist's biography of Blake]. I really believe that is what ought to be done" (*Anne Gilchrist: Her Life and Writings*, ed. H. H. Gilchrist [1887] 94), and the three texts of E. J. Ellis and W. B. Yeats together (1893, 1979) and separately (1893 [two editions] 1905, 1906, 1910, 1920, 1969, 1973) are often even more inaccurate.

<sup>3</sup> *Blake Books* 487-89, the source of most of the information here which does not come from the Quaritch mss. I am deeply grateful to my friend Dr. Arthur Freeman of Quaritch for his generosity in providing me with reproductions of the Muir documents and giving me permission to quote from them. The biography of Quaritch, on which he has been working for some years, will provide a fuller context for Quaritch's dealings with Muir. Note that Quaritch was also the prime agent in the distribution of Blake Trust facsimiles.

A great mass of Quaritch documents is

in the British Library, with a "time-lock" until the year 2000.

<sup>4</sup> A facsimile of Blake's letter of 16 March 1804 is included.

<sup>5</sup> According to a flyer of May 1885, facsimiles of *The Book of Abania* and *The Book of Los* were "in contemplation," but apparently they were never issued.

<sup>6</sup> Quaritch also has fascinating records of the Ellis & Yeats edition of Blake (1893) and of the *Facsimile of the Original Outlines before Colouring of the Songs of Innocence and of Experience* [U] (1893).

<sup>7</sup> That is "The Ancient of Days," the frontispiece of *Europe*.

<sup>8</sup> In another letter to Quaritch of 5 May 1919, Muir wrote: My Letter of 5 May 1919 leaves price of Los undetermined[.]

"I told Mr Mudie it would be more than it used to be[.] This (£6.6.0) is less than it should be. It should be £7.7.0 but I fear you will not think so[.]"

<sup>9</sup> "On Homers Poetry & On Virgil."

<sup>10</sup> A marginal note says "nine months."

<sup>11</sup> This sum of £625.5.6 presumably represents Quaritch's 33% commission, and the £1,250.11.0 is what Muir received.

<sup>12</sup> This is an odd mistake for a printer as careful and experienced as Muir, for almost all the works by Blake of which he made facsimiles—*Innocence*, *Theb*, *Visions*, *Experience*, *Marriage*, *Milton*, *No Natural Religion*, *On Homer*, Hayley's "Little Tom," *America*, *Europe*, *Urizen*, and *Song of Los*—are etched in relief. Only *The Book of Abania* and *The Book of Los* (which Muir did not reproduce) plus *The Gates of Paradise* (which he reproduced in 1890) are conventionally etched in intaglio. The method of etching, in relief or in intaglio, determines the method of printing. Of course, none of Blake's copperplates for any of these works survives (though there are electrotype copies of 16 of the *Songs* plates originally made for Gilchrist's *Life of William Blake*, "Pictor Ignotus"), so our evidence of the form of etching is indirect. There is, however, no ambiguity as to whether the etching is in relief or intaglio.

<sup>13</sup> I have used this method in printing from electrotypes of Blake's plates (on conspicuously modern paper, signed on the versos) with effects very like those Blake achieved.

<sup>14</sup> I have not observed this phenomenon in either Linnell's copies of *Innocence* (I) and *Songs* (R, X, AA) or elsewhere. As the blue flower in "Infant Joy," to which Muir refers below, is found in only nine copies, including *Songs* (X), perhaps Muir saw copy X, which remained in the Linnell family until 1918.

<sup>15</sup> The flower in "Infant Joy" (pl. 25) is blue rather than the usual red in *Innocence* (A, G-H, X) and *Songs* (D-F, I, X).

<sup>16</sup> I have not observed this phenomenon in any copy of *Visions* pl. 2.

<sup>17</sup> Apparently Professor Brereton had asked why Muir's facsimile of *Thel* pl. 7 shows *Thel's* bent head in profile [as in copies N-O], while that in *The Works of William Blake*, ed. E. J. Ellis & W. B. Yeats (1893), III, unnumbered facsimile page, shows only the top of *Thel's* head (as in copy D in the British Museum Print Room).

<sup>18</sup> Made from a hard, lustrous resin obtained from various tropical trees.

<sup>19</sup> This formula is clearly for producing the effects of Blake's color-printing, as in *The Song of Los*, the only work Muir reproduced by his own method of color-printing.

<sup>20</sup> By an odd chance, Professor John Le Gay Brereton, the nephew of the author of this letter, was a dear friend of ours. I have enquired for other parts of this correspondence, but neither members of his family nor the archivists of the University of Sydney Library and the State Library of New South Wales, which have collections of his papers, have been able to throw light on the matter.

<sup>21</sup> *A Bibliography of William Blake* (1921) 297, says that "Only about twenty-five copies [of URIZEM] were done; the plates, which were etchings on zinc, have since been lost."

<sup>22</sup> A note at the bottom of the page says: "incorrect. It is in 2 other originals." In fact, this pl. 4 is found in copies A-C, H, and I (the last two copies consist of only five plates altogether). Most of the emendations seem to have been made at Quaritch's.

<sup>23</sup> This is apparently the collection of miscellaneous Blakeana, including *Urizen* pl. 4, acquired by Muir in 1885, described in *Blake Books* 437-41.

<sup>24</sup> In *Urizen* (B), which Muir reproduced, the titlepage is pl. 1, the fifth plate is pl. 14, the ninth plate is pl. 10, the 22nd plate is pl. 20, and the 23rd plate is pl. 21.

<sup>25</sup> According to Quaritch Catalogue 427 (1929) Lot 243, "Only 48 copies were issued of which 12 were coloured."

Notes here on the copies issued supplement the information in *Blake Books* (1977).

<sup>26</sup> Quaritch Catalogue 486 (1934) Lot 79, says that of the "1931" version "Only seventeen copies will be reproduced" and Catalogue 560 (1939) adds: "Only two copies were reproduced."

<sup>27</sup> According to Quaritch Catalogue 373 (Dec 1922) Lot 160, When Mr. Muir made his facsimile of 'Urizen' [in 1888] only fourteen copies were coloured. The sale was rather slow, and after his removal from Edmonton the zinc plates could not be found and in consequence no more were done.

The above copy [of 1922] was recently completed by Mr. Muir.

And Quaritch Catalogue 560 (1939) Lot 103, adds that there were only "four copies reproduced entirely by hand by Mr. Muir . . . numbered 15 to 18"; No. 15 is in the Essick collection, and an unnumbered copy is in the Huntington.

<sup>28</sup> According to Quaritch Catalogue 560 (1937) Lot 100, "Although the edition was intended to be one of 50 copies, only 31 were published."

<sup>29</sup> Quaritch Catalogue 405 (Dec 1926) Lot 256, offered "Little Tom" "with two illustrations COLOURED BY HAND from the copy in the British Museum (1925)."

<sup>30</sup> Quaritch Catalogue 560 (1939) Lot 105, says: "50 copies were printed, only a very small number being coloured from the Fitzwilliam copy [I]," though the only ones seen by Robert N. Essick and GEB seem to have been colored from Copy A.

<sup>31</sup> According to Quaritch Catalogue 530 (1927) Lot 101, "Only 42 coloured copies were issued."

<sup>32</sup> Quaritch Catalogue 427 (1929) Lot 250, says: "Only 23 copies were reproduced," and Keynes (1921) adds that "Some . . . have been executed recently."

<sup>33</sup> A volume marked "Drawings for Songs of Experience" presented, according to its inscription, by Wm & S. E. Muir to the Revd Mr. Eastward on 14 Sept 1914 (in the collection of Robert N. Essick) consists of reproductions of *Experience* (pl. 1, 28-37, 39-54), most of them in wash but nine of them (pl. 1, 29, 33-34, 36, 46-47, 53) in lithographs. The lithographs are probably those Muir used for his own facsimile (though pl. 29 lacks the date in this

copy). Gilchrist reproduces different lithographs of pl. 29 (lacking the date), 33-34, 36, 43, 46-48, 53; perhaps Muir began with lithographic copies of the Gilchrist plates and then added wash outlines of the *Experience* plates not in Gilchrist.

<sup>34</sup> In one late copy, pl. 8, 22-23, 25 and 54 were "completed by hand" (i.e., without any printed base), according to an inserted letter by William Muir (Ken Spelman Catalogue 13 [May 1988] Lot 1, cited in Essick, "Blake in the Marketplace, 1988," *Blake* 23 [1989]: 12).

<sup>35</sup> Quaritch Catalogue 427 (1929) Lot 254 offers a version of "(1928)"

Reproduced from the most richly coloured known copy [G] which was at one time in my possession, but which has not previously been reproduced. The outlines are printed from [the same] etched plated, and the colouring done by hand by Mr. Muir and his staff of expert colourists.

And Catalogue 530 (1937) Lot 106, adds: "Although the edition was announced as consisting of 50 copies, only 10 were issued."

A curious hybrid edition, printed in black (as in Copy a), the plates colored mostly like those in Copy G but a few like Copy F (color printed) and H, on paper watermarked 1923, may be "the 1927 reissue" of which "only two copies were issued," according to an anonymous note of 17 Sept 1945 about "oddmens" from "William Muir's Library" acquired from "his [Muir's] widow by Bernard Quaritch Ltd." (all these materials are in the collection of Robert N. Essick).

<sup>36</sup> Quaritch Catalogue 427 (1929) Lot 258, offers a copy of "The Ancient of Days" of "(1929)"; "Only 9 copies . . . [have been] issued."

<sup>37</sup> Presumably the dedicatory poem to Blair's *Grave* (1808) in conventional typography, though perhaps it is the frontispiece drawing bearing the poem in the British Museum Print Room.

<sup>38</sup> Apparently Blake never issued a complete set of the plates for *There is No Natural Religion*.

<sup>39</sup> *William Blake's Writings* (1978) 1649.

## William Muir and the Blake Press at Edmonton with Muir's letters to Kerrison Preston

by Keri Davies

William Muir (1845-1938) is remembered, if at all today, for the hand-colored facsimiles of the Prophetic Books of William Blake published by "The Blake Press at Edmonton."

Twelve<sup>1</sup> works in Illuminated Printing were issued between 1884 and 1890, printed and coloured by hand at great trouble and with considerable success. These works have, on occasion, been accidentally sold as originals. The size of the editions was small, but their influence was appreciable, and their scope has only been equalled in recent times by the facsimiles of the Blake Trust.<sup>2</sup>

Robert Essick suggests that Muir may have been responsible for the facsimiles of the frontispiece to "Europe" (*The Ancient of Days*) mistakenly included in the 1978 William Blake exhibition at the Tate Gallery.<sup>3</sup> Muir worked with no intent to deceive but the confusion at the Tate Gallery points up the best features of Muir's copies. They maintain a truth to Blake's processes, if not always to his images, by continuing the basic combination of a printed monochrome image with hand coloring. "Muir's productions capture something of the spirit of the originals, their various textures and hand-made craftsmanship, better than any photographic reproductions."<sup>4</sup>

Muir's obituary in the *Oban Times* was subtitled "a man of ability and resource."<sup>5</sup> In the course of his long life, Muir had been a quarry manager on the Ross of Mull, a journalist in Aberdeen, a businessman in London; an author, printer, publisher, and inventor. He was a Blake scholar and collector; and the friend of crofters and Princes.

### Childhood<sup>6</sup>

William Muir was born on 7 May 1845 at 20 Clyde Terrace, Gorbals, Glasgow. He was the eldest child of George Walker Muir and his wife Christina Penman. His father's family came from Kilmarnock, Ayrshire, and G. W. Muir is listed in directories of the time as a "commission merchant." His mother was a native Glaswegian; William was born in the tenement where his mother's family lived for many years.

By the time of the 1851 Census, William had been joined by a brother (Andrew) and two sisters (Christina and Hannah).<sup>7</sup> The fifth child, George Walker Muir junior, was born in November. By 1851, William's father had given up his job as "commission merchant" and enrolled as a student of Law at Glasgow University.<sup>8</sup> He never took his degree. In fact, he changed his occupation again in 1855 when he was granted the first of four patents.<sup>9</sup>

Invention will be a recurring topic in this brief history of Muir and his family. George Walker Muir's patents were granted over the years 1855 to 1858 and are all concerned with heating and ventilating. They have in fact a rather modern concern with energy efficiency. In 1855, G. W. Muir moved with his family to Manchester, where he set up as a freelance heating engineer.<sup>10</sup>

Around 1860, William Muir was apprenticed in a stockbroker's office in Glasgow, where he was to remain for some years. But 1860 also saw the death of his brother Andrew Penman Muir, aged just 14. This death seems to have affected Muir deeply. It was not until 1917 that he was in a position to arrange for an inscription on his brother's tomb. "Grief endures," it says.<sup>11</sup>

Gilchrist's *Life of William Blake, 'Pictor Ignotus'* was published in 1863. One can only speculate about the impact it would have made on the 18-year-old Muir, but I am tempted to suggest that he would have reacted particularly strongly. Blake too had lost a younger brother and as with Muir the loss of his brother was an enduring grief.

