

*Albions Angel stood beside the Stone  
of night, and saw  
The terror like a comet, or more like the  
planet  
That inclos'd the terrible wandering comets in his sphere.  
Then Mars thou wast our center, & the planets there flew round  
The crimson disk of the Sun was in the sphere;  
The Spectre glow'd his horrid length staining the temple long  
With beams of blood; & thus a voice came forth, and shook the  
temple*

# B L A K E

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# Blake

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Cover: *America a Prophecy* copy Q, plate 7 (composed 1793, printed c. 1829 by Catherine Blake, and hand tinted in the early twentieth century). Special Collections, Princeton University Library. Image courtesy of the *William Blake Archive*.

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## Blake in the Marketplace, 2021

BY ROBERT N. ESSICK

ROBERT N. ESSICK has been collecting and writing about Blake for over fifty years.

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1 **T**HE Blake market, almost dormant in 2020, sprang to life early in 2021 with the appearance of Blake's drawing *The Death of Ezekiel's Wife* (illus. 2) in Sotheby's New York sale of Old Master Drawings on 27 January. The estimate of \$80,000-\$120,000 undervalued one of Blake's most important monochrome wash drawings remaining in private hands. Bidding paused for half a minute at the low estimate. As the auctioneer was about to knock down the lot, another bidder jumped in. Two combatants drove the drawing to a hammer price of \$230,000-\$289,800 including the buyer's premium charged by the house. I believe that this is an auction record for an uncolored drawing by Blake, and a record for one of his pictures in any medium datable to the 1780s. I have not been able to discover the

identity of the new owner, but I suspect a private collector. Has Bono struck again?<sup>1</sup> *Adam and Eve Asleep*, a watercolor with a disputed attribution, was offered in Sotheby's next lot—see under Interesting Blakeana.

- 2 Auction sales in January included Samuel Palmer's c. 1835 watercolor *The Welsh Cottage* for \$100,000, twenty times the high estimate. This is probably a one-off fluke rather than a new benchmark for Palmer's post-Shoreham-period works. In May another Palmer watercolor, *Sketch for a Pastoral Scene*, datable to c. 1851, sold for a hammer price within the estimate range of \$20,000-30,000. One of the very few privately owned Shoreham-period drawings by Palmer came to auction in July—see the entry for *A Shepherd Leading His Flock under the Full Moon* and illus. 9.
- 3 Two notable works came to market in March. On the 25<sup>th</sup> the London dealer Peter Harrington Rare Books offered a set of Blake's Virgil wood engravings almost certainly printed by Edward Calvert after John Linnell acquired the blocks in 1825 (illus. 7). Henry Fuseli's rare soft-ground etching "Chrysgone Conceive, in a Ray of Sunshine, Amoretta and Belpheobe" achieved an extraordinary price at auction on the same day. For details, see the listings below.
- 4 In May a hitherto unrecorded version of Blake's visionary head of Boadicea appeared with little fanfare in an auction in Maine. Mistakenly offered as a work "after" Blake with a modest estimate and no mention of the mysterious sketch on the verso, the pencil drawing fetched a bargain hammer price of \$1300. See illus. 4 and 5 and the entry below for further comments on the *Visionary Head of Queen Boadicea*.
- 5 The highlight—lowlight?—of the fall auction season was the sale on 14 October of *The Incubus Leaving Two Young Women*, an oil painting stated by Christie's, without hesitation or caveat, to be by Henry Fuseli (illus. 8). If indeed by him, this is the most important work by the artist to be auctioned since the sale of *Satan Starting from the Touch of Ithuriel's Lance* from Rudolf Nureyev's collection for £770,000 in 1995. See the caption to illus. 8 for some doubts about the attribution. The hammer price of \$2,900,000, on-

1. The rock musician Bono (Paul David Hewson) is rumored to have purchased both plates of "A Cradle Song" from copy Y of *Songs of Innocence*. See the 2018 sales review in *Blake* 52.4 (spring 2019), entry for *Songs of Innocence* copy Y. Other possible purchasers are Florence Rothman, owner of the finest collection of Blake's illuminated books remaining in private hands, and Leon Black, the billionaire collector of drawings who owns two watercolors by Blake, *God Blessing the Seventh Day* and *The Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins* (Butlin #434, 481), and possibly the large color print *The Good and Evil Angels Struggling for Possession of a Child* (Butlin #324).

ly \$100,000 below the low estimate, suggests that at least one bidder (possibly bidding against the reserve price rather than another person) did not have any doubts. The online version of the catalogue states, however, that “Christie’s has a direct financial interest” in the lot, and thus the auction house, or a third party backing the sale, may have acquired the work at an agreed-upon reserve price.

- 6 The final month of the year provided Blake collectors with several opportunities to make significant acquisitions. Heritage Auctions of Dallas, Texas, offered Blake’s pencil sketch *Adam and Eve Expelled from Eden* on 3 December. The restrained estimate range of \$8000–12,000 was probably owing to the sunburnt condition of the paper and questions about who added the pen and ink work and wash to the underlying pencil drawing. In spite of these issues, five bidders pushed the lot to a hammer price of \$46,000 (\$57,500 including the buyer’s premium). See the entry below and illus. 1 for details. Six days later, Christie’s in London brought to the auction block a previously unrecorded impression of Blake’s “Enoch” lithograph, only the fifth known example and one of only two remaining in private hands (illus. 6). The print sold for a hammer price at the low estimate of £100,000 (£125,000 with the buyer’s premium) to John Windle acting for Northwestern University Library.
- 7 Sotheby’s offered three works by and after Blake in its London online auction extending from 3 to 14 December: *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* posthumous copy c, the Camden Hotten 1868 facsimile of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, and the Pickering 1886 facsimile of *There is No Natural Religion*. All came from the collection of Stopford A. Brooke (1832–1916) and thence by descent through the family to Mrs. William Drysdale.<sup>2</sup> The most important is, of course, *Songs* copy c, estimated at £50,000–70,000. This attracted only a single bidder, who acquired the work for a hammer price of £45,000, probably one step above the unpublished reserve price. The two facsimiles are listed under Interesting Blakeana.
- 8 In my 2019 marketplace review I included six important works by Blake that the estates of two descendants of Geoffrey Keynes intended to give to the Fitzwilliam Museum.<sup>3</sup> Those gifts were made in 2020.<sup>4</sup> Each work is listed below for the record.

2. Other important works by Blake, including *There is No Natural Religion* copy E and a posthumous impression pl. 28 of *Jerusalem* (upper design only), were sold from Brooke’s collection, Sotheby’s London, 27 July 1917, #788–95, 798–99.

3. *Blake* 53.4 (spring 2020): par. 4.

4. Arts Council England, *Cultural Gifts Scheme & Acceptance in Lieu Report 2020* (Manchester: Arts Council, 2020) 47. I did not receive a copy of this publication until Jan. 2021.

- 9 The year of all sales, catalogues, and correspondence in the following lists is 2021, unless indicated otherwise. With a few exceptions, such as Blake’s engraving after William Hogarth and exceptionally rare items, only complete copies of plates in series and letterpress books with Blake’s commercial illustrations are included. Most reports about auction catalogues are based on the online versions. Illustrations are in color, unless noted otherwise. Coverage of regional auctions is selective. Dates for dealers’ online catalogues are the dates accessed, not the dates of publication. Works offered online by dealers and listed in previous sales reviews are not repeated here. Most of the auction houses add their purchaser’s surcharge to the hammer price in their price lists. These net amounts are given here, following the official price lists. Estimates in auction catalogues are usually for hammer prices. I am grateful for help in compiling this review to David Bindman, Julian Brooks, Mark Crosby, Adam Douglas, Harriet Drummond, Julian Gascoigne, Mark Griffith-Jones, Pom Harrington, Sophie Jensen, Constance McPhee, Raluca Nastase, Lambert Peyton, François de Poortere, Kevin Salatino, Joseph Viscomi, and John Windle. My special thanks go to Jenjoy La Belle for assistance in all matters. Once again, Sarah Jones’s editorial expertise has been invaluable.