There is another possible reason for Muir's interest in Blake. Muir was great great-nephew of the journalist, inventor, and biblical controversialist Alexander Tilloch.<sup>12</sup> Blake was one of the signatories in 1797 to a testimonial in favor of Tilloch's process for preventing the forgery of banknotes.<sup>13</sup> Could some family tradition have led Muir towards Blake? Certainly Tilloch's sisters Rabina and Margaret were residents of Clyde Terrace in 1841 along with Muir's mother and grandmother.<sup>14</sup> Rabina Niven was Muir's great grandmother. Margaret Tilloch (she never married) had kept house in London for Tilloch after his wife's death in 1783 and could conceivably have met Blake.

### Quarry Manager

In August 1867, when just 22, Muir moved from Glasgow to the Inner Hebrides to become the quarry manager at the Tormor Quarry<sup>15</sup> on the Ross of Mull just across the Sound from Iona. The quarry at that time was operated by G. & J. Fenning. Following the Fenning's bankruptcy, the quarry was taken over by the Shap Granite & Concrete Co.<sup>16</sup>

He lived at Fionnphort where the ferry now sails for Iona (his sister Hannah kept house for him); and there he made the acquaintance of the MacCormick family. Their father Neil MacCormick was quarry foreman and of his 8 sons, two also worked in the quarry. The family preserve to this day memories of Muir's friendship.<sup>17</sup>

Muir left his post as quarry manager in 1875.<sup>18</sup> (The *Oban Times* obituary refers to a period spent in Aberdeen as editor of an agricultural newspaper but I have so far been unable to verify this.) He seems to have spent a year or so in Manchester before moving to London. He left his foreman, Neil MacCormick, as quarry manager. The 1881 Census shows Muir at 9 Angel Row, Edmonton (now 191 Fore Street, London N9).<sup>19</sup> His sister Hannah joined him in Edmonton a couple of years later.

The 1881 census gives Muir's occupation as "granite agent." Ross of Mull granite had been used in a number of engineering projects of the 1860s and 1870s, such as the piers of Blackfriars Bridge, docks in New York, parts of the Thames Embankment, and bridges in Glasgow. In later years the decorative qualities of the granite (it has a distinctive pink color) were exploited by architects and sculptors. It was presumably as supplier of granite that Muir made the acquaintanceship of Count Gleichen.

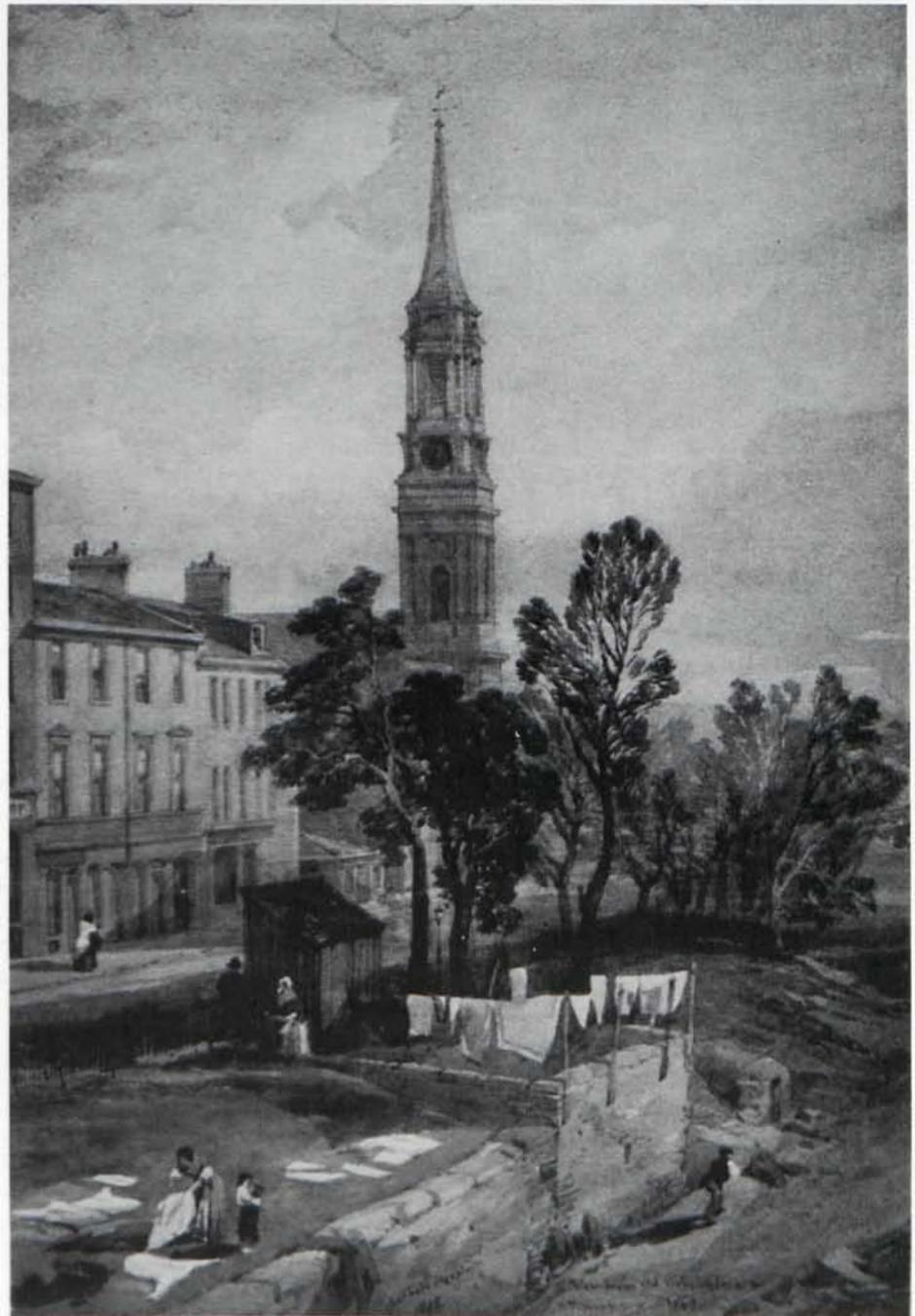
#### Count Gleichen<sup>20</sup>

Count Gleichen, or Prince Victor of Hohenlohe-Langenburg to give him his proper title, was a nephew of Queen Victoria. Prince Victor had a successful naval career, seeing service in the Baltic, the Crimea, and in China, but retired from the Navy in 1866 because of ill-health and devoted himself to an artistic career, taking up sculpture as a serious profession. Queen Victoria granted him a suite of apartments at St James' Palace where he set up his studio. His best known work is a colossal statue of *Alfred the Great* in the

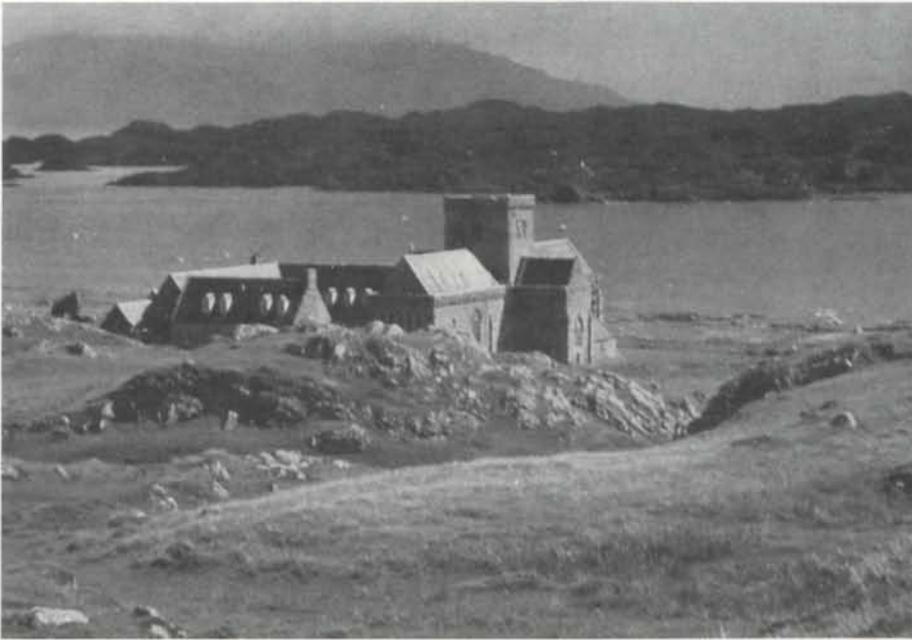
market square at Wantage in Oxfordshire.

At Woolwich, just off the Repository Road and not far from the Rotunda, stands the Afghan and Zulu Wars Memorial by Count Gleichen. It consists of six blocks of pink granite assembled to form a simulacrum of a giant boul-

der. The granite was supplied by the Shap Granite Company.<sup>21</sup> Also at Woolwich, Gleichen's statue of Louis Bonaparte, the Prince Imperial, was unveiled in January 1883. It too had a pink granite plinth.<sup>22</sup> I suggest that Muir may have been the agent for the granite used in these works.



1. Clyde Terrace and Gorbals Parish Church, Glasgow, in 1845. Number 20, where Muir was born, is the five-story tenement just visible on the left-hand side. (From a watercolor in The Mitchell Library Glasgow Room. Reproduced by permission of Glasgow City Libraries.)



2. In 1867, Muir became quarry manager at the Tormor Quarry on the Ross of Mull in the Inner Hebrides. This is the view from Iona looking over the fifteenth-century Abbey towards the island of Mull—it would be hard to imagine a location of greater contrast to his childhood in Glasgow and Manchester. (Photo: Ted Ryan.)

### Blake Press

Muir remained associated with the granite trade to the end of the century, but friendship with Count Gleichen must have encouraged his own artistic ambitions, and in 1884 he began the work for which he is now remembered: the production of hand-colored facsimiles of the Prophetic Books of William Blake.

Muir's facsimiles were dedicated to Count Gleichen, whom he terms his "Patron." For example, the Preface to Muir's facsimile of *Thel* is dedicated

To his serene highness, Prince Victor Hohenlohe-Langenburg, Count Gleichen &c. Your Serene Highness and my kind Patron ... I have to thank your highness for the interest that you have been pleased to take in this enterprise. Blake is pre-eminently an Artist's artist. He has created for himself a realm of pure Imagination in which he works alone, and his results are most stimulating to the imaginations of those who study them. I am your Highness Humble servant, Wm Muir, Edmonton 1885.<sup>23</sup>

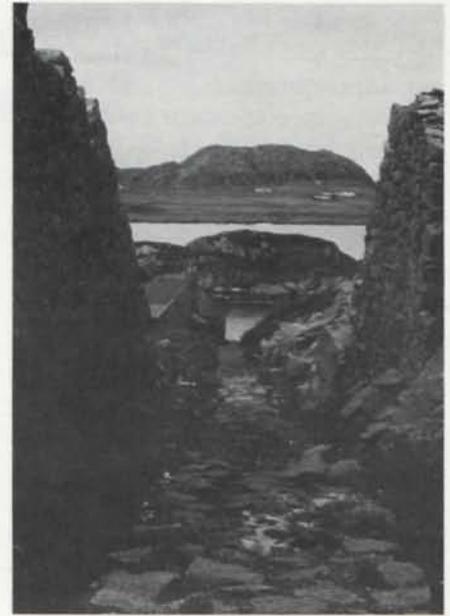
In a "Programme" attached to that same facsimile, he spells out the intentions behind his edition:

My desire and intention is to reproduce ALL the important works by Wm Blake that exist in book form and also some of his finest designs and this by methods of working as nearly the same as Blake himself used as the need of maintaining fidelity to his results will allow. I will not use either photography or chromolithography. All outlines are drawn and all the colouring is by hand. I produce fifty copies only of each book and each of them is numbered.

The bookseller John Pearson, who sold the first of Muir's facsimiles, retired from business in 1885.

Mr Pearson sold the first twelve copies [of the *Songs of Innocence* facsimile] between Jany and May 1885. Then he retired from business "Because he had made £20,000 and was content" - He introduced me to Mr Bernard Quaritch who continued the work. He received and sold the remaining 38 copies between May 1885 and August 1886. So completing the Edition.<sup>24</sup>

The firm of Bernard Quaritch remained Muir's agent for the Blake Press facsimiles for the next 50 years. Prices for Blake Press titles ranged from one guinea for the single sheets to 8 guineas for a lengthy work such as *Milton*.<sup>25</sup> Quaritch's commission was the usual one-third of published price.



3. The remains of the quarry tramway at Tormor. Iona is visible in the distance. (Photo: K. Davies.)

Blake had printed his prophetic books from etched copper plates and the printed image was then decorated in color. Muir had first to reverse this process. Working from an original lent him by Pearson or Quaritch, he had to reconstruct the printed image that lay under the painted decoration. His careful outline drawing was then transferred to a zinc plate.<sup>26</sup> The zinc plate in turn was used directly as a lithographic printing plate (as with the *Songs of Innocence* facsimile) or etched in relief (for the facsimile of *There is No Natural Religion*) or even etched in intaglio (for the *Gates of Paradise*). Multiple copies of each page of these outlines would then be printed in ink matching as closely as possible the ink of the original. One of these printed copies would serve as the basis for a fully hand-colored copy made after the original; this was Muir's master copy from which his assistants would work. ("Fidelity ... is obtained by each of my friends working on every copy, thereby obliterating each other's mannerisms."<sup>27</sup>)

Muir was in full-time employment as "granite agent" until at least 1902. I

assume that he and his friends gathered together on just one or two evenings each week to work on the facsimiles. I interpret the evidence of the letters as implying that just a sufficient number of copies of each title were hand-colored to keep ahead of demand, and that Muir had printed monochrome outlines in excess of the stated limitation to allow for any wastage in the coloring process.