#### Abbreviations

AH	Abbott and Holder, London
ALC	Antiquarian online auctions, Lakeville, Connecticut
BB	G. E. Bentley, Jr., <i>Blake Books</i> (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1977). Plate numbers and copy designations for Blake’s illuminated books and commercial book illustrations follow BB.
BHL	Bonhams auctions, London
BHNY	Bonhams auctions, New York
BR(2)	G. E. Bentley, Jr., <i>Blake Records</i> , 2 <sup>nd</sup> ed. (New Haven: Yale UP, 2004)
Butlin	Martin Butlin, <i>The Paintings and Drawings of William Blake</i> , 2 vols. (New Haven: Yale UP, 1981)
cat(s).	catalogue(s)
CB	Robert N. Essick, <i>William Blake’s Commercial Book Illustrations</i> (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1991)
CL	Christie’s auctions, London
CNY	Christie’s auctions, New York
DRW	Dreweatts auctions, Newbury, Berkshire
DW	Dominic Winter auctions, South Cerney, Gloucestershire

E	<i>The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake</i> , ed. David V. Erdman, newly rev. ed. (New York: Anchor-Random House, 1988)
EB	eBay online auctions
FM	Forum auctions, London
illus.	illustration(s), illustrated
LLY	Lowell Libson & Jonny Yarker, London
NB	Neverland Books, Waalre, Netherlands
PBA	PBA Galleries auctions, Berkeley, California
PHB	Peter Harrington Rare Books, London
pl(s).	plate(s)
SL	Sotheby's auctions, London
SNY	Sotheby's auctions, New York
SP	Robert N. Essick, <i>The Separate Plates of William Blake: A Catalogue</i> (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1983)
st(s).	state(s) of an engraving, etching, or lithograph
SW	Swann auctions, New York
Weinglass	D. H. Weinglass, <i>Prints and Engraved Illustrations by and after Henry Fuseli</i> (Aldershot: Scolar P, 1994)
Windle	John Windle Antiquarian Bookseller, San Francisco
#	auction lot or catalogue item number

### Illuminated Books

*Europe*, pls. 5 and 10 printed recto/verso. Given 2020 by the estate of Mary Cecilia Keynes to the Fitzwilliam Museum, accession no. P.102-2020.

*Europe*, pls. 6 and 7 (lower half only of each pl.) printed recto/verso. Given 2020 by the estate of Stephen Keynes to the Fitzwilliam Museum, accession no. P.103-2020.

*Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, posthumous copy c, printed by Frederick Tatham. Fifty-four pls. on 54 leaves of J Whatman 1831 paper, lacking pl. 52, "To Tirzah," but with pl. b, "A Divine Image." Printed in sepia (reddish brown). SL online auction, 3-14 Dec., #23, illus. (£56,700; estimate £50,000-70,000). The provenance in *BB*, p. 426, ends with "... Stopford Brooke, and inherited (according to the present owner) by his granddaughter ... Mrs. William Drysdale." The SL cat. adds the following information: "Rev. Stopford A. Brooke (1832-1916); his daughter, Maud, m. [married] T. W. Rolleston (1857-1920), poet and founder member, with Yeats and C. G. Duffy, of the Irish Literary Society; then by descent" to Mrs. Drysdale. The vendor at the SL auction was probably an heir of Mrs. Drysdale's.

The only impression of pl. b printed by Blake appears in copy *BB*. All other impressions were printed c. 1831-32 by Tatham.

### Drawings and Paintings

*Adam and Eve Expelled from Eden*. Heritage auction, Dallas, 3 Dec., #69068, illus. (\$57,500; estimate \$8000-12,000). I do not know the identity of the new owner. See illus. 1.

*The Death of Ezekiel's Wife*. SNY, 27 Jan., #88, illus. (\$289,800 to an art dealer probably acting on behalf of a private collector; estimate \$80,000-120,000). See illus. 2.

*Free Version of the Laocoön*. Given 2020 by the estate of Stephen Keynes to the Fitzwilliam Museum, accession no. PD.29-2020. See illus. 3.

*Visionary Head of Queen Boadicea* (recto), sketch of geometric and architectural forms (verso). Barridoff Galleries auction, South Portland, Maine, 15 May, #58, no mention of the verso drawing, recto described as "after William Blake" and from the "estate of Donald Brenwasser, New Jersey," paper browned by overexposure to light, illus. (\$1651 to Windle acting for a British private collector; estimate \$500-700). See illus. 4 and 5 (digital images made after the leaf was cleaned by the new owner).

### Separate Plates and Plates in Series

"Enoch," lithograph. CL, 9 Dec., #154, "previously pasted into an amateur album of prints, which can be dated to the first quarter of the 19th century," the album containing lithographs from Georg Jacob Vollweiler's issue of *Specimens of Polyautography* (1806), illus. (£125,000 to Windle acting for the Charles Deering McCormick Library of Special Collections, Northwestern University Library, Evanston, Illinois; estimate £100,000-150,000). See illus. 6.

"Ezekiel," 2<sup>nd</sup> st. *SP* VI, impression 2C. Given 2020 by the estate of Stephen Keynes to the Fitzwilliam Museum, accession no. P.104-2020.

"The Idle Laundress," after George Morland, 2<sup>nd</sup> st., 1788. EB, Sept., trimmed to the image except at the bottom, imprint present, illus. (£620, a record auction price for either of Blake's pls. after Morland).

"Industrious Cottager," after George Morland, 3<sup>rd</sup> st., 1788. EB, Sept., trimmed to the image except at the bottom, imprint present, illus. (£360).

"Job," 2 impressions, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> sts. *SP* V, impressions 1A and 2D. Given 2020 by the estate of Stephen Keynes to the Fitzwilliam Museum, accession nos. P.105-2020 (1<sup>st</sup> st.) and P.106-2020 (2<sup>nd</sup> st.). For an illus. of this impression



1. *Adam and Eve Expelled from Eden*. Pencil, pen and ink, touches of gray wash, 13.2 x 16.4 cm. on wove paper. Butlin #781A, dating the work to “c. 1820-5 (?)” The paper toned yellow-brown through overexposure to light. Photo courtesy of Heritage Auctions.

The reproduction of this drawing in Geoffrey Keynes, *Drawings of William Blake* (New York: Dover, 1970), illus. 45, shows 2 pencil inscriptions lower right, “W. Blake.” and “17762”, neither in Blake’s hand. According to Butlin’s cat. entry, both were “removed in 1976.” The leaf still contains the following inscriptions, none by Blake and none shown in the illus. here: the number “17762” repeated far lower right and, on the verso, “White 158 Col H. | 8 vo W. grey” followed by an undecipherable word.

The pencil drawing is undoubtedly by Blake, but the pen and ink and wash additions to 2 figures are open to question. This work is skillfully executed but is unusual for a pencil sketch by Blake. In some passages the ink lines do not follow underlying pencil work and thus, like the shading and modeling with wash, they add to the composition. Butlin, in his cat. entry noted above, writes insightfully about this issue: “The underlying pencil drawing has been partly gone over in ink. In the actual drawing this is more convincing than in reproduction, but it is still possible that this could have been added by someone else such as John Linnell.” Unfortunately, the provenance record for this

drawing begins with William A. White in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century; there is no evidence that Linnell ever possessed the work. Frederick Tatham can also be added to the list of candidates for the execution of the pen and ink lines and the tinting with wash. White owned at least 3 drawings by Blake once in Tatham’s possession: Butlin #92, 326, 568. We cannot rule out the possibility that William or Catherine Blake added this finishing work, but I remain skeptical.

The title refers only to the subject of the right half of the drawing. Adam and Eve, their loins adorned with (fig?) leaves, stride to the left but look and reach back toward Eden. At least 3 angels turn their backs on the couple. The bat-winged man and the 4(?) figures far left probably represent Satan arousing his rebel angels. One devil holds aloft a spear; clouds rise to the left of Satan and hellish flames appear between him and Adam and Eve. The expulsion could have been based on the Bible, but the motifs on the left and the way Adam and Eve look back to Eden indicate that the textual basis for this drawing is John Milton’s *Paradise Lost*.<sup>5</sup> Both the expulsion and Satan arousing his fallen cohorts are pictured in separate designs in Blake’s 2 completed series of *Paradise Lost* watercolors, Butlin #529 and 536.

5. Book 12, line 641: “They looking back, all th’ Eastern side beheld.” Quoted from Milton, *Complete Poems and Major Prose*, ed. Merritt Y. Hughes (New York: Odyssey P, 1957) 468.

2. *The Death of Ezekiel's Wife*. Monochrome wash drawing, 33.9 x 47.7 cm. The 27 Jan. SNY cat. describes the medium as "pen and black ink with black and grey washes over pencil, heightened with scratching out." To this can be added the white material (probably powdered chalk mixed with glue) on Ezekiel's beard and left hand. Blake used this pigment to revise the drawing by covering black lines he wished to delete. Butlin #165. Photo courtesy of Sotheby's.

This drawing can be dated to c. 1785 on stylistic grounds. The much more finished version of the design in the Philadelphia Museum of Art is also dated to c. 1785 by Butlin, #166, but I believe it is much later, the direct preliminary for the large separate etching/engraving of 1794 (*SP VI*). All 3 works are about the same size. The companion print of 1793, "Job" (*SP V*), follows a parallel history of development, first as a monochrome wash drawing of c. 1785 (*The Complaint of Job*, Butlin #163, collection of Robert Bransten, San Francisco), then as a highly finished drawing (Fine Art Museums of San Francisco, dated by Butlin #164 to c. 1785 but I believe c. 1793), and finally as the separate pl. of 1793. For the Job design there is also a variant preliminary, with differences in the postures and positions of Job and his wife, of c. 1785 (Butlin #162, Tate Collection).<sup>6</sup> These Ezekiel and Job drawings are reproduced in Butlin and in *SP* figs. 9-11,

13-14, with the exception of the drawing owned by Bransten (Butlin #163), for which see Windle cat. 65, *William Blake: Always in Paradise*, March 2017, p. 3, item 2.

The work has an interesting provenance. The British critic, editor, and poet Francis Turner Palgrave (1824-97) gave it to the American author Henry Adams (1838-1918) and his wife (née Marian Hooper) as a wedding present in 1872. Butlin concludes the provenance information with George C. Homans of Boston. To this record I can add his daughter, Susan Homans Elias, by descent in 1989, and then by descent in 2002 to her husband, Archibald Cameron Elias, Jr., of Philadelphia. A. C. Elias died in 2008; the vendor at SNY on 27 Jan. was probably one or more of his heirs.

6. The Tate drawing is probably the earliest. Its verso includes a pencil sketch of Job's wife in the posture she assumes in all later versions. For a detailed consideration of these Job designs, see Martin Butlin, *William Blake, 1757-1827*, Tate Gallery Collections, volume 5 (London: Tate Gallery, 1990) 52-55. In this discussion Butlin accepts the later dating of the Job drawing in the Fine Art Museums of San Francisco, Butlin #164. A small pencil drawing of the composition, datable to c. 1790-93 and with several variants from the other versions, is in Blake's Notebook, Butlin #201.20. This last work is probably part of a series of emblems in the Notebook and not directly related to the development of the large etching/engraving.





3. (previous page) *Free Version of the Laocoön*. Pencil, pen and ink, monochrome washes, and touches of watercolor on the central figure's face, image 53.7 x 43.5 cm. on a leaf of wove paper 54.2 x 44.0 cm. Inscribed "The Laocoon" in pencil, lower left. Butlin #681, dating the work to c. 1825 and tentatively attributing the inscription to Frederick Tatham. The hand does not look to me like Tatham's. The paper has darkened, due to overexposure to light, except for strips where the margins were formerly covered with a mat. The edges of the mat window are visible as lines at the top, along the right edge, and bottom left. Fitzwilliam Museum accession no. PD.29-2020. Reproduced by permission, © Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.

Butlin's dating places the execution of this drawing at about the same time that Blake returned to his engraving of *Laocoön* (BB #84, SP XIX) to add the many inscriptions,

including the identification of the figures as "יה [Jehovah] & his two Sons Satan & Adam".<sup>7</sup> Blake's engraving closely follows the classical statue, but in this drawing he has made many changes to the positions and postures of the three human figures and to the serpents. Laocoön is now clothed rather than nude. He may be Jehovah, as Blake identifies him in the engraving, or perhaps a Hebrew rather than a Trojan priest.

7. E 273 (the bracketed "[Jehovah]" is in the E text). For the engraving and its dating, see the *William Blake Archive* at <<http://www.blakearchive.org/work/laocoon>> and Rosamund A. Paice, "Encyclopaedic Resistance: Blake, Rees's *Cyclopaedia*, and the *Laocoön* Separate Plate," *Blake* 37.2 (fall 2003): 44-62.

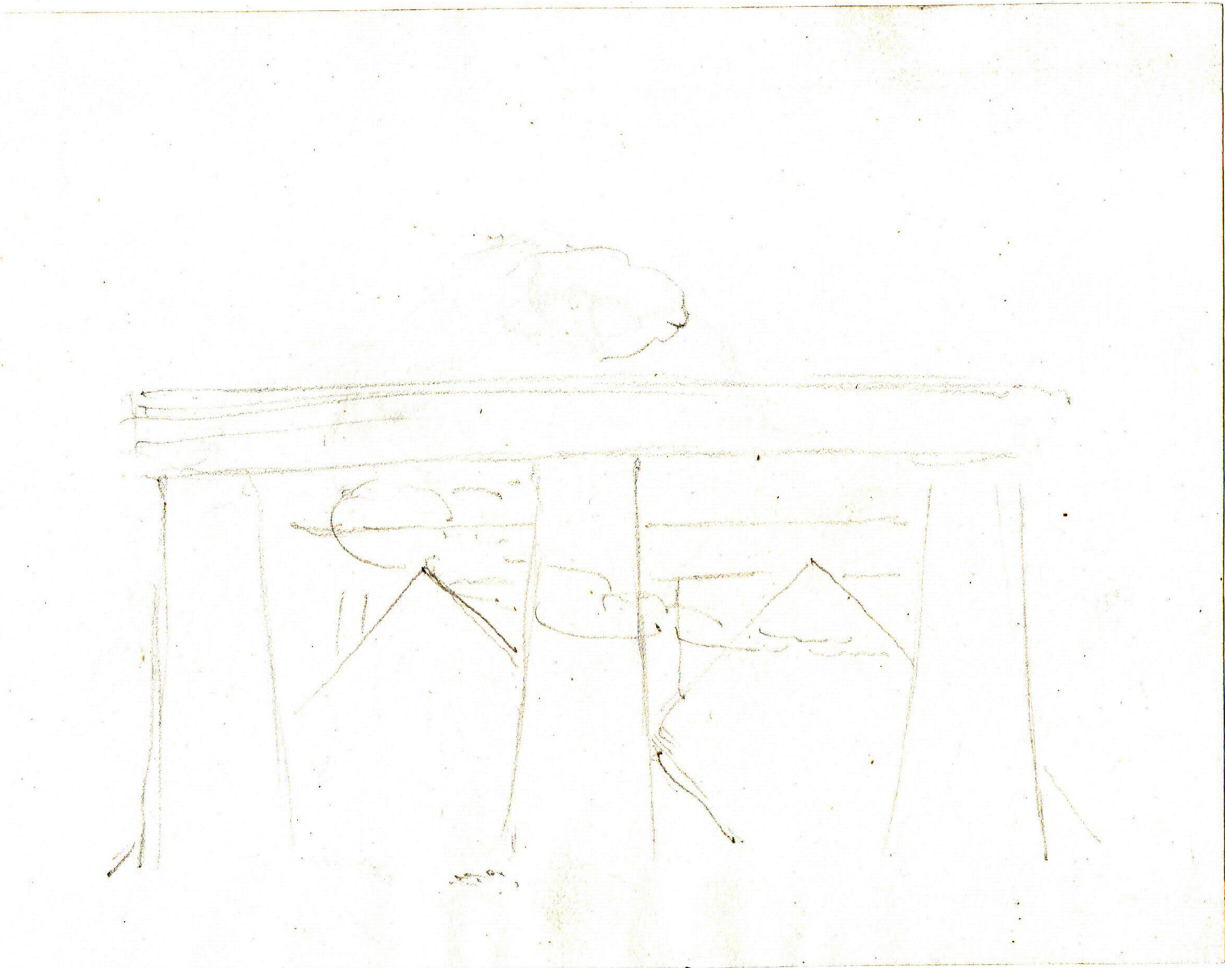
4. (next page) *Visionary Head of Queen Boadicea* (recto). Pencil, head approximately 19.0 x 14.6 cm. on a leaf of wove paper, 19.9 x 15.5 cm., inscribed "Boadica" in pencil below the profile head facing to the left. The leaf is the same width as those in the smaller Blake-Varley Sketchbook (Butlin #692), datable to c. 1819. The height is about 0.6 cm. less than the leaves of the sketchbook, but cutting a leaf from a bound volume would normally mean some loss along the inner edge. It was probably removed from the sketchbook early in its history by either John Varley or John Linnell. Boadicea, queen of the Iceni, a Celtic tribe in Britain, led a revolt against Roman rule c. 60 AD. See illus. 5 for the verso sketch. Private collection, Great Britain; reproduced by permission.