Some modification of his methods was required in later years when he had fewer collaborators or did not have an original at hand. Each copy then took some six or eight weeks to complete.<sup>28</sup> It is clear that production of the facsimiles extended over a much longer period than their printed dates would indicate. A facsimile of *America* was completed as late as 1929 despite bearing a publication date of 1887.<sup>29</sup> Muir's increasing age and infirmity would supply ample reason for the noticeable variation between copies.

Muir's principal collaborators were his sister Hannah and Emily Druitt. Emily was the daughter of Jabez Druitt, a monumental mason in East London, and presumably a granite trade connection. Emily was a watercolorist of considerable accomplishment and shared Muir's enthusiasm for Blake. In 1866 Muir married her sister Sophia. After her marriage, Sophia too joined the Blake Press team.

#### A. H. Mackmurdo<sup>30</sup>

During the 1880s a number of artists were exploring the possibilities of new expressive means in the graphic arts—what would eventually be termed *Art Nouveau*. Designers such as A. H. Mackmurdo tried to incorporate in their own work some of the vitality and expressiveness they found in Blake.

Mackmurdo and Herbert Horne (Mackmurdo's pupil and later partner in his design firm, the Century Guild) sought to spread their ideas by publishing a magazine which they called the *Century Guild Hobby Horse*.<sup>31</sup> It reprinted texts by Blake and its illustrations included facsimiles of



4. 9 Angel Row (home of the Blake Press) is the second house from the right. (From a photograph in the Local History collection of Enfield Libraries and used by permission.)

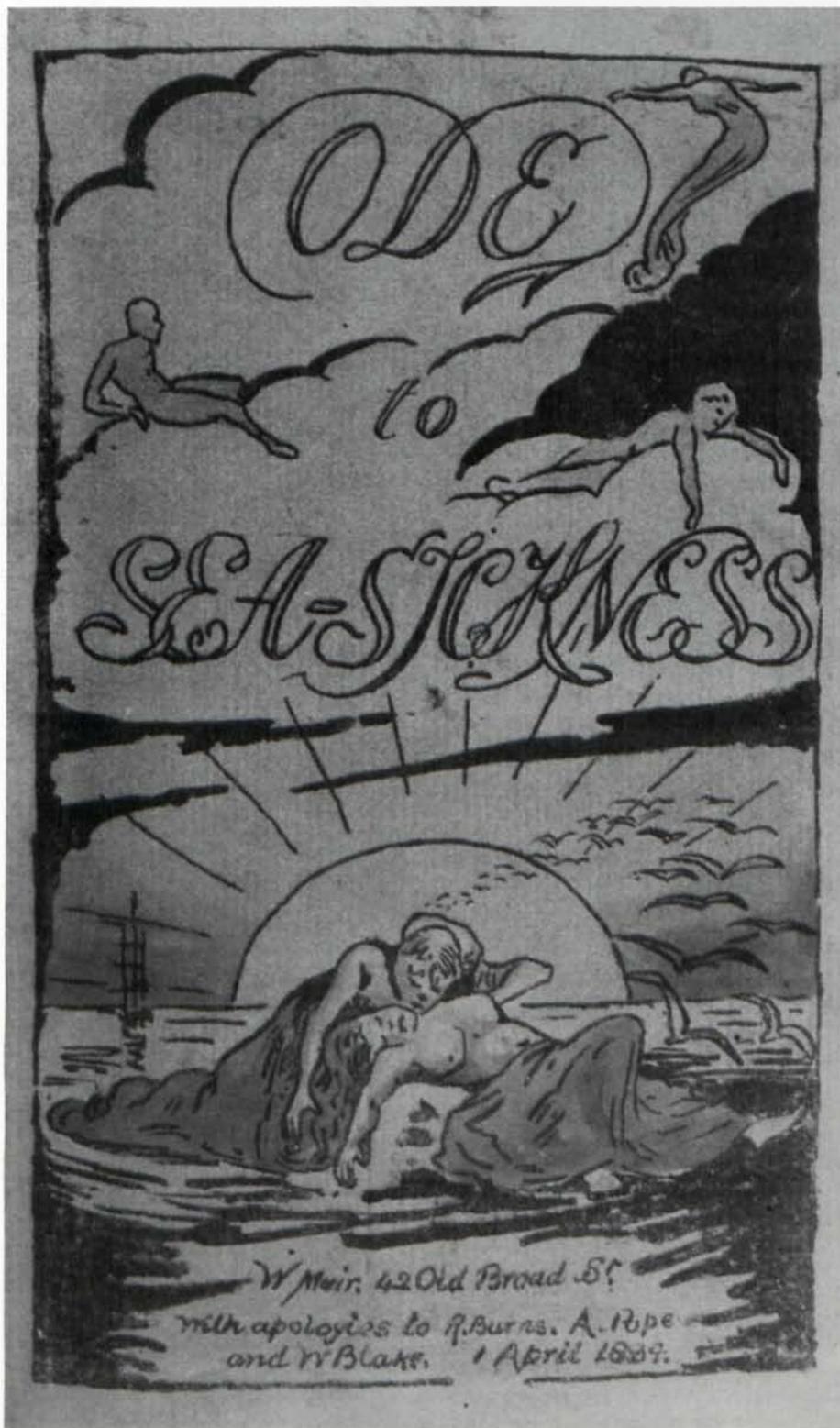
Blake's works prepared by Emery Walker & Boutall. The volume for 1886 lists "the names of those workers in art whose aim seems to us most nearly to accord with the chief aim of this magazine"; the names include "Mr Muir, The Blake Press, Edmonton."<sup>32</sup>

That 1886 volume reproduced Blake's broadsheet *Little Tom the Sailor* with an article on Blake by Herbert H. Gilchrist.<sup>33</sup> Muir had assured purchasers that neither photography nor chromolithography would be employed in his facsimiles.<sup>34</sup> He may have breached this promise with his facsimile of *Little Tom*. Presumably this required a larger printing plate than he could handle; he seems to have bought in a stock of prints from Walker & Boutall and incorporated the *Hobby Horse* reproduction into his Blake Press edition.<sup>35</sup> However, he eschewed making use of another *Hobby Horse* facsimile, the so-called "Sybilline leaf," *On Homers' Poetry; On Virgil* and prepared his own outline for printing.<sup>36</sup>

Incidentally, Muir and Herbert Horne seem to have planned a working colla-



5. Prince Victor of Hohenlohe-Langenburg, Count Gleichen. Muir's "Patron." (Caricature published in *Vanity Fair* 5 July 1884. From a print in the possession of Ted Ryan.)



6. To mark the start of his publishing career, on 1 April 1884, Muir issued this little jeu d'esprit: "Ode to Sea-Sickness." It bears the address 42 Old Broad Street where D. D. Fenning, granite merchant and W. Muir, agent occupied offices on the second floor. Reproduced by courtesy of the Trustees of the National Library of Scotland.)

boration. A note in the *Century Guild Hobby Horse* for 1886 stated: "During the new year, Mr Muir hopes to publish engraved work from the designs of Mr Herbert P. Horne." Nothing seems to have come of that particular project.<sup>37</sup>

Mackmurdo's circle included Mrs. Anne Gilchrist, widow of Blake's biographer, herself a writer and the English friend of Whitman. He was also acquainted with her son Herbert, the painter, and her daughter Hannah. (When, in 1844, Mackmurdo organized the Enfield Art Exhibition, Hannah Gilchrist lent Blake prints and drawings from the family collection.<sup>38</sup>)

Mackmurdo's collaborators included Selwyn Image, designer, lecturer on Blake, and later Slade Professor of Art at Oxford; Christopher Whall, the stained glass designer (Whall was a great admirer of Blake's art); and of course, Herbert Horne, who wrote on Blake and his followers, and collected drawings by Blake.

The *Hobby Horse* ran, in one form or another, for 10 years. "During this period Mackmurdo himself was operating as a patron of the arts. He maintained a large house in Fitzroy Street in which he accommodated most of the inner circle of the Century Guild as well other artistic strays ..." <sup>39</sup> Herbert Horne had a room there, as did the poet Lionel Johnson. Laurence Binyon and W. B. Yeats, both of whom would make important contributions to Blake studies, were frequent visitors.

It was into this milieu with its passionate interest in the art of Blake that Muir introduced the facsimiles of the Blake Press. Muir's facsimiles not only made Blake's works in "Illuminated Printing" accessible for the first time in reliable copies and helped establish Blake's reputation as visual artist alongside his reputation as poet, but I feel must also have contributed to the most advanced ideas in English art of the 1880s. Mackmurdo and Horne helped create the artistic climate in which the Blake Press could flourish. Muir through his Blake facsimiles provided a design resource on which the artists of the 1880s and 1890s could draw.

Iona Press<sup>40</sup>

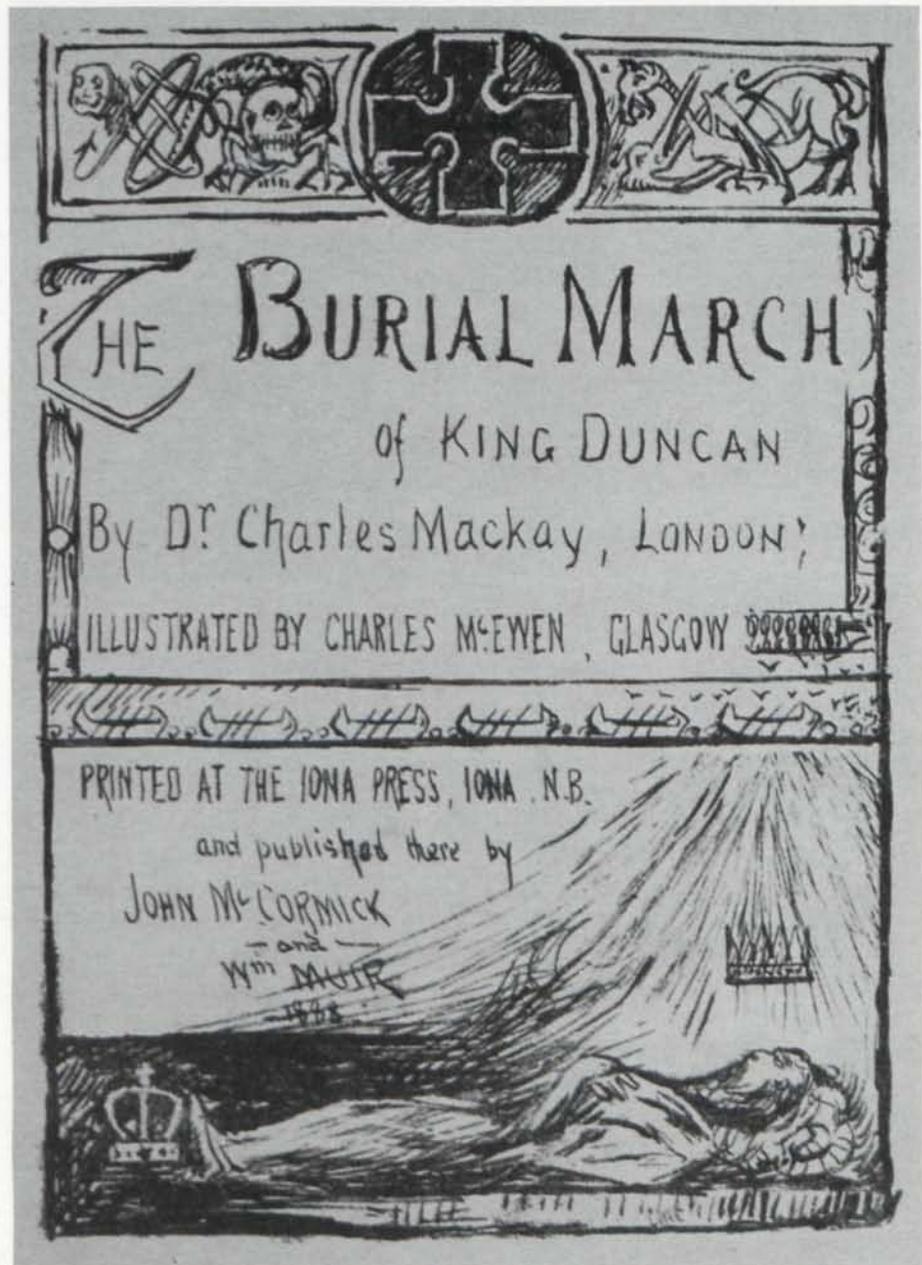
With the Blake Press underway, Muir began a second publishing venture: the Iona Press—producing small lithographic editions of Gaelic poetry in the design of which the style of Blake's prophetic books was followed closely. Muir in Edmonton was proprietor, manager, editor; John MacCormick (son of the quarry foreman at Tomor) at Fionnphort initially worked the press and bound the booklets issued.<sup>41</sup> The designs in the "Iona Press" publications were painted by girls on the island, under the instruction of Muir and Miss Flora Ritchie, whose father was proprietor of the St. Columba Temperance Hotel on Iona.