There are 2 other versions of this portrait, Butlin #717, head facing to the right (formerly Joseph Holland collection, now in a private collection, San Francisco) and

#718, head facing to the left (Morgan Library and Museum, New York). Butlin describes the former as "possibly a counterproof, with the hair added," of the latter. The pencil lines of Butlin #718 are very faint. The version reproduced here would appear to be an original drawing rather than a counterproof. The spelling of "Boadica" and formation of the letters (except for the "B") follow the title inscription, attributed by Butlin to Linnell, on Butlin #717.

Butlin traces the history of his #717 to the sale of Linnell's collection, CL, 15 March 1918, #165, "Boadicea" and 16 other works by Blake (£46.4s. to the dealer E. Parsons & Sons). This lot included "duplicates and impressions" according to the auction cat. Butlin #699 identifies 13 of the 17 works in this lot, leaving "4 others" unidentified. This newly discovered drawing may have been among the "duplicates" in the Linnell sale and 1 of the 4 that Butlin was unable to identify.





5. Sketch of geometric and architectural forms, the verso of illus. 4, the leaf turned to the horizontal format of the drawing attributable to Blake. Pencil, leaf of wove paper 15.5 x 19.9 cm. The largest motif consists of 3 (stone?) columns supporting a lintel. Two triangular forms dominate the spaces between the columns. Another lintel and at least 2 columns stand behind the triangles (note that the tops of the triangles overlap the horizontal beam). This sense of recessional space prompts one to view the sketch as a single composition dominated by the entry to an Egyptian temple, such as Karnak, in the foreground, with 2 pyramids

and further temple structures behind it. The circle hovering over the pyramid on the left may be the sun; other rounded shapes, including 1 above the foreground lintel, might be clouds. David Bindman has suggested to me, in an e-mail of 7 June, that there may be a connection between this verso sketch and *The Man Who Built the Pyramids* and related details in the smaller Blake-Varley Sketchbook, Butlin #692.102 (portrait of the man, now missing and known only as a replica in the Tate Collection, Butlin #752) and #692.103 (details). Reproduced by permission of the owner.



6. "Enoch." Lithograph, image 21.7 x 31.2 cm. on a leaf of buff (light beige) wove paper, 22.6 x 32.1 cm., showing a "C 1806" watermark. This is the only recorded impression with a watermark, one that supports the dating of the work to c. 1806–07. Reproduced by permission of Christie's, © 2021 Christie's Images Limited.

Provenance, according to the CL cat.: Presumably Buxton Kenrick (1770–1832) of Lincolnshire and London; George Cranmer Kenrick (1806–69), presumably by inheritance; Wanda Jill Ferguson, nee Forsyth-Forrest (1934–2021), by inheritance; "acquired locally by the present owner." The cat. also points out that the watermark indicates that the paper was probably produced by Joseph Coles, Somerset.

### Separate Plates and Plates in Series (continued)

of the 1<sup>st</sup> st., see the *William Blake Archive*, <<http://www.blakearchive.org/copy/esv.1-1a?descId=esv.1-1a.spb.01>>.

Job engravings, complete sets. Pom Harrington of PHB, private offer in an e-mail to Windle of 26 March, published "Proof" impressions on so-called "French" paper, "some foxing to sheets affecting engravings only very slightly," from the collection of David Lindsay, the 27<sup>th</sup> Earl of Crawford and 10<sup>th</sup> Earl of Balcarres (1871–1940), later half morocco (£57,500); same copy and price, Voewood Rare Books, "Firsts" online book fair, 20–25 May, illus., and July online cat. 3, #3, illus.; same copy and price, PHB, online

cat. for the New York Virtual Book Fair, 9–12 Sept., illus. Zucker Art Books, June online cat., published "Proof" impressions on laid India, letterpress title label "with corrected address" pasted on a leaf, three-quarter morocco, illus. (\$45,000). JF Letenneur Livres Rares, online cat. for the New York Virtual Book Fair, 9–12 Sept., 1826 printing on wove paper after removal of the "Proof" inscription, leaves 37.9 x 27.2 cm., 19<sup>th</sup>-century boards with leather spine, illus. (€68,250).

## Letterpress Books with Engravings by and after Blake

Allen, *History of England*, 1798. EB, April, contemporary calf very worn, illus. (£662 to the London dealer Zantiques, which offered the vol. to Windle for £1400; sold late April by Zantiques to a private collector for £1250).

Allen, *Roman History*, 1798. DW, 13 May, #355, "occasional light spotting," contemporary sheep worn, with 2 unrelated vols., illus. (£360).

Ariosto, *Orlando furioso*, 1799. Andrew Cox, Feb. online cat., 5 vols., no mention of Blake's pl., scattered foxing, contemporary calf worn and partly repaired, covers of vol. 5 detached, illus. (£245).

Bible, *The Royal Universal Family Bible*, 1780–81. EB, Nov., contemporary calf worn (offered at the "buy it now" price of \$589.99).

Blair, *The Grave*. ALC, 7–14 Jan., #146, 1926 printing of pls. only by the Phoenix Press (BB #435J), publisher's portfolio, illus. (\$116). FM, 28 Jan., #98, 1813 quarto, "occasional spotting," later half roan worn, illus. (£650). Nicholas Goodyer, Feb. online cat., 1808 quarto, scattered foxing on pls., later half calf, illus. (£1600). Peter Fennymore, Feb. online cat., 1808 quarto, scattered foxing, half morocco worn (£1750). Tippecanoe Antiques Trader, Feb. online cat., "1813" (actually 1870) folio, publisher's cloth very worn, illus. (\$2400). Hermitage Bookshop, Feb. online cat., 1808 quarto, light browning and foxing, calf rebacked (\$2000, previously offered at \$3000). Potter & Potter auction, Chicago, 13 March, #150, [1870] ed., modern half morocco, illus. (\$938). Freeman's auction, Philadelphia, 23 Sept., #35, 1808 quarto, foxed, three-quarter morocco, illus. (\$1572). BHNY, 15 Oct., #115, 1808 quarto, "plates foxed," modern morocco, illus. (\$535.50). DRW, 17 Nov., #463, 1813 quarto, "morocco-backed boards" worn, illus. (£260). EB, Nov., 1926 printing of the pls. only, publisher's portfolio worn, illus. (\$49.95).

Bryant, *New System ... of Ancient Mythology*, 1773–76. PHB, April online cat., with a variant title page in vol. 1 dated "M DCC LXXIII" (1773), 3 vols., contemporary vellum, illus. (£2000). Most copies of the 1<sup>st</sup> ed. of vol. 1 are dated 1774.

Catullus, *Poems*, 1795. Brick Row Book Shop, Aug. online cat., 2 vols., lacking pl. 2 but with a 2<sup>nd</sup> impression of pl. 1 bound as the frontispiece in vol. 2, foxed, contemporary calf rebacked, illus. (\$500).

Darwin, *Botanic Garden*. Kurt Gippert, California Virtual Book Fair, 4–6 March, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. of Part 1, 1795, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. of Part

2, 1794, 2 vols. in 1, later half calf, illus. (\$1250). EB, March, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. of both parts, 1791, 1789, 2 vols. in 1, vol. 2 "possibly" lacking 2 pls. (not by Blake), "sporadic foxing throughout," contemporary calf, illus. (no bids on a required minimum bid of \$1999.10); Sept., 1<sup>st</sup> ed. of Part 1, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. of Part 2, both 1791, 2 vols. in 1, some spotting, modern buckram, illus. (\$555). The Book Squirrel, March online cat., 1<sup>st</sup> ed. of both parts, 1791, 1789, 2 vols. in 1, foxed, no description of binding other than "considerable wear" (\$350). James Hawkes, March online cat., 1<sup>st</sup> ed. of Part 1, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. of Part 2, both 1791, 2 vols. in 1, "large paper copy," contemporary calf rebacked, illus. (£1680). NB, March online cat., 4<sup>th</sup> ed., 1799, 2 vols., contemporary calf, illus. (\$2000). Mallams auction, Oxford, 22 April, #734, 4<sup>th</sup> ed., 1799, 2 vols., scattered foxing on pls., contemporary half calf, illus. (£475). Heritage auction, Dallas, 10 June, #45663, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. of Part 1, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. of Part 2, both 1791, 2 vols. in 1, contemporary calf rebacked, original backstrip retained, illus. (\$562.50). Lawrences auction, Crewkerne, Somerset, 23 Sept., #106, 4<sup>th</sup> ed., 1799, 2 vols., contemporary calf worn, illus. (£195). FM, 23 Sept., #262, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. of Part 1, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. of Part 2, both 1791, 2 vols. in 1, 2 signatures in Part 2 misbound, contemporary calf worn, illus. (£653).

Darwin, *Poetical Works*, 1806. EB, Jan., 3 vols., contemporary calf worn, illus. (offered at the "buy it now" price of £1750 or "best offer"). PHB, April online cat., 3 vols., contemporary calf, illus. (£2250).

Flaxman, Hesiod designs, 1817. Windle, June online cat., bound with Flaxman's Aeschylus designs, 1831, scattered stains, half morocco worn, illus. (\$500). EB, July, water stains in the lower right margins of some pls., later morocco worn and water stained, illus. (£73). PHB, Dec. online cat., "a few plates bound out of sequence" and "initial 3 leaves remargined," scattered foxing, half-title torn in left margin, "contemporary red half sheep, neatly rebacked and recornered," illus. (£475).

Flaxman, *Iliad* designs, 1805. EB, March, badly foxed, half calf very worn, illus. (£80); another copy, Oct., scattered foxing, half calf very worn, "binding is loose," illus. (no bids on a required minimum bid of £79.99); same copy, Oct., illus. (offered at the "buy it now" price of £79.99 or "best offer"). Halls Fine Art auction, Shrewsbury, Shropshire, 6 Oct., #115, title pl. badly foxed, scattered foxing elsewhere, 19<sup>th</sup>-century half calf very worn, illus. (£24).

Fuseli, *Lectures on Painting*, 1801. Grand auction, Folkestone, Kent, 27 Sept., #89, an anonymous watercolor copy, 15.0 x 10.0 cm., of Blake's pl., oddly described as a "self portrait" of Fuseli, illus. (not sold; estimate £900–1200). Previously offered Grand auction, 17 Feb. 2020, #114, illus. (no bids; estimate £100–150).

Gay, *Fables*, 1793. PBA, 7 Jan., #0105, 2 vols., “scattered light foxing,” later calf, front cover of vol. 1 detached, illus. (\$200); same copy, EB, July, hinges repaired, illus. (offered at the “buy it now” price of \$1500); same copy and price, Burnside Rare Books, July online cat., illus. ALC, 17-24 June, #306, 2 vols., 6 pls. partly hand colored, “general foxing throughout, some pages heavily,” three-quarter modern buckram, illus. (not sold; estimate \$600-900); same copy, EB, July, illus. (no bids on a required minimum bid of \$500); same copy, EB, July, illus. (offered at the “buy it now” price of \$890.95 or “best offer”). Bitterscotch auction, Bedford, New York, 11 July, #0188, 2 vols., contemporary calf, illus. (\$476). FM, 18 Nov., #127, 2 vols. in 1, “some foxing,” contemporary calf rebacked and worn, illus. (£459). J & S Wilbraham, Dec. online cat., 2 vols., three-quarter morocco, “both spines completely lacking,” illus. (£275).

Hayley, *Life of Cowper*, 1803–04. EB, Feb., 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 3 vols., all but fragments of the imprint on pl. 3 trimmed off, contemporary half calf worn, back cover of vol. 2 detached, illus. (£154). Subun-So Books, April online cat., 1<sup>st</sup> ed., 3 vols., contemporary calf (\$954). Colin Page, Oct. online cat., 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 3 vols., with the supplement of 1806 in a 4<sup>th</sup> vol., light foxing, contemporary calf, illus. (£775).

Hayley, *Life of Romney*, 1809. Thomson Roddick auction, Carlisle, Cumbria, 7 Oct., #122, 19<sup>th</sup>-century morocco, “extra illustrated with portraits, views, etc.,” illus. (£118).

Hayley, *Triumphs of Temper*, 1803. ALC, 1-3 Sept., #353, large-paper copy uncut in original boards, illus. (not sold; estimate \$300-400).

Hogarth, *The Beggar’s Opera by Hogarth and Blake*, 1965. EB, Dec., lower quarter of Blake’s pl. stained, publisher’s folding box, illus. (offered at the “buy it now” price of \$118.97).

Hogarth, *Works*. EB, Jan., ed. dated 1822 but “clearly a later issue,” Blake’s pl. with a “tear across image,” 19<sup>th</sup>-century half calf repaired, the copy offered at the “buy it now” price of £2250 or “best offer” in Nov. 2020, illus. (offered at the “buy it now” price of £2250 or “best offer,” reduced to a “buy it now” price of £1950 or “best offer” in March); May, Blake’s pl. only, a late st., probably 6<sup>th</sup>, illus. (offered at the “buy it now” price of \$350 or “best offer”); May, Blake’s pl. only, an early st., probably 3<sup>rd</sup>, illus. (offered at the “buy it now” price of \$200 or “best offer”); July, Blake’s pl. only, a later st., possibly 6<sup>th</sup>, hand colored, illus. (offered at the “buy it now” price of £175); Aug., Blake’s pl. only, probably 5<sup>th</sup> st., illus. (offered at the “buy it now” price of \$350 or “best offer”); Oct., Blake’s pl. only, possibly 6<sup>th</sup> st., illus. (offered at the “buy it now” price of £99.99); Oct., 1790 ed., modern half calf, illus. (no bids on a required min-

imum bid of \$8500). DW, 11 Aug., #129, Blake’s pl. only, probably 3<sup>rd</sup> st., “some light spotting to lower margin, trimmed outside the plate mark, sheet size 45.5 x 66 cm,” illus. (£840; estimate £70-100. Probably a record auction price for this pl.). Mullen Books, Dec. online cat., 1822 ed., missing some pls. but with Blake’s, “foxing throughout,” three-quarter “leather” worn with “covers not attached,” illus. (\$4000). It is difficult to determine the sts. of impressions of this pl. based on low-resolution online images.

Hunter, *Historical Journal*, 1793, octavo issue. Australian Book auction, Armadale, 22 March, #64, modern calf, binding illus. (\$936 Australian).