Between 1887 and 1893, around a dozen small booklets<sup>42</sup> were produced on a lithographic press shipped from Edmonton and housed in a bothy (now the Iona Bookshop) opposite the St. Columba Hotel. Muir and MacCormick stated that their aim was to give tourists to Iona "an opportunity of carrying back with them literary as well as geological mementoes of the sacred isle."<sup>43</sup>

A travel book of the time carries the following account of the press:

A special feature of Iona is its printing press, which was commenced in 1887 by Mr William Muir, Mr John M'Cormick, Miss Muir, and Miss Ritchie, and stands within a few hundred yards of Reilig Odhrain and the Cathedral. The Iona Press is quite a unique and interesting little establishment, superintended personally by Miss Muir, a clever, active, intelligent maiden lady, assisted by a tall, handsome, dark-eyed, native damsel hardly out of her teens, whom I have seen with her well-formed arms working hard at the press.<sup>44</sup>

By the end of the century, production of the books had ceased, although postcards were printed under the name of the Press and sold in a souvenir shop run until the 1920s by Hannah Muir.



7. *The Burial March of King Duncan* (Iona Press, 1888). Outline before hand-coloring. (Reproduced by courtesy of the Trustees of the National Library of Scotland.)

## Inventor

If the 1880s had been the decade of Muir's activity as publisher, the following decade found him devoting a lot of his energies to chemical experiment. In 1892 he was granted a patent for a process for extracting tin from slag.<sup>45</sup> And then in 1902 a patent described as "Improvements in or relating to Igniting Material for Matches, Cartridge Fuses and the like."<sup>46</sup> The patent describes how matches may be made

using the red allotropic form in place of the highly dangerous white phosphorus. He sold his rights in the patent for £900 to R. Bell & Co., who had a match factory at Bromley by Bow.<sup>47</sup>

In 1901, Muir and his wife had left Angel Place and had moved to 97 Church Street, Edmonton.<sup>48</sup> In October of that year he issued a short religious tract: *The Greatest of All Visions*—a brief commentary on some verses from the Apocalypse of St. John.<sup>49</sup> Like

the Iona Press titles it consists of the lithographic reproduction of a hand-written text. Though with the printing-press now with his sister on Iona, he had to make use of a commercial lithographer. One hundred copies were printed.

In 1907 the Muirs moved again—to 153 Church Street, Edmonton. And again in 1908 to Claremont, Bury Street; always to surprisingly large houses considering there was just himself, Sophia, and a servant. He and his wife would move four times in 10 years. I imagine his neighbors complained about the chemical experiments.

Finally, in 1912, and after 30 years in Edmonton, the Muirs moved for the last time, to Romford Road, Forest Gate, from where all the letters that follow were written.

#### Blake Society<sup>50</sup>

The inaugural meeting of the Blake Society took place in 1912. Muir, along with Mrs. Muir, and his sister-in-law, Emily Druitt, were active members. In 1917 he gave a paper to the society on an appropriately Scottish theme: "Blake's view of Wallace."<sup>51</sup>

In April 1920 the annual meeting of the Blake Society was held at the Hampstead home of Thomas J. Wise. Muir was chairman at that meeting. In 1920, his host, Wise, was at the height of his reputation as bibliographer, collector and scholar. Many years later, Wise was to be exposed as a forger and a thief.<sup>52</sup> It is tempting to speculate if Wise or his accomplice Harry Buxton Forman had a hand in any Blake forgeries.

In 1920, Muir produced a new facsimile of *The Book of Thel* (32 copies completed), and in 1927 (the centenary of Blake's death), new facsimiles of the *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* (100 copies planned; 55 completed). In 1928 he began work on a new *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* (50 copies planned; 11 completed).<sup>53</sup> His collaborators in these last facsimiles included Frederick Hollyer, the portrait photographer.<sup>54</sup> Forty years



8. The Iona Press printing house. Today the building has been refurbished by the proprietors of the St. Columba Hotel as a second-hand bookshop. (Photo: K. Davies.)

earlier, Hollyer like Muir had been listed in the *Century Guild Hobby Horse* among "the names of those workers in art whose aim seems to us most nearly to accord with the chief aim of this magazine."<sup>55</sup>

Thomas Wright summed up Muir's career in his *Life of William Blake*.

Numerous and important have been the services to Blake students rendered by Mr William Muir. It was in 1884 that he began his admirable series of reproductions of Blake's books. Copies of the British Museum *Thel*, the Flaxman *Songs of Innocence*, and the Beckford *Songs of Experience* done by him then, now command prices comparable with those paid sixty years ago for the original Blakes. The *Milton*, *Europe*, *America*, *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, and all the others have maintained the high standard of the enterprise, and the Beaconsfield *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience* now being executed show no falling off in love and fidelity. For any one to find himself in Mr Muir's company, and to hear him talk about Blake, is a liberal education.<sup>56</sup>

Not until 1935, when he was 90 years old, did failing eyesight cause him to give up work on Blake facsimiles. It may have been at this time that he disposed of the master copies of four

of his facsimiles to the John Rylands Library, Manchester.<sup>57</sup> The lithographed outlines have been colored with great care and occasional marginal drawings of details have been added as a help to Muir's assistants.

William Muir died on 2 January 1938, aged 92. He is buried alongside his in-laws in the City and East London Cemetery. Sophia survived her husband another five years. She died on 30 January 1943 at Helston in Cornwall, at the home of her niece Winifred Catling.<sup>58</sup>

Muir long outlived the Victorian world in which he grew up; he seems to us today very typical of that world—typical in his enthusiasm, his energy, his confidence and his piety. But let Kerrison Preston have the last word

... there was a remarkable refinement about him, such as I imagine one might have noticed about Blake himself.<sup>59</sup>

#### Letters to Kerrison Preston

The collector Kerrison Preston was born in 1884 and practiced as a solicitor in Bournemouth from 1909 to 1949. Until October 1953 he lived at St. Julian's, 22 Knyveton Road, Bournemouth, and then moved to The Georgian House, Rockshaw Road, Merstham, Surrey. He issued a catalogue of his collection in 1960.<sup>60</sup> In 1967, Preston donated his collection of books by and concerning Blake to Westminster City Libraries. He died in 1974 and his papers, including five letters from Muir, were deposited in Westminster City Archives.<sup>61</sup>

These letters, with the letters to Quaritch edited by Bentley, both groups dating from the last 20 years of Muir's life, yield considerable insight into the productions of the Blake Press and clarify a number of features of the facsimiles commented on by previous writers.<sup>62</sup> But Muir's letters are not just a business correspondence; they record the growth of a friendship that Preston was to value highly.

... I mention certain vitalising experiences of friendship which have brought me into closer contact with Blake.

Thirty years ago Graham Robertson introduced me to his Bogey Room containing the most stupendous Blake pictures, and I have never been the same since. He let me slowly browse upon these and the rest of his wonderful Blake collection in London and the country, and I gained a whole new world of thought and feeling . . .

Many years after and many miles away, I spent a memorable afternoon at the charming home in America of Mr Robertson's friend Mrs William Emerson, who showed me the famous *Rossetti Manuscript*, that well-filled note-book of writings and designs used by Blake himself for thirty years, revealing him intimately at work. The Nonesuch Press has done well in issuing a photographic copy of the complete book, but it does not quite convey the thrill of the original pages with the very writing of Blake and Rossetti together.

In the meantime the late William Muir, who was in many ways a Blake-like character himself, had lent me some of his facsimiles to copy, and I had followed the excellent example of both Blake and Rossetti and got my wife to colour them.<sup>63</sup> These brought home to me the necessity for studying Blake's words in their original form of decorated pages, in which the meaning is often suggested by the little pictures no less than by language.<sup>64</sup>

-Letter 1<sup>65</sup> -

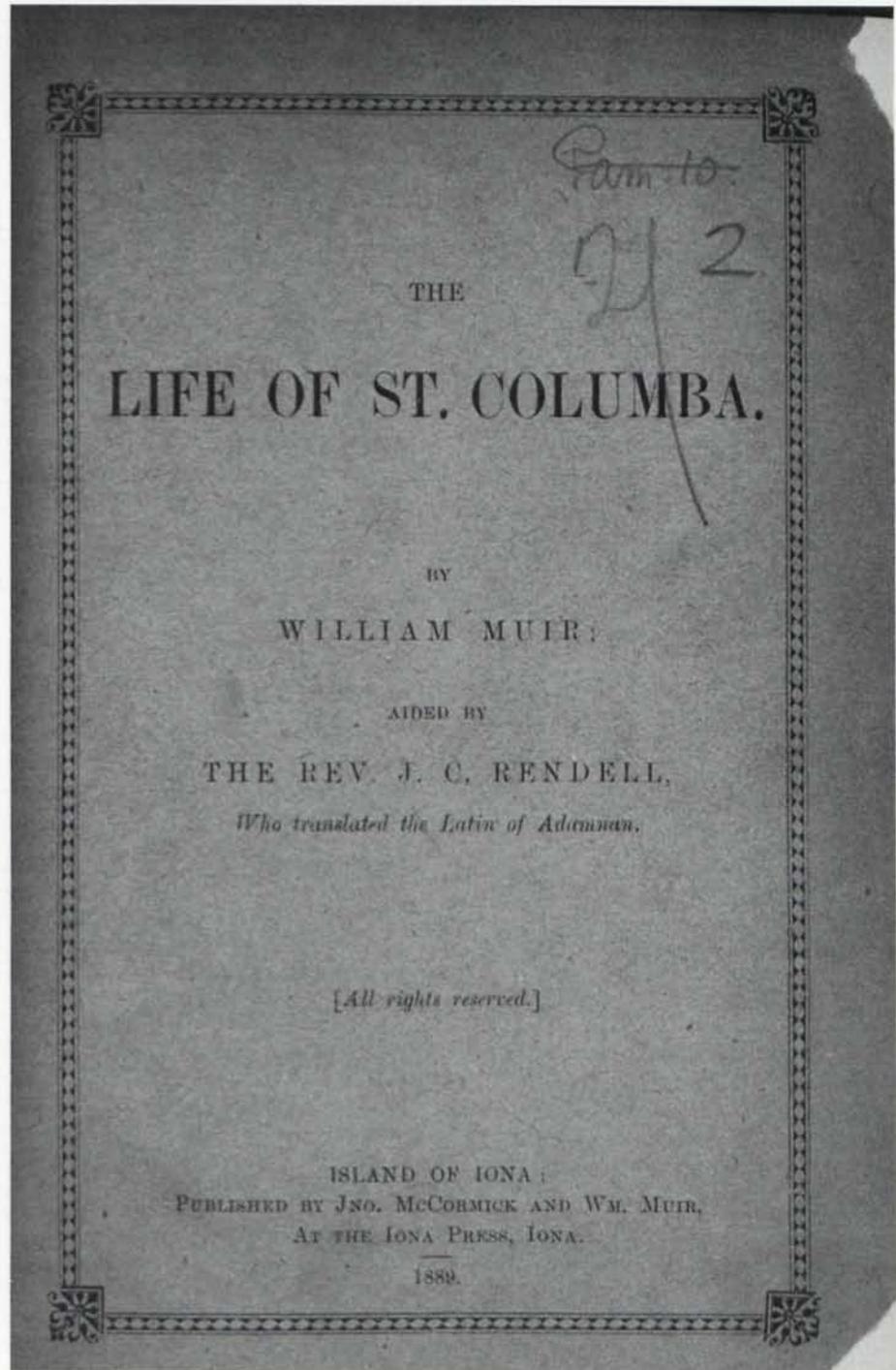
538 Romford Road  
Forest Gate, London E  
18 July 1916

K. Preston Esq.  
Dear Sir

In reply to your favour of yesterday's date, on Fly leaf please find a list of my Blake facsimiles—Those marked x are all sold. I still have two copies of the "Heaven & Hell", two or three of the "Ancient of Days" and a few of the others not marked x. —A copy of those all sold can occasionally be got from Mr Quaritch for he buys up any that come into the market as libraries containing them are sold.

Soliciting your commands I am  
Yours faithfully  
W<sup>m</sup> Muir

- x Songs of Innocence & of Experience
- x Book of Thel
- x Visions of the Daughters of Albion
- x Urizen
- x The Song of Los
- x Little Tom the Sailor
- Marriage of Heaven & Hell £3. 3. 0.
- Milton 10. 0. 0.
- There is no Natural Religion 1. 1. 0.
- The Ancient of Days
- a single plate. 1. 1. 0.
- Blake's favourite work.
- America a Prophecy 4. 4. 0.



9. *The Life of St Columba* written by Muir, is his only extended work and his only book conventionally set in type. His collaborator the Rev. J. C. Rendell had been curate at St James' Edmonton in 1884 when Muir was sidesman there. (Reproduced by permission of the Trustees of the British Library.)