Josephus, *Works*. PBA, 21 Jan., #190, *BB* issue A, c. 1785–87, contemporary calf rebacked, illus. (\$510). Ryedale auction, Kirkbymoorside, York, 23 Sept., #2270, *BB* issue E, c. 1792–93, contemporary calf worn, illus. (not sold; estimate £500-600); same copy, 1 Oct., #33, illus. (£482). Adam Partridge auction, Cheshire, 18 Nov., #2697, *BB* issue E, c. 1792–93, “rebound” in boards (£180).

Lavater, *Aphorisms*. EB, March, 1789 ed., later calf, illus. (offered at the “buy it now” price of £250); June, 1794 ed., 2<sup>nd</sup> st. of Blake’s pl., slight marginal foxing, contemporary calf, illus. (\$105.50); Nov., 1794 ed., 1<sup>st</sup> st. of Blake’s pl., modern faux leather, illus. (offered at the “buy it now” price of £40 or “best offer”). Addison & Sarova auction, Social Circle, Georgia, 3 April, #5, 1789 ed., contemporary calf very worn, front cover detached, illus. (\$218.75). McNaughtan’s Bookshop, Oct. online cat., 1794 ed., 3<sup>rd</sup> st. of Blake’s pl., “a print of a Blake drawing pasted to flyleaf,” contemporary calf worn, illus. (£200; acquired by Windle for stock); same copy, Windle, Nov. online cat., binding illus. (\$395).

Lavater, *Essays on Physiognomy*. Schilb Antiquarian, June online cat., “1792” (c. 1818) ed., 3 vols. in 4, contemporary calf worn, illus. (\$1250).

*Novelist’s Magazine*, vols. 10-11 (*Sir Charles Grandison*), 1783. EB, Sept., 2 vols., 19<sup>th</sup>-century half calf, illus. (offered at the “buy it now” price of \$403 or “best offer”).

*Remember Me!*, [1824], for 1825. EB, Dec., a French binding, red morocco (?) worn, gilt and blind-stamped covers, “REMEMBER | ME” stamped in gold on the spine (offered at the “buy it now” price of €7500 or “best offer”; acquired by Windle for stock).

Shakespeare, *Dramatic Works*, 1802. EB, Feb., 9 vols., no mention of Blake’s pl., “all copperplates are foxed and dampstained, some heavily,” contemporary morocco worn, 2 vols. rebacked with parts of backstrips missing, illus. (offered at the “buy it now” price of \$1250). Some copies do

not include Blake's pl., inscribed as a "variation" of Peter Simon's pl. after a painting by John Opie. For the relationship between the 2 pls., see *CB* p. 83.

Shakespeare, *Plays*, 1805. Abell auction, Los Angeles, 21 Jan., #0303, 10 vol. issue, contemporary calf rebaked, bindings illus. (\$687.50). EB, April, 10 vol. issue, badly foxed, contemporary calf very worn, illus. (no bids on a required minimum bid of \$199); May, 9 vol. issue, scattered foxing, 19<sup>th</sup>-century calf repaired, illus. (£97). Windle, July online cat., 10 vol. issue, contemporary Russia, illus. (\$5750). Freeman's auction, Philadelphia, 23 Sept., #77, 10 vol. issue, contemporary morocco, bindings illus. (\$1113.50).

Stedman, *Narrative*, 1796, colored copy. Bubbs > Kuyper auction, Haarlem, Netherlands, 24 Nov., #3339, 2 vols., lacking 1 map (not by Blake), slight foxing, 1 pl. damp stained, contemporary half calf, illus. (€14,344).

Stedman, *Narrative*, uncolored copies. EB, Feb., 1796 ed., 2 vols., soiling in margins of some pls., contemporary calf rebaked and worn, illus. (\$1825). Aardvark Books, July online cat., 1796 ed., 2 vols., pls. lightly foxed, contemporary calf rebaked with new spines, illus. (\$3500). Henry Sotheran, July online cat., 1813 ed., 2 vols., scattered foxing, 19<sup>th</sup>-century half morocco, bindings illus. (£2450). Subun-So Books, July online cat., 1813 ed., 2 vols., scattered stains, contemporary calf (\$2971). Wittenborn Art Books, July online cat., 1806 ed., 2 vols., "slightly foxed," calf rebaked, illus. (\$2250). Vashon Island Books, July online cat., 1813 ed., 2 vols., title page to vol. 1 missing, some leaves repaired, modern three-quarter "leather" (\$2250).

Stuart and Revett, *Antiquities of Athens*, vols. 1-4, 1762-1816. CNY online auction, 1-15 Oct., #42, with the *Supplement* of 1830, vols. 1-3 in contemporary morocco, vol. 4 and the *Supplement* in half calf, all uniformly rebaked in morocco, illus. (\$11,875). Blake's 4 pls. are in vol. 3.

*Vetusta Monumenta*, vols. 1-5, 1747-1835. Lawrences auction, Crewkerne, Somerset, 23 Sept., #87, 5 vols., 19<sup>th</sup>-century half calf, illus. (£1430). The illus. for an essay by Joseph Ayloff in vol. 2 are signed by James Basire and are based on drawings by Blake (Butlin #3-11). "Blake's name appears on none of the plates in *Vetusta Monumenta*, but it is very likely that he had a hand in some of them" (*BB* #503). See also *CB* p. 118.

Virgil, *Pastorals*, 1821. Battledoor Books, California Virtual Book Fair, 4-6 March, 2 vols., 19<sup>th</sup>-century calf with original sheep backstrips, illus. (\$35,000); same copy and price, online cat. for the New York Virtual Book Fair, 9-12 Sept., illus. Previously offered CNY online auction, 2-18 June 2020, #68 (no bids; estimate \$15,000-25,000).

Virgil wood engravings, the 17 blocks designed and engraved by Blake, separately printed. Pom Harrington of PHB, private offer in an e-mail to Windle of 25 March, the prints mounted in an oblong album, extensively described and with all 17 prints, the binding, and the inside front cover illus. (£75,000; acquired by Windle at a 20% dealer's discount and sold early April to Essick for \$94,500). See illus. 7.

The album contains 18 leaves of ivory wove paper, each leaf 11.4 x 19.2 cm. The 1<sup>st</sup> leaf is blank; the Virgil wood engravings, printed on thin white wove paper, are pasted to the rectos of leaves 2 through 18. Album leaves 7 and 16 show a watermark that is very difficult to read. My best guess is "MSS" or "M&S" followed, on a second line, by a year possibly beginning with "18". The album leaves are glued to thin white paper stubs, which are in turn bound into early to mid-19<sup>th</sup>-century half morocco over marbled paper boards, stamped in gilt "VIRGIL. BY W. BLAKE." on the spine.<sup>8</sup> The bookplate of Samuel Boddington (1766-1843) is glued to the front pastedown endpaper, also inscribed in pencil by a later owner, David Lindsay, the 27<sup>th</sup> Earl of Crawford and 10<sup>th</sup> Earl of Balcarres (1871-1940), "given me by | D. Y. Cameron. | C[rawford].", the Scottish painter and etcher Sir David Young Cameron (1865-1945). This is probably the album sold from the collection of Thomas Boddington (Samuel Boddington's nephew, who inherited his uncle's library, according to Harrington's e-mail to Windle), SL, 4 Nov. 1895, #95, "Blake, (Wm.) Seventeen Small Woodcuts, *original impressions mounted—Calvert* (Edward) Sixteen Small Designs in the Manner of Blake, *mounted, in 2 small scrap-books*" (£3.6s. to the dealer Bernard Quaritch).

In addition to the thin paper stubs to which the album's leaves are attached, there are 29 stubs in the gutter of the binding, without any attachments, scattered at odd intervals between the album's full, reattached leaves. Fifteen of these stubs are the tails of the thin white paper stubs to which the album's leaves are attached; 14 stubs are remnants of the album's ivory leaves. The remnants of the ivory leaves and the use of stubs to attach the 18 full leaves to the spine clearly indicate that the album's leaves were cut out of, and then returned to, their original binding. Given the number of each type of stub, 3 of the thin white paper stubs with album leaves attached have no visible tails and 4 of the album's ivory leaves were removed without leaving any visible stubs in the binding.

The whiteness of the paper on which the blocks are printed is in part due to cleaning, possibly by Quaritch, after its acquisition of the album in Nov. 1895, or in more recent

8. In an e-mail to me of 29 March, Windle states that he "would tentatively date the binding 1830-35 (after 1825 and most likely well before 1845)."



7. Blake's 1<sup>st</sup> wood engraving illustrating R. J. Thornton's *Pastorals of Virgil*, 1821. Image 6.2 x 8.4 cm. on a leaf of white wove paper 6.4 x 8.7 cm. Illus. cropped close to the leaf of white wove paper.

This impression almost certainly printed by Edward Calvert, possibly in 1828, and mounted a few years later in the Boddington album described in the entry. An exceptionally fine impression, although over-inking on the

tree's foliage at the top obscures a few white lines. The strong contrast between black ink and white paper is probably due in part to cleaning the printed leaf with bleach. Most of the impressions in the album are of equivalent quality. The slightly granular ink imparts to printed surfaces a pleasingly tactile dimension. Essick collection.

years.<sup>9</sup> This cleaning explains why the album's ivory leaves were taken out of their binding: it was necessary to soak each leaf in water to lift off the print for cleaning. Bleach was probably used to remove glue stains and other defects. Not every print was reattached precisely in its original position, with the result that, in a few cases, brown stains

from the original mounting glue are visible on the backing leaves, outside the edges of the prints.

John Linnell acquired the woodblocks on which Blake had engraved his 17 Virgil illus. for "two guineas" (£2.2s.) on 16 Sept. 1825 from "Mr. [William] Harrison," one of the booksellers who published Robert John Thornton's 1821 ed. of Virgil's *Pastorals*.<sup>10</sup> Linnell's eldest son, John Linnell, Jr.,

9. Adam Douglas of PHB tells me, in an e-mail of 12 April, that the cleaning was not done by his firm.

10. BR(2) 775, quoting from *Catalogue of an Exhibition of Drawings, Etchings & Woodcuts by Samuel Palmer and Other Disciples of William*

writing at an unknown date years later, recorded the subsequent printing history of the blocks: “These blocks after the Publisher had used them, (J. L. bought of him for 2 guineas) E Calvert printed them for J. L. & self, &c (certain number of imprints of the set) (J. L. jun. & brother printed a few of the blocks, but did not finish the set)” (*BB* p. 630, excluding Bentley’s bracketed comments). Linnell senior recorded in his journal that “Calvert came & brought impressions of Blake’s wood Cuts” on 8 Sept. 1828 (*BR*[2] 488). Given the quality of the impressions and the provenance of the album, we can be confident that they were printed by “E[dward] Calvert” and were probably among the group that he delivered to Linnell in 1828.

Samuel Boddington acquired several works by Blake in the 1830s. He probably purchased *America* copy P and *A Descriptive Catalogue* copy E from Frederick Tatham (*BB* pp. 105, 137). He purchased impressions of Blake’s “Chaucers Canterbury Pilgrims” and Job engravings from John Linnell on 30 March 1835 (*BR*[2] 793-94). It is likely that Boddington acquired his Virgil prints from Linnell at around the same time, with a *terminus ad quem* of Boddington’s death in 1843. Up to that year the only available impressions were very probably those printed by Calvert. John Linnell, Jr., was born in 1821; his next brother, James, in 1823.<sup>11</sup> It is highly unlikely that a teenager and one of his younger brothers were printing from the Virgil blocks in the mid-1830s. Further, the comment by John Linnell, Jr., quoted above, that he “printed a few of the blocks, but did not finish the set” implies that any complete and uniformly printed set of Blake’s 17 wood engravings, such as the one described here, could not have been from this later printing by the Linnell brothers. A complete set with a mixture of impressions printed by Calvert and the Linnell brothers would no doubt reveal itself as such due to at least slight differences in inking or other aspects of presswork. I suspect that John Linnell, Jr., and his brother did not attempt printing the blocks until the 1860s, after Alexander Gilchrist or his representative acquired electrotypes of 3 of Blake’s Virgil wood engravings for publication in Gilchrist’s 1863 *Life of William Blake*.<sup>12</sup> The publication of the biogra-

*Blake*, with an introduction and notes by A. H. Palmer, Victoria and Albert Museum, 20 Oct.–31 Dec. 1926 (London: Board of Education, 1926). Palmer states that this information about the sale of the blocks was written by Robert John Thornton on the back of an advertisement card for his publication: “Received of Mr. Linnell for the Wood-Blocks executed by Mr. Blake two guineas (*i.e.*, about 2/6 each) for Mr. Mr. (sic) Harrison. R. I. Thornton M. D.” (28). The parenthetical interjections were added by Palmer.

11. See the biographical outline in *John Linnell: A Centennial Exhibition*, selected and catalogued by Katharine Crouan (Cambridge: Cambridge UP and Fitzwilliam Museum, 1982) xxii.

12. See Robert N. Essick, “The Virgil Wood Engravings in Alexander Gilchrist’s *Life of William Blake*,” *Book Collector* 40.4 (winter 1991): 579-81.

phy greatly increased the attention paid to Blake’s works. Consequently, the Linnell family may have believed that there would be a reinvigorated market for original impressions of Blake’s only wood engravings.

Thomas Boddington may have owned another album of Blake’s Virgil wood engravings, one also containing some of Calvert’s prints of his own designs. In a brief article published in 1930, the art historian A. J. Finberg refers to such an album, “whose first owner’s name was T. Boddington.”<sup>13</sup> In his e-mail to Windle of 25 March, Harrington speculates that the album mentioned by Finberg is the same as the one described here, but with Calvert’s works removed. Finberg indicates that the source of his information is “a volume published in 1913 by Mr. Thomas Bird Mosher”—that is, Mosher’s *Edward Calvert: Ten Spiritual Designs*. Mosher’s cryptic comments on the album of prints from which he derived his Calvert reproductions include a description of what is clearly a different album from the one offered by Harrington and now in my collection. For example, the volume referenced by Finberg and Mosher is “bound in dark green cloth,” measures “7 x 8 inches” (17.8 x 20.3 cm.), and contains “a neat manuscript hand written on its first blank leaf: *Eleven Subjects | by | Edward Calvert | and | Seventeen Woodcuts | by William Blake*.”<sup>14</sup> Mosher’s account of the characteristics of that album accords with neither of the “2 *small scrap-books*” described in the 1895 SL auction.

Summary provenance: Edward Calvert, who printed the impressions after 1825; John Linnell, probably in 1828; Samuel Boddington, probably in the mid-1830s and certainly no later than 1843, who had the prints mounted in the album in which he added his bookplate; his nephew, Thomas Boddington, by bequest in 1843; sold from T. Boddington’s collection, Sotheby’s, 4 Nov. 1895 (as noted above); the London dealer Bernard Quaritch; the artist Sir David Young Cameron; David Lindsay, the 27<sup>th</sup> Earl of Crawford and 10<sup>th</sup> Earl of Balcarres, probably until 1940; an heir of Lindsay’s, probably a family member, who sold the album to (or placed it on consignment with) PHB no later than March 2021; Windle in late March 2021; sold April 2021 to Essick.

Virgil, *The Wood Engravings of William Blake for Thornton’s Virgil*, 1977. DW, 16 Dec., #727, publisher’s box, illus. (£2952 to Windle for stock).

13. Finberg, “A Note on Edward Calvert,” *Print Collector’s Quarterly* 17.3 (July 1930): [302].

14. Mosher, “Foreword” in *Edward Calvert: Ten Spiritual Designs* (Portland, Maine: Thomas Bird Mosher, 1913) viii. Mosher implies, but does not explicitly state, that T. Boddington once owned the volume.

Wollstonecraft, *Original Stories*. Windle, April online cat., 1796 ed., 3<sup>rd</sup> (final) sts. of the pls., contemporary calf, illus. (“sold”). Rob Zanger Books, April online cat., 1791 ed., 2<sup>nd</sup> st. of pl. 1, sts. of other pls. not indicated, “a little foxed towards end,” later morocco, the copy sold FM, 28 March 2019, #52, for £3250, illus. (\$10,000).