- |   |          |   |           |
|---|----------|---|-----------|
| Do specially coloured from an original now in U.S.A.—very effective | 5. 5. 0  | In addition to these I have <i>one copy</i> of the Songs of Experience coloured from the Brit Mus copy. | £5. 5. 0. |
| Europe coloured from the BM copy                                    | 5. 5. 0. |   |           |
| x The Gates of Paradise copper plate not coloured                   | 3. 3. 0. |   |           |

- Letter 2 -

538 Romford Road Forest Gate  
London E  
28 July 1916

Dear Sir

I duly received your card of 23<sup>rd</sup> I fear that Mr Quaritch cannot sell you any of my out of print facsimiles of Blake's works cheap, for they usually fetch higher prices now than I got for them — I saw one set on sale (and sold) at £110. —But—If *un-coloured* copies answer your purpose I could let you have "Milton", "America" & "Europe" for 10/- each. —I have never before known uncoloured copies be asked for but no doubt the text is the feature that interests you.

Each copy takes six or eight weeks to colour. —Milton takes longer.—Hence the high price.

Yours faithfully  
W<sup>m</sup> Muir

- Letter 3 -

538 Romford Road Forest Gate  
London  
14 Aug 1916

K. Preston Esq.

Dear Sir

With this I have posted per registered parcel post your uncoloured copy of Milton and your copy N<sup>o</sup> 37 of "No Nat Relig".

The parcel should arrive two or three posts after this letter.

*Re the Milton.* Please do not blame me for the *very* rude engraving of one or two of the illustrations. They are so in the original. —One, in especial, is positively ugly—I suspect that it was engraved by M<sup>rs</sup> Blake—as rich colouring makes them look quite different.

*Re No Nat Relig.* No *complete* copy of this book (or books) exists This is made up from three copies, all imperfect, and still one plate is lacking as you will see. Assuring you that the colouring (slight as it is) is

faithful to Blake and hoping that you will be pleased I am

Yours faithfully  
W<sup>m</sup> Muir

- Letter 4 -

538 Romford Road Forest Gate  
London E  
23 August 1916

My dear Sir

I thank you for your kind letter of 16<sup>th</sup> and am glad that the No Nat. Relig. & the Milton please you — but I am sorry that your Milton is not coloured.

It occurs to me that you may possibly be an Artist, or at least have some skill in water colour work.

If so I would be very willing to *lend* you a coloured Milton free (no payment) for a month or two and in that time you could colour your own copy yourself —The meticulous accuracy that I habitually use is not necessary (would not be necessary) in your case.

You can easily get the general effect, if you, or any one of your household, can use colours at all.

Yours very truly  
W<sup>m</sup> Muir

- Letter 5 -

538 Romford Rd London E7  
23 Jan 1922

Dear Mr Kerrison Preston

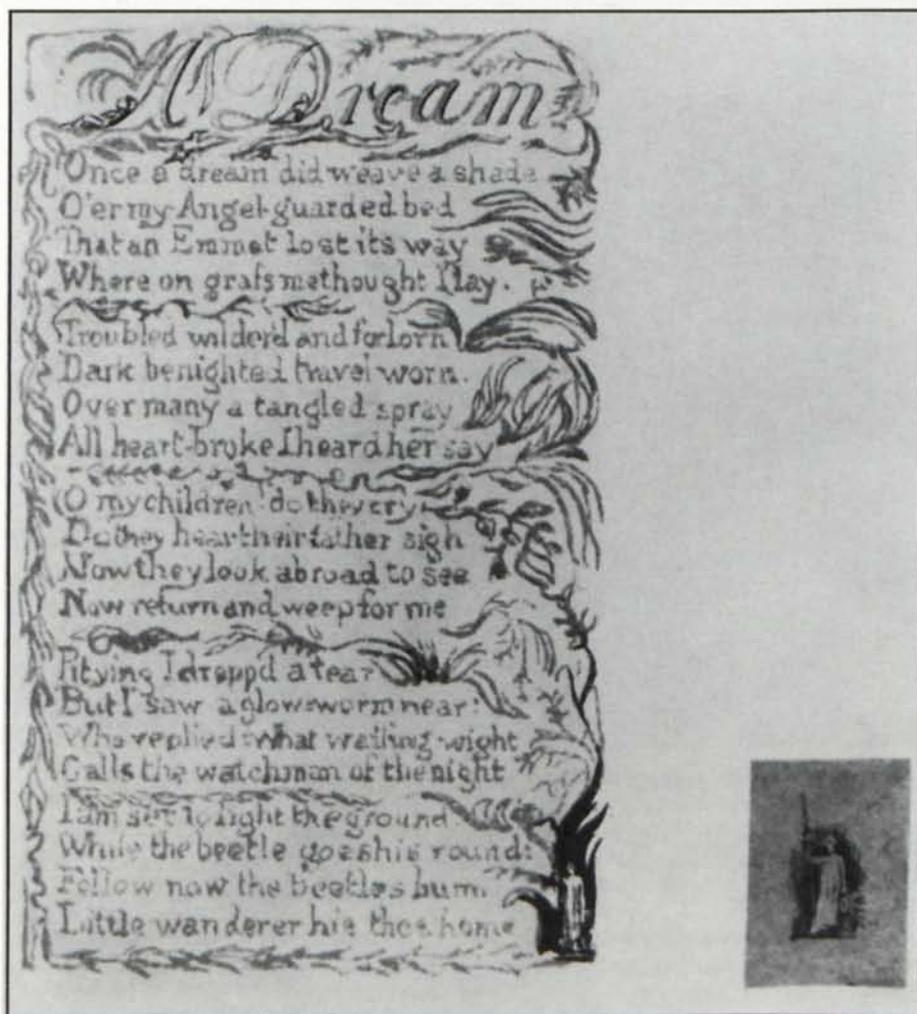
How stupid of me! It is entirely my fault! I had kept no record, and somehow had got it into my mind that Jan 15<sup>th</sup> had been arranged — Of course complete your copy — Do not on any account return the book till that is done. — It will suit me quite well if I have the book back by February 28<sup>th</sup> if *you have finished by that time.* — Do not distress your self or your good wife. make your copy a good one, take time, and don't let her neglect the children for the book.

If not finished by Feby 28<sup>th</sup> let me have a postcard saying so and that will be all right.

Thanks for your kind and interesting letter. So your wife has had the prevalent influenza? I have had it also but am quite better.

*Traberne* Thanks for your remark — I will alter the 1647 to 1674 — as it should be as he was born about 1636

*Garth Wilkinson's* "poems"<sup>65</sup> are more curious than beautiful but he hits on a good thing by accident occasionally. I think the little poem "A Landscape" is a *gem*. Rossetti was interested in the "poems" because they were written in much the same way as Blake wrote his "Prophetic books" — putting the words down just as they came to mind — Garth Wilkinson's book is *very* scarce. I don't suppose six copies are known — I *know* only two, the B. M. copy



10. *A Dream* from the master copy of Muir's facsimile of *Songs of Innocence*. Outlines printed by lithography with hand-coloring. A slip bearing a hand-drawn detail has been pasted to the page. (Reproduced by courtesy of the Director and University Librarian, the John Rylands Library of Manchester.)

and my own, which I got on a costermonger's barrow for 4<sup>d</sup> — [ (in margin) its real worth as *literature*] that was why I copied some onto blank pages in my Blake.

*Quaritch's* announcements of 1888 interest you. I do not remember them, but I note your remarks. Most, perhaps all, have (no doubt) gone to the U.S.A.

The only facsimiles we have now for sale would not interest you — when you are in London some time you can see them if you can find time to call, letting us know the day before.

I am so glad you like the Bournemouth Guide<sup>66</sup> — I got it on a costermonger's barrow for 2<sup>d</sup>, which was *less* than its value as literature — Notice the account in the medical appendix of the "Broken Spectre" seen near *Edinburgh*.

I thought the proper place for the book was in the hands of a Bournemouth man and I am glad you value it.

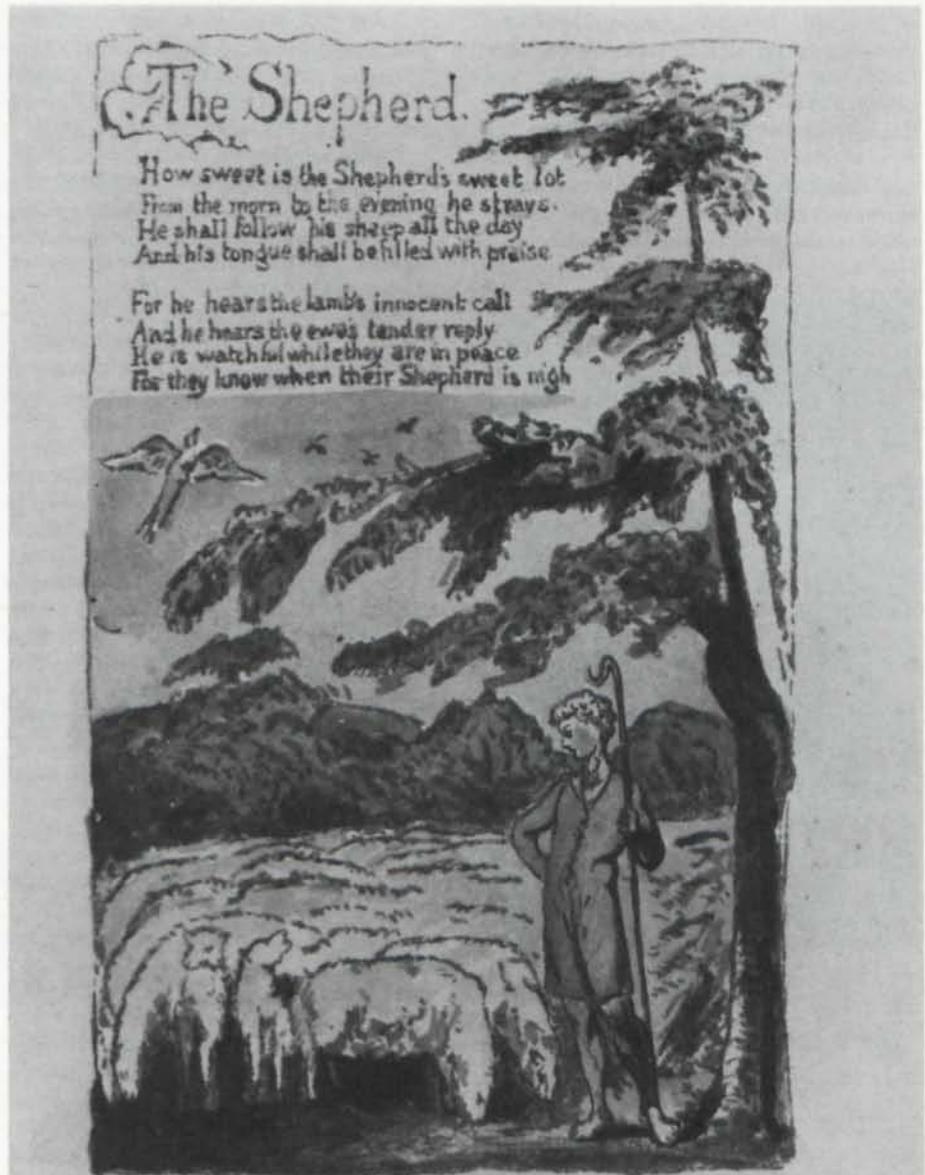
You wonder what you could give to me! I will tell you what I would like very much. If it would not be too much trouble a copy *tinted* perhaps (ain't I greedy!) tinted perhaps — a copy — not a facsimile but just a freehand copy of the View of Bournemouth that is at the beginning of the Guide would be very welcome\*. It may not be elaborately faithful, but just something giving the general effect. I would frame it and hang it in this room where I am writing. — Now please don't worry over this if it is not convenient, but if as I suppose you or your wife *do* sketch occasionally it will not come very difficult. If you *don't* sketch then please don't attempt it.

With our united kind regards to you both  
I am

Yours very Truly  
W<sup>m</sup> Muir

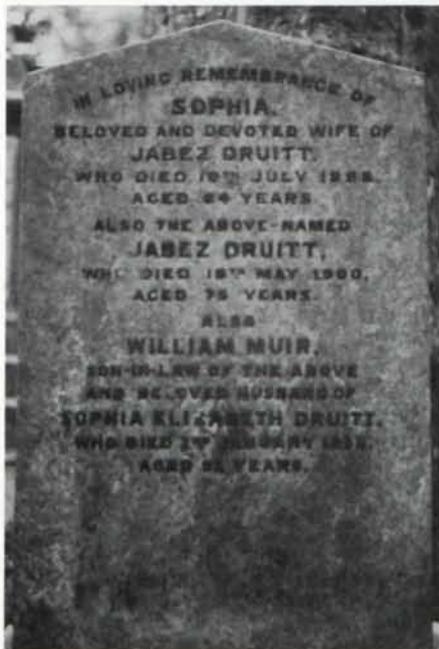
\* It might be a little bigger than the engraving — say the size of this paper 7" x 9" or so.