Young, *Night Thoughts*, 1797. Warren Zimmermann, March online cat., with the “Explanation” leaf and a manuscript “Explication des gravures” in French, “pages are untrimmed,” modern half calf, illus. (\$12,000). Pom Harrington of PHB, private offer in an e-mail to Windle of 26 March, with the “Explanation” leaf, “light foxing in a few places,” from the collection of David Lindsay, the 27<sup>th</sup> Earl of Crawford and 10<sup>th</sup> Earl of Balcarres (1871–1940), later morocco with “all edges gilt” (£17,500); same copy and price, Voewood Rare Books, July online cat. 3, #6, illus. Windle, April online cat., with the “Explanation” leaf, later half morocco, illus. (\$15,000).

### Interesting Blakeana

Royal Academy exhibition cats. EB, Jan., cats. of 1784, 1798, 1799, 1801, 1802, and 1804, 6 pamphlets in all, unbound, illus. (acquired by Windle for stock at the “buy it now” price of £250). Windle, Jan. private offer of the 1784 cat. (\$250, acquired by Essick); Feb. private offer of the 1799 cat. (acquired by the E. J. Pratt Library, Victoria University, Toronto). The 1784 and 1799 cats. include works by Blake; see *BB* #520, 525.

Dante, *A Translation of the Inferno of Dante Alighieri ... by Henry Boyd*, 1785. PHB, April online cat., 2 vols., contemporary calf, illus. (£5000). Blake owned and annotated a copy of this work (*BB* #721, E 633-35).

W. [Paulet] Carey, *Critical Description of the Procession of Chaucer's Pilgrims to Canterbury, Painted by Thomas Stothard*, 1808. *BB* #1338A. EB, March, presentation inscription by Carey to the Earl of Kinnaird, contemporary half calf worn (offered at the “buy it now” price of \$500 or “best offer”). Includes a brief reference to Robert H. Cromek's commissioning Blake to illustrate Robert Blair's *The Grave* (pp. 10-11, footnote). An advertisement for Cromek's 1808 ed. of *The Grave* with designs engraved by “L. Schiavonetti, V. A. executed from the classical compositions of William Blake” is included at the end of Carey's pamphlet on 2 unnumbered pages.

*Adam and Eve Asleep*. A copy of *Adam and Eve Asleep* (Butlin #536.5) in the series of *Paradise Lost* illus. Blake executed for Thomas Butts in 1808. Watercolor with pen and black ink over traces of pencil, 50.6 x 40.3 cm., date un-

certain. SNY, 27 Jan., #89, offered as “attributed to William Blake,” illus. (\$37,800; estimate \$30,000-50,000). Previously offered privately by the London dealer Andrew Clayton-Payne, Sept. 2018 (price on request). For illus. and an attribution to Blake, see Martin Butlin, “Blake's Unfinished Series of Illustrations to *Paradise Lost* for John Linnell: An Addition,” *Blake* 51.1 (summer 2017), and Butlin, “The ‘Linnell’ *Adam and Eve Asleep*: The Case for the Defense,” *Blake* 51.2 (fall 2017). For arguments against this attribution, see the essays by David Bindman, Robert N. Essick, and Joseph Viscomi in *Blake* 51.2 (fall 2017). All 5 essays are cited in the SNY cat. Auction lots described as “attributed to” an artist indicate that the attribution is uncertain or disputed.

*The Light Blue: A Cambridge University Magazine*, vols. 1-5, 1866-70. Nudelman Rare Books, Aug. online cat., 5 vols. in 4, 19<sup>th</sup>-century half calf worn, illus. (\$275 to Windle for stock). Vol. 2 (1867) includes an essay on Blake signed “P. M.” The essay contains “the first publication of three poems from the *Island in the Moon*” (*BB* #2155).

Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Camden Hotten facsimile [1868]. SL online auction, 3-14 Dec., #24, foxed, “quarter vellum over boards,” from the collection of Stopford A. Brooke, illus. (£756).

Walt Whitman, autograph letter signed to “My dear Swinton” (John Swinton, managing editor of the *New York Times*), dated 31 March 1868, 1 p. University Archives auction, Wilton, Connecticut, 14 April, #0345, with Whitman's signed *carte de visite*, illus. (\$8125). The letter alone previously sold CNY, 16 June 2016, #143, illus. (\$3750). See the 2016 sales review in *Blake* 50.4 (spring 2017) for details about this letter, in which Whitman requests a copy of a review of A. C. Swinburne's *William Blake* published in the *Times*.

Blake, Job engravings, [1875]. EB, Oct., reproductions of the pls. only loose as issued in a faux leather portfolio stamped in blind on the front cover “*THE BOOK OF JOB | BLAKE*” and “*HELIOTYPE | JAMES R. OSGOOD & CO.*,” with a duplicate of the pl. numbered 4, the portfolio worn, illus. (acquired by Essick at the “buy it now” price of \$143.99). The same heliotypes published in *BB* #422, *William Blake's Illustrations of the Book of Job*, ed. Charles Eliot Norton (Boston: James R. Osgood, 1875), this separate issue of the pls. only not previously recorded. A “heliotype” is an early form of collotype patented by Ernest Edwards in 1869; see Geoffrey Wakeman, *Victorian Book Illustration: The Technical Revolution* (Detroit: Gale Research Co., 1973) 116.

Blake, *The Book of Thel*, William Muir facsimile, 1885. Windle, Dec. online cat., no copy no. but inscribed “Academy”, original wrappers, illus. (\$3500).

Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, William Muir facsimile, 1885. Windle, March online cat., the rare issue with coloring based on copy I, with an “Appendix” containing reproductions of the manuscript “Order in which the *Songs of Innocence and Experience* ought to be paged” (BB #125) and the relief etching of “A Divine Image” from *Songs of Experience* (BB #139 pl. b), “once badly stained in the margins now washed and cleaned by Court Benson,” the leaves trimmed close to the images, recent cloth, illus. (\$5750). This copy, unrestored, sold Addison & Sarova auction, Macon, Georgia, 5 Nov. 2016, #195, illus. (\$522.75 to Windle acting for Essick).

Blake, *Songs of Innocence*, with *Songs of Experience*, William Muir facsimiles, 1885. BHL, 24 June, #231, 2 vols. in 1, “William Muir’s proof copy” with “several trial tracings pasted in margins, Muir’s manuscript notes, 2 autograph letters signed by Bernard Quaritch to Muir, Quaritch’s 4 pp. 1888 prospectus for works by Blake and Muir, and other ephemera bound in,” original wrappers marked in pencil “Mr Muir’s Master Copy”, contemporary “limp boards,” half morocco slipcase (£6375; estimate £1000-2000); same copy, Lucius Books, online Transatlantic Book Fair, 22-27 July, illus. (£14,750).

Blake, *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, William Muir facsimile, 1885. Windle, Dec. online cat., on Hodgkinson wove paper, lacking printed wrappers and limitation statement, modern half calf, illus. (\$3500).

Blake, *Milton*, William Muir facsimile, 1886, with a facsimile of Blake’s letter of 16 March 1804 to William Hayley. NB, July online cat., copy no. 7, later morocco, illus. (\$6800). Windle, Dec. online cat., no copy no. but inscribed “Builder”, modern buckram, original wrappers bound in, illus. (\$9500); another copy, no copy no. recorded, contemporary half calf, original wrappers bound in, illus. (\$9500).

Blake, *There is No Natural Religion*, Pickering facsimile, 1886. SL online auction, 3-14 Dec., #25, large paper copy, from the collection of Stopford A. Brooke, “some plates hand coloured, original blue wrappers bound in, contemporary blind-tooled calf, rear cover detached, loss of calf to lower edges, joints worn,” illus. (no bids; estimate £500-700).

Blake, *Europe*, William Muir facsimile, 1887. NB, July online cat., no