My account of Muir's life had its origin in an invitation from the Edmonton Hundred Historical Society to speak on "William Muir and the Blake Press at Edmonton" in February 1991. I am grateful to the Society and to Mr. D. O. Pam, its chairman, for encouraging me to put my haphazard notes on Muir into a semblance of order. Mrs. Angela Alabaster kindly granted permission to publish her father's letters from Muir. I should also acknowledge here Raymond Lister's role (*Blake*, fall 1986) in suggesting that Muir's letters may have survived amongst the Kerrison Preston papers. My particular thanks are due to Dr. E. Mairi MacArthur for her help in locating references to Muir in Scottish newspapers, and for sharing her unrivalled knowledge



11. *The Shepherd* from the master copy of Muir's facsimile of *Songs of Innocence*. A drawing of an enlarged detail has been tipped in, presumably as a guide for Muir's assistants. (Reproduced by courtesy of the Director and University Librarian, the John Rylands Library of Manchester.)

of Iona history. Ted Ryan was generous with assistance and advice. My brother Geoff gave successive drafts a close and critical reading. I gratefully acknowledge the help received from G. E. Bentley, Jr., who allowed me to see his essay on Muir, coincidentally written at the same time as my own, and to improve mine on the basis of his.



12. William Muir is buried alongside his in-laws in the City and East London Cemetery. (Photo: K. Davies.)

<sup>1</sup> The Blake Press at Edmonton issued 15 titles, of which 12 were hand-colored: *Act of Creation* (1885?), *America* (1887), *The Book of Thel* (1884), *Europe* (1887), *The First Book of Urizen* (1888), *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1885), *Milton* (1886), *The Song of Los* (1890), *Songs of Experience* (1885), *Songs of Innocence* (1884), *There is No Natural Religion* (1886), *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* (1884), and three were issued as monochrome facsimiles, *The Gates of Paradise* (1888), *Little Tom the Sailor* (1886), *On Homer's Poetry On Virgil* (1886).

<sup>2</sup> G. E. Bentley, Jr., *Blake Books* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1977) 28.

<sup>3</sup> Robert N. Essick, *The Separate Plates of William Blake: A Catalogue* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1983). The disputed prints were items 66 and 67 in the catalogue of the 1978 Tate Gallery exhibition.

<sup>4</sup> Robert N. Essick, "Songs of Innocence and Songs of Experience. Manchester, England: Manchester Etching Workshop, 1983," *Blake* 19 (1985): 39.

<sup>5</sup> Alex Gartshore, "The late Mr William Muir: a man of ability and resource" *Oban Times*, 19 October 1940, 3 col 4. Biographical statements not otherwise supported are derived from this account.

<sup>6</sup> Principal sources for this section are *Post-Office Annual Glasgow Directory* 1844-45 to 1846-47; *Old Parish Registers: Gorbals Parish* [Microfilm and typescript indexes in Mitchell Library, Glasgow]; *Glasgow Register of Electors* 1846-55.

<sup>7</sup> Census 1851, *Enumerators' returns for Glasgow, Gorbals*. (Microfilm ref. 613-9).

<sup>8</sup> W. Innes Addison, *The Matriculation albums of the University of Glasgow from 1728 to 1858* (Glasgow: Maclehose, 1913).

<sup>9</sup> UK Patents nos. 25 "Warming & ventilating," 1173 "Fumaces," 2912 "Steam-boilers" (1855); and no. 52 "Warming & ventilating" (1858).

<sup>10</sup> Slater's *General and classified directory and street register of Manchester and Salford* 1855-58.

<sup>11</sup> Niven lair, Glasgow Cathedral. Grave-slab reads:

THE PROPERTY OF DAVID NIVEN, BOOKSELLER OF GLASGOW ANDREW PENMAN MUIR (SECOND SON OF G.W. MUIR) BORN 4TH SEPT. 1846: DIED 16TH JULY 1860 AT ASCOG, BUTE CHRISTINA PENMAN (GRAND DAUGHTER OF D. NIVEN AND WIFE OF G. W. MUIR BORN 4TH SEPT 1818: DIED 14TH NOV 1869 Grief endures. W M MUIR 1917

<sup>12</sup> See the *Dictionary of National Biography* 56: 391-92.

<sup>13</sup> G. E. Bentley Jr., *Blake Records* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1967) 58.

<sup>14</sup> Census 1841, *Enumerators' returns for Glasgow, Gorbals* (Microfilm ref. 6442-47)

<sup>15</sup> "Memories of Oban in the Sixties" *Oban Times*, 5 May 1934.

<sup>16</sup> For a history of the quarry at Tormor, see Joan Faithfull's article in *Am Muileach: community newspaper for Mull and Iona*, February 1990.

<sup>17</sup> Personal communication from Neil MacCormick's granddaughter, Miss Margaret Harper-Nelson, October 1990.

<sup>18</sup> *Oban Times*, 13 February 1875.

<sup>19</sup> Census 1881, *Enumerators' returns for Middlesex*, Edmonton. (Microfilm ref. ED4 Edmonton Schedule 242).

<sup>20</sup> See *DNB Supplement* 3: 388-89.

<sup>21</sup> Contemporary accounts of the two monuments at Woolwich can be found in *The Times*, 5 October 1882: 7 and 15 January 1883: 10. Confusingly, the *Times* reporter manages to ascribe the distinctive pink granite of cairn and plinth both to Cumberland and to Aberdeenshire.

<sup>22</sup> I have been unable to locate the present whereabouts of the monument to the Prince Imperial.

<sup>23</sup> William Blake, *The book of Thel: the author & printer William Blake, 1789* (The

edition of the works of Blake prepared by the Blake Press at Edmonton; vol. 1) (Edmonton, 1884).

<sup>24</sup> Muir's note in his master copy for the *Songs of Innocence* facsimile, now in John Rylands Library, University of Manchester.

<sup>25</sup> Price list included in Muir's facsimile of *The Song of Los* (Edmonton, 1890).

<sup>26</sup> A discussion of the various processes available for the lithographic printing of facsimiles can be found in Michael Twyman, *Early Lithographed Books* (London: Farrand P, 1990). The period covered precedes Muir, of course, but indicates the technical possibilities available to the capable amateur.

<sup>27</sup> Prospectus bound with Muir's master copy for the *Songs of Innocence* facsimile. See n24 above.

<sup>28</sup> Muir's letter to Kerrison Preston, 28 July 1916.

<sup>29</sup> Muir's letter to Quaritch, 17 Feb. 1936.

<sup>30</sup> Accounts of Mackmurdo's role in the development of English Art Nouveau and the influence of Blake on the movement can be found in Stephan Tschudi Madsen, *Sources of Art Nouveau* (Oslo: H. Aschehoug, 1956); Nikolaus Pevsner, *Studies in Art, Architecture and Design*. Vol. 2: *Victorian and after* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1968) 134-35; Robert Schmutzler, *Art Nouveau* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1964) and in many subsequent studies.

<sup>31</sup> For studies of the *Century Guild Hobby Horse* see Lorraine Lively Hunt, *The Century Guild Hobby Horse: A Study of a Magazine* (University of North Carolina doctoral thesis, 1965) and Peter Frost, "The Century Guild Hobby Horse and Its Founders" *The Book Collector* 27 (1978): 348-60.

<sup>32</sup> See for example *Century Guild Hobby Horse* Jan. 1889 (unnumbered pages following page 40).

<sup>33</sup> Herbert H. Gilchrist, "Nescio quae nugarum no. III: The Ballad of Little Tom the Sailor," *Century Guild Hobby Horse* 1 (Oct. 1886): 159-60. The facsimile is bound as frontispiece to this issue, facing page 121.

<sup>34</sup> *Proposal for the publication of the Prophetic Books and the Songs of Innocence and of Experience by W. Blake* (London: J. Pearson, 1884).

<sup>35</sup> I have modified the interpretation given by Geoffrey Keynes, *Blake Studies* 2nd. ed. (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1971) 105-10.

<sup>36</sup> Here I disagree with Bentley, *Blake Books* 335, 488, 836. Muir's facsimile and that printed with Herbert R. Horne, "Blake's Sibylline leaf on Homer and Virgil" *Century Guild Hobby Horse* 2 (1887): 115-16 differ in a number of respects and are unlikely to derive from the same lithographic plate.

<sup>37</sup> But among a collection of drawings by Christopher Whall in the William Morris Gallery are single sheets from Muir's *Songs of Innocence* (1885) and *Gates of Paradise* (1888) facsimiles, the former marked up to suggest Muir may also have planned a collaboration with Whall.

<sup>38</sup> "Enfield Local Art Exhibition," *Meyer's Observer and Local and General Advertiser* [Enfield], 14 June 1884: 6 and 7:

"Miss H. Gilchrist's loan collection included a singular work in oil colour 'The Descent to the Grave', by Blake; engravings, 'Southwark Fair', and 'The Distressed Poet', (by Hogarth) also an oil colour, 'The Translation of Enoch', by Blake; and a charcoal 'Study', by D.G. Rossetti."

<sup>39</sup> Frost 348-60.

<sup>40</sup> This brief account of the Iona Press draws largely on Mairi MacArthur. "Pages from Iona's Past," *Scotsman Magazine* (December 1987): 29.

<sup>41</sup> John MacCormick (born 1860) is known as a Gaelic writer chiefly of plays and humorous sketches. The *Scottish Gaelic Union Catalogue* (Edinburgh: National Library of Scotland, 1984) lists 13 titles by MacCormick published between 1908 and 1931.

<sup>42</sup> Iona Press titles known to me are as follows:

- (i) The Blessing of the ship, 1887  
- reprinted 1893
- (ii) Bas Fraoich or The Death of Fraoch, 1887 (letterpress)
- (iii) Ossian's Address to the sun, 1887
- (iv) The Burial march of King Duncan, 1888
- (v) A Highland New Year's carol, 1888
- (vi) Prayer formerly used by all the children of Iona at school, 1888  
- 2nd ed. 1893
- (vii) The Death of Fraoch, 1888
- (viii) The Great hymn "Altus" of St Columba, 1889
- (ix) Iona, by the Marquis of Lorne, 1889
- (x) Views from an artist's sketchbook [by Elizabeth McHardy], 1889
- (xi) The Life of St Columba, by William Muir, 1889 (letterpress)
- (xii) Iona autograph album, 1891
- (xiii) The Great hymn "Altus" of St Columba, 1897 (new edition)
- (xiv) Map of Iona, n.d.
- (xv) Sailm cvii, 30, n.d. (single sheet)

<sup>43</sup> Prospectus of the Iona Press. Quoted in E. Mairi MacArthur *Iona: The Living Memory of a Crofting Community* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1990).

<sup>44</sup> Malcolm Ferguson, *A Visit to Staffa and Iona*. (Dundee and Edinburgh, 1894).

<sup>45</sup> UK Patent No. 1907 (1892) "Extracting tin &c from slag."

<sup>46</sup> UK Patent No. 11,503 (1902) "Matches &c."

<sup>47</sup> "Death of notable Kilmarnock man" *Kilmarnock Standard*, 15 January 1938.

<sup>48</sup> *Kelly's Enfield, Edmonton & Winchmore Hill directory* and *Kelly's Tottenham & Edmonton directory* 1893-1909.

<sup>49</sup> William Muir, *The greatest of all visions, being the text of part of The Book of Revelation C4 V1 to C6 V2, with a commentary interpreting it* (Edmonton, 1901) Copy: Mitchell Library Glasgow pressmark A217141.

<sup>50</sup> Some documents of the Blake Society survive in the Thomas Wright collection in Buckinghamshire County Record Office.

<sup>51</sup> The reference is presumably to Blake's Visionary Heads of "Edward I, and William Wallace" (two on one sheet) formerly in John Linnell's collection, and now in the collection of Robert N. Essick.

<sup>52</sup> The most recent account of their criminal careers is John Collins, *The Two Forgers: A Biography of Harry Buxton Forman & Thomas James Wise* (Aldershot: Scolar P, 1992).

<sup>53</sup> Numbers planned derive from a letter "To the Reviewer" [1928?] once inserted in Muir's *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* (2nd ed.) and now in the collection of Raymond Lister. Numbers completed derive from Muir's letter to Quaritch, 17 Feb. 1936.

<sup>54</sup> G.E. Bentley, Jr., *Blake Books* 489.

<sup>55</sup> See n32 above.

<sup>56</sup> Thomas Wright, *The Life of William Blake* (Olney, Bucks: T. Wright, 1929).

<sup>57</sup> *America* (1887), *The Marriage of heaven and hell* (1885), *The Songs of Innocence* (1885), and *The Visions of the Daughters of Albion* (1885) were accessioned in September 1939 but are likely to have been in the possession of the Library for some time before then. (Personal communication from David W. Riley, Keeper of Printed books, John Rylands University Library of Manchester, 17 October 1990.)

<sup>58</sup> Probate register (England and Wales) 1943.

<sup>59</sup> Kerrison Preston, letter to Raymond Lister 25 Aug. 1961.

<sup>60</sup> Kerrison Preston, *Notes for a catalogue of the Blake Library at The Georgian House Merstham* (Cambridge: Gold- en Head P, 1960).

<sup>61</sup> Westm. Accession 924: Papers of I. Kerrison Preston, donated by his daughter Mrs. Angela Alabaster, and his son David C. Preston, 1 April 1977.

<sup>62</sup> Recent papers that make reference to Muir are:

Morton D. Paley, "A Victorian Blake Facsimile" *Blake* 15 (1981): 27. (Paley illustrates the first page of Muir's prospectus for the *Song of Los*.)

Robert N. Essick, "Songs of Innocence and Songs of Experience" Manchester, England: Manchester Etching Workshop, 1983, *Blake* 19 (1985): 39.

Raymond Lister, "William Muir" *Blake* 20 (1986): 49. (Reprints a letter about Muir from Kerrison Preston.)

<sup>63</sup> The Preston Blake Library in Westminster City Libraries contains a number of Muir's facsimiles, including a copy of *Milton* handcolored by Mrs. A. E. Preston.

<sup>64</sup> Kerrison Preston, *Blake and Rossetti* (London: A. Moring, 1944) 5.

<sup>65</sup> G. E. Bentley, Jr., points out that although Muir states in this letter that he has "two copies of the 'Heaven & Hell' and two or three of the 'Ancient of Days,'" he in fact sold three copies of the *Marriage* (nos. 48-50 on 9 Nov. 1916 and 23 Feb., 16 July 1917, and sold four copies of the *Ancient of Days* (which he calls the "Act of Creation") on 4 June 1917, 1 Apr., 27 June, 14 Aug. 1918 (nos. 47-50). The copy of *America* "specially coloured from an original now in U.S.A." imitates copy B, which has been in the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York since 1909. The copy of *Europe* "coloured from the BM copy" imitates copy D. The British Museum copy of *Songs of Experience* which he copied is probably copy T. (Personal communication from G. E. Bentley, Jr., 18 May 1992.)

<sup>66</sup> J. J. Garth Wilkinson, *Improvisations from the Spirit* (London and Manchester, 1857). The *National Union Catalogue* lists six copies.

<sup>67</sup> John Sydenham (publisher), *The visitor's guide to Bournemouth and its neighbourhood ... 2nd ed. containing additions and corrections with an appendix by Thomas Johnstone Aitkin* (Poole and Bournemouth, 1842). Aitkin's appendix ("A dissertation on the climate of the district of Bournemouth and its adaptation to health") takes up pages 53 to 152 of this work. His account of the optical phenomenon here called the "Demon of the Brocken" is on pages 121-23 of the Appendix.

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## REVIEWS

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Conference: William Blake  
and the Regeneration of  
London, 19 October 1991

Reviewed by  
Helen P. Bruder

A conference devoted to the exploration of "William Blake and the Regeneration of London" sounded like an excellent idea. No one acquainted with his work could doubt Blake's passionate commitment to the spiritual and temporal revival of the city in which he spent so much of his life. Nor can we today afford to disregard his vision of human potential bound within a decaying yet potentially vibrant metropolis. The problem with the recent day conference which addressed these issues, a problem perhaps endemic to such events, was that the subject rather overwhelmed the frame within which it was being discussed. There were just too many Blakes around at the Tate, wandering through an equally diverse warren of London streets. Perhaps the most lamentable disjunction caused by this profusion was that which emerged between the historically specific Blake and the politically relevant contemporary Blake, a disjunction sadly fostered by the scheduling of the day's events. However, the morning session "Blake and the Radical Spirit" did at times manage to bridge the gap, and for this reason was the most illuminating part of the conference.

The day began with an animated film by Sheila Graber, "William Blake" and a scene from Jack Shepherd's play, "In Lambeth," two brief presentations which vividly demonstrated the potential of Blake's art to speak to contemporary audiences through media other than those employed by Blake

himself. These were followed by a wonderful lecture from Joel Kovel, whose collection of essays on psychoanalysis and society provided the title for the morning session. Kovel approached the issue of Blake and regeneration through an account of his personal experience of reading and viewing Blake over a number of years; in particular he focused upon the irreducible and perhaps inexplicable "shudder" generated by the intensity of Blake's works. Kovel skillfully explicated Blake's vision of how the human self is formed in society and his belief that the self can only be regenerated in the context of a dynamic community, however painful this experience may be. He also offered the most engaging psychoanalytic account of Blake that this reviewer has ever encountered, one which succeeded because it tempered Freud's essentialist predilections with a Marxist radical perspectivism, and more importantly with a celebration of Blake's combative optimism. As Kovel seemed to suggest, the most regenerative aspect of Blake is his refusal to be seduced or defeated by pessimism. His poetry speaks of a redeemable "Los," not an irredeemable lack, a fact rarely pondered by those post-structuralists who wish to colonize the poet.

The morning was closed by a series of brief (rather too brief) papers from Anne Janowitz, Martin Postle and David Worrall, which brought the historical and urban Blake into sharp perspective. Postle offered some thought-provoking suggestions of possible sources for Blake's great image of regenerated masculinity commonly known as "Glad Day," while Janowitz and Worrall presented two impeccable historicist accounts of *Jerusalem*. These two papers, along with the work of Marilyn Butler and Susan Matthews, indicate one important direction in which the criticism of Blake's last epic poem might be heading, a path which shows the political bounty of a criticism premised upon a sensitive understanding of the structuring force of history.

The conference's two afternoon sessions comprised a variety of contributions which were largely guided by the concerns of the action-research network "London 2000," an organization launched in March 1990 and directed by one of the conference organizers, Bob Catterall. These contributors gave a very clear picture of the problems of community self-determination in many areas of London today, especially Kings Cross and Spitalfields. Yet as this vision of contemporary urban crisis took stark form, a sense of the relevance of Blake's concern with the regeneration of the city sadly ebbed away. The film "Chartered Streets," directed by Jeremy Wooding, was a partial exception.

The ambitious project "William Blake and the Regeneration of London" was, then, marked by a somewhat problematic diversity, a diversity well illustrated by the nature of the questions and contributions from the floor. These ranged from tentative enquiries about dates and names, to impassioned contributions about the crisis of identity in the alienating post-modern city or, again, to musings about the future of historical materialism in the light of recent events in Eastern Europe.

Yet maybe this profusion was the point. Perhaps ultimately the conference was marked by that refreshing excess which leads to the palace of wisdom. As Blake said "Enough! or too much." South African Jazz musician Bheki Mseleku's improvisation on *Jerusalem*, which closed the event, certainly epitomized the plentitude of a conference at which participants were spoiled by too much choice, rather than an event spoiled by it.

Peter Otto. *Constructive Vision and Visionary Deconstruction: Los, Eternity, and the Productions of Time in the Later Poetry of William Blake*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991. xi + 244 pp. \$55.20.

Reviewed by  
V. A. De Luca

Peter Otto's book, though flawed in a number of ways, has at its core an interesting and valuable idea about Blake. Otto takes aim at the idealist or monistic conception of Blake, associated chiefly with Northrop Frye, in which "reality" is held to be the creation of an "autonomous" or, in Otto's preferred phrase, "world-forming" Imagination. In its place Otto offers us the notion of a Blake who accepts difference and otherness and who seeks to reach beyond the perimeters of the self to establish a humane and vitalizing relationship with this other domain. Instead of possessing the whole of reality within an individual creative consciousness, as the idealists' Blake is said to do, this Blake turns his face instead to an as-yet unknown and unpossessed world of potentiality, rich with the possibilities of mutual exchange.

This is in itself an attractive thesis and a useful corrective to those critics so preoccupied with the idea of the individual as creator of his world that they give us a Blake who borders on solipsism. We have little further need of a criticism so intent on eradicating from Blake's thought perceptions of difference—then and now, here and there, outside and inside, me and you—that a monadic absurdity is produced. We are all familiar with the kind of commentary that asserts that the whole history of the world and its myriad productions from the creation

to the final apocalypse are "really" no more than a single event occupying a single moment in the mind of a single consciousness, Albion. If this barren and reductive conception were a true representation of what Blake is trying to say, it would not be clear why he should continue to interest us. But of course no obvious formulation of this conception is to be found anywhere in Blake's works, and indeed it is belied by the fascination with the rich world of temporal and spatial differences that these works everywhere display.

Thus any attempt, such as Otto's, to modify or refute the radically monistic conception of Blake is to be welcomed as a valuable contribution to the ongoing work of criticism on this poet. Unfortunately the value of such an attempt is greatly diminished if the plan and method of the critique are ill conceived and ill calculated to persuade. Despite the evidence of sophisticated ideas and lucid expression in many passages, *Constructive Vision and Visionary Deconstruction* is hobbled by an overall weakness in the treatment of its subject. It suffers from both an excess of busy philosophizing on abstract themes and a shortage of carefully established philosophical premises. Otto tells us in his Acknowledgments that "the book began life as a doctoral dissertation," and it would seem that subsequently it has not made much progress toward a maturer stage. At least it displays a number of flaws commonly associated with the dissertation stage: a dogged and tendentious pursuit of the argument conducted on a rarified plane of abstraction, a belligerence toward the previous body of criticism (whose errors have to be itemized from the outset), a tendency toward jargon and formulaic phrasing, and a plodding, unimaginative mode of exposition (most of the book consists of an extended plate-by-plate commentary on *Milton* and *Jerusalem*—each plate confirming the idea of Blake which the author alone among the critics has discovered; one would have thought that Blake criticism had outgrown this approach by now.)

## CONSTRUCTIVE VISION AND VISIONARY DECONSTRUCTION

*Los, Eternity, and the Productions of Time  
in the Later Poetry of William Blake*



PETER OTTO



CLARENDON PRESS OXFORD

These blemishes, although irritating to the reader, would finally not matter much, if the intellectual argument as a whole were persuasive in its logic and progression from clearly established premises. Otto is clearly familiar with fundamental issues in epistemology and metaphysics, and the names of eminent philosophers, ancient and modern, parade through the book. But his own method of argument tends to proceed more by ungrounded assertions, associative leaps, and rhetorical sleights of hand than by rigorous philosophical analysis. Take, for example, a key premise underlying Otto's reading of *Jerusalem*, namely that the poem presents itself as an experience of linear or fallen time. My concern is not with the correctness of this view but rather with the ease and rapidity with which it is established. Citing the chapters of equal length and the periodic recurrence of design arrangements, Otto declares, "this regular measured form suggests that the subject matter of *Jerusalem* will be organized according to an absolute time such as that proposed by Newton in the *Principia*. On this level, *Jerusalem* appears to be a remarkable product of

the horological revolution; it is a time-piece capable of measuring out the linear succession of 'nows' which characterize chronological and everyday time" (101). The sweeping confidence of these assertions may distract us from the looseness of the logic and from certain nagging questions—such as the following: What is absolute time? Why is there no description of Newton's concept so that the reader will have it more clearly in mind? What in fact does Blake's neat four-unit package have in common with the infinitely extended line that is Newtonian time? Is a poem whose *subject matter* is organized according to a temporal principle the same thing as an actual timepiece? In what sense is *Jerusalem* a timepiece—can the text of the poem substitute for a Rolex watch and get us to work on time? If not, if we are only in the presence of a hyperbolic trope, what can we say of the truth value of the assertion? And finally, what are we to make of the surreptitious movement of the verbs in the passage quoted, from the "suggests" of the first clause, to the "appears to be" of the second, to the flat "it is" of the third, on which a superstructure of commentary proceeds to be built?

Such close scrutiny of Otto's indeterminacies could be applied to many other passages in the book, with similar results. The slippery and elliptical kind of reasoning seen here becomes especially disturbing when it is employed to establish the major premises of the book's argument or to challenge the consensus critical position on Blake. Here, for example, is Otto confronting Northrop Frye, the arch-exponent of that position: "When one turns to Blake's poems one finds that many of the texts which are used by Frye or those influenced by his criticism to support his case for the redemptive power of the . . . world-forming imagination contradict such a claim" (12). Otto then goes on to cite the famous passage in *A Vision of the Last Judgment* where Blake contrasts the vision of the sun as "somewhat like a Guinea" to his own perception of it as a great "Heavenly host." Otto comments:

Frye interprets this passage in the following way: "The Hallelujah-Chorus perception of the sun makes a far more real sun than the guinea-sun because more imagination has gone into perceiving it." This seems to me to miss the point. The perception of the sun as a guinea is tied to the economy of the self. A guinea is something we can use. . . . The vision of the sun as a Hallelujah-Chorus is, however, radically different. It is of course, still a perception, but now it is one which has been interpenetrated with others. Those others can talk, move, sing, and can therefore suffuse the self with a force which cannot be reduced to our perception of them. The world formed by Frye's imagination discovers within its bounds a force and presence which far exceeds its domain. (12)

For the sake of argument let us grant that the passage of Frye that Otto cites may not be the happiest instance of explication in *Fearful Symmetry*. But compared with Otto's, Frye's explanation of the Blake text is a model of clear sober reasoning. If anyone is forming worlds here, it is Otto himself, who embarks on a fantasia of association and speculation that does little justice to either Blake's or Frye's statements. Note for example, how Blake's similitude of "somewhat like a Guinea" (a size comparison only) is converted, through an associative leap, to an actual coin, which Otto can then enlist in his ongoing program of chastisements of the materialistic or corporeal self. Note also the astonishing expansion of Blake's "company of the Heavenly Host" into a busy society of beings who "can talk, move, sing," and perhaps perform in yet other ways that Blake does not mention. Where does Blake speak of this host as "suffusing the self with a force"? As for Frye, where does he speak of setting "bounds" to how much reality there is in the angelic view of the sun? What exactly is "Frye's imagination" imagining that Blake did not imagine before him? In these instances, Otto is simply asserting things that have no existence in the texts in front of him. And this critique of Otto's commentary still leaves untouched the tangled contradictions and equivocations of its own internal logic. Note the surreptitious insertion of the unearned "therefore"

in the penultimate sentence; the equivocal "perception . . . interpenetrated with others," which may mean interpenetrated with other perceptions—in which case we are still left with the "world-forming" imagination—or else perceptions interpenetrated with non-perceptions, which seems a logical impossibility; finally, the conundrum of an imagination that can "discover" within its scope "a presence" that at the same time it cannot discover because the presence exceeds its scope.

If Otto's argumentative resources can so easily self-destruct even at such a critically necessary point in his project as the confrontation and refutation of Frye, then one is reluctantly led to certain damaging surmises about the project as a whole. It seems that either Otto has published before having fully worked out a form of presentation that would give a tight cogency to his subject (in which case the Clarendon Press must share some of the blame) or else he lacks a gift for philosophic discourse equal to his interest in philosophic concerns. Whatever the reasons for the book's problems, it is nonetheless clear that no amount of pre-publication improvement could have eliminated its central intellectual flaw (since it forms the basis of his thesis), which is that Otto deliberately and persistently conflates the world-forming imagination of the idealist tradition with the Urizenic making of enclosed, exclusionary worlds internally governed by Newtonian and Lockean principles. In his conclusion, Otto tells us that "in Blake's *oeuvre* the autonomous imagination of the Romantics is subject to a visionary deconstruction" (221), which is all very well if one accepts his identification of the romantic imagination with Blake's idea of Urizenic perception. But before accepting the identification, one would want to have from Otto a much more thorough understanding of what actually constitutes the romantic imagination—in other words, a pertinent examination of such relevant texts as Coleridge's critical writings (and not just a passing glance at Chapter 13 of the *Biographia*), Wordsworth's *Pre-*

lude, Shelley's *Defence*, Keats's letters, even the later poetry of Wallace Stevens, as well as some account of hermetic and neoplatonic antecedents. Needless to say, Otto provides none of this, and hence we have no way of knowing whether he has any clear understanding of the concept or of the differences to be found among its classic formulations—although we can sense that he has spared himself the need of explaining away any differences between, say, Keats's "I am certain of nothing but the holiness of the Heart's affections and the truth of Imagination—what the imagination seizes as Beauty must be truth" and say, Urizen's intention to create a world ruled by "One curse, one weight, one measure / One King, one God, one Law." This is not the occasion to elaborate the differences between the expansive, open-ended, transformative, and fluid characteristics of the "autonomous" romantic imagination, and the reductive, closed, fixed, and solidifying characteristics of the world made by Lockean and Newtonian perceivers; one need only point out that Otto should show some awareness of these differences, and if he genuinely believes that these differences are illusory, that the similarities are more profound and basic, he should attempt to convince his reader with well-grounded, patient, step-by-step arguments.

The easier course, however, is to attempt something tried and true, namely a Blakean critique of Lockean conceptions—and this Otto accomplishes reasonably successfully—while seeming radical and new, by an arbitrary relabeling of Lockean empiricism as romantic idealism. In so doing, Otto aligns himself with those currently flourishing Schools of Resentment that are engaged in undermining further the fading prestige of romanticism in general and Frye in particular. But this gesture toward fashion—like the hasty apology at the end of the Introduction for not discussing sexism in his book (32)—is somewhat half-hearted, and no radical polemic damaging to

romanticism really emerges in this study. The same tentative quality is apparent in Otto's dealings with that even more fashionable movement of our critical era, deconstruction. On the one hand, Otto seems to want to advertise the book's connection with deconstruction, most conspicuously by lodging the term in the title itself and by using it generously throughout his commentary. On the other hand, Otto performs nothing remotely like a rigorous deconstructionist analysis in his treatment of themes and text. Indeed, some of the most valuable and thoughtful remarks in the whole book are devoted to showing the limitations of Derrida's analysis when applied to Blake (see 24-27). One emerges with the impression that the deconstructionist references are more for show than for practical use.

These equivocations, like the extravagant assertions, the need to display intimate acquaintance with the philosophers, the hand-is-quicker-than-the-eye modes of argument, all bespeak a certain insecurity on Otto's part about his project, a lack perhaps of a confident mastery of the subject that can spread conviction to his readers. This is a pity, for there is the germ here of a truly interesting and useful book on the limitations of radically monistic or solipsistic conceptions of Blake (which conceivably Otto could undertake some time in the future). As it stands, *Constructive Vision and Visionary Deconstruction* succeeds only in resembling too many other interpretive books on major poets, books that appear in print before they have found an adequate form to embody their intentions, that show less of an interest in the texture of the poetry than in abstract ideas, that are more comfortable with the milieu of such ideas than with genuine analytic rigor, that flirt with Derridean nihilism, and show uneasiness with a romantic humanism that they have in no way escaped. That there is evidence here of an unseized potential for something far finer is the chief regret one has in reading this book.

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## DISCUSSION

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*with intellectual spears & long winged arrows of thought*

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### Reply to De Luca's review of *Constructive Vision and Visionary Deconstruction*

by Peter Otto

After allowing that *Constructive Vision* "has at its core an interesting and valuable idea about Blake," De Luca's critique gets underway with the assertion that the book's "argument tends to proceed more by ungrounded assertions, associative leaps, and rhetorical sleights of hand than by rigorous philosophical analysis." I suppose that as the author of the book I should just accept De Luca's vigorous and rhetorical strictures and leave it at that. However, in this instance the right of reply has proved too tempting, though I will try to confine myself to a few brief remarks.

De Luca's first example of "ungrounded assertions, associative leaps, and rhetorical sleights of hand" is a parallel between Newtonian time and the "ORDERD RACE" (26, E 171) of *Jerusalem* that is drawn in the first paragraph of the third chapter of *Constructive Vision*. I am happy to believe that almost all of the issues that would arise from this conjunction are left unexplained or undeveloped in *this paragraph*—it is after all an introductory paragraph—but De Luca wants to argue that the reading of *Jerusalem* contained by the last four chapters of *Constructive Vision* somehow depends upon connections established here. According to De Luca, in this small paragraph a parallel between *Jerusalem* and fallen time is established on which an entire "superstructure of commentary proceeds to be built." In fact, this opening and introductory paragraph is in no sense the *ground* of the reading that follows.

The claims and certainties of the first paragraph represent a naive or first approximation that is complicated, and qualified, by the very next paragraph, and then by the rest of the chapter. The following chapters treat Newtonian time as at best one aspect (a superficial one at that) of fallen time. Newtonian time is not the subject of detailed analysis because this particular correlation is not of great importance for the argument that follows. *Constructive Vision* does argue that *Jerusalem* mirrors "some of our most fundamental experiences of time," but this claim is first made seven pages after the paragraph referred to by De Luca. Moreover, the claim is substantiated by an analysis of critical accounts of the experience of reading *Jerusalem*, a discussion of Locke's account of time in *An Essay*, and then by the extended reading of *Jerusalem* which follows.

De Luca's second example of "ungrounded assertions" is meant to be more substantial and more devastating. De Luca introduces it as an instance of a "slippery and elliptical kind of reasoning" that is "especially disturbing when it is employed to establish the major premises of the book's argument or to challenge the consensus critical position on Blake." I must admit that my language in the passage quoted by De Luca is a bit woolly and probably too earnest and enthusiastic. However, in his attempt to discredit my argument before it gets started, De Luca seems unnecessarily obtuse. Why should the phrase "somewhat like a guinea" refer only to size? What is so extraordinary about the assumption

that "an Innumerable company of the Heavenly host crying Holy Holy Holy is the Lord God Almighty" is able to "talk, move and sing?" Why is the "therefore" in the penultimate sentence of the passage quoted by De Luca surreptitious and unearned? Isn't it reasonably self-evident that in this context talking, moving and singing had been understood to imply an alterity which cannot be reduced to our perception of it? Surely the phrase "interpenetrated with others" is, in this context, not as equivocal as De Luca suggests. Why doesn't he consider the possibility that "others" refers to the angelic hosts? There is after all a footnote to page 11 that, in an attempt to reduce the possibility of the kind of confusion alluded to by De Luca, explains the sense in which the word "other" is used in my argument. Or finally, why should De Luca be so resistant to the thought that "The world formed by Frye's imagination might discover within its bounds a force and presence which far exceeds its domain"? If domain can mean: (a) "estate, lands, dominions;" (b) "district under rule, realm, sphere of influence;" and "scope, field, province of thought or action," then surely for most people it is not an unusual experience to come across (within the bounds of their world) a force and presence which exceeds their domain. There is an inside/outside paradox here, but I really don't see why De Luca should find it so difficult to fathom.

One of the self-revealing moments in De Luca's review occurs when he claims that I "deliberately and persist-

ently" conflate "the world-forming imagination of the idealist tradition with the Urizenic making of enclosed, exclusionary worlds." De Luca believes that in so doing I align myself "with those currently flourishing Schools of Resentment that are engaged in undermining further the fading prestige of romanticism in general and Frye in particular." There is no doubt that De Luca is here raising a number of important issues but, rather than debating them, he frames them as charges to be answered in court. If I am to be charged with these views and these alliances (and I don't think that the issues are as cut and dried as he suggests), why not at least gesture towards the readings which after all make up more than 90% of the text? As my introduction carefully explains, when I wrote this book it was my opinion that "The nature of Los and the relationship between time and Eternity in Blake's oeuvre" (which together constitute, after all, the main subject matter of the book, not the reputation of Northrop Frye or the nature of the imagination in romanticism) could be elaborated most profitably "only within a discussion of the body of Blake's poetry." It is these readings that provide the ground and evidence for the wider generalizations that are made from time to time in *Constructive Vision*. It seems a shame that rather than arguing his case from the views put forward in *Constructive Vision* and clearly identifying his own "interest" in the issues at stake, De Luca chose a much easier course.

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## Newsletter

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### CALL FOR PAPERS

Jackie Di Salvo and Tony Rosso have a contract with Garland Press and are soliciting essays for an anthology on "Blake, Politics, and History." They are looking for essays written in an accessible style and providing concrete analyses of the politics and historical contexts of Blake's work. The editors welcome a broad array of historical perspectives and approaches: old and "new" historicism; reception history; mythic, art, sexual, imperial, psychic, or women's histories; and feminist, Marxist, Foucauldian, Bakhtinian, or cultural-materialist histories. Deadline is roughly 1 February 1994. Please send hard copy (MLA style) and disks in WordPerfect 5.x. to:

Tony Rosso  
96 Bishop Street  
New Haven CT 06511  
(203) 777-7530

Jackie Di Salvo  
401 8th Avenue #34  
Brooklyn NY 11215  
(718) 499-3318

### BLAKE PAPERS AT THE CONFERENCE ON ROMANTICISM AND THE IDEOLOGIES OF GENRE AT LONDON, ONTARIO, 26-29 AUGUST 1993

"'Visibility Should not be Visible':  
Blake's Borders and the Regime of  
Sight," David Clark (McMaster)

"The Genre of Creation: Blake's  
Revisions to the Title Page to *Europe*,"  
Peter Otto (Melbourne)

"Blake's *Jerusalem* and the Language of  
Constitutions," Angela Esterhammer  
(Western Ontario)

"'Mother Outline': A Critique of Gender  
in Blake's Aesthetics," Peter Georgelos  
(Western Ontario)

### BLAKE TAPES

Poetic/dramatic recitation of selected Blakean verse. Recording artist has 4-year European conservatory background and stateside Ph.D. Tapes are high bias, 60-minute audiocassettes (playable on a standard deck), first generation from DAT original. \$12.95 includes shipping and handling. Order from Stanza, 13675 SE Laurie Avenue, Milwaukie OR 97222.

Selections include: Introduction to *Innocence*, The Lamb, Night, Introduction to *Experience*, Earth's Answer, Sunflower, Rose, Tyger, Clod and Pebble; selections from *Marriage*; selections from the *Notebook* (Eternity, Day, Morning, Mock On, Never Pain, Angel); selections from *Auguries of Innocence*, *Four Zoas* (35: 11-15 & 36: 13-14; 122: 26-123: 6; 138: 20-40); *Milton* (Preface; 2: 1-25; 13: 45-14: 33; 40: 28-42: 6); *Jerusalem* (4: 1-23; 5: 16-20; 10: 20-12: 2; 99: 1-5).



### VOLUMES 1-25 BLAKE CUMULATIVE INDEX

1993 is the 25th anniversary of *Blake/An Illustrated Quarterly*. To celebrate, we will be sending a cumulative index to all subscribers with the fall issue (vol. 27, #2). After that time, the cumulative index will be available for \$2.00 per copy. New subscribers will receive a free copy with their subscriptions.

### BAD COPIES OF VOLUME 26, #3

We've just been alerted that some copies of volume 26, #3 are missing pages 81-88, and pages 89-96 are repeated. If your copy is one of these, please let us know and we'll replace it.

**Vincent Arthur De Luca**

1940 - 1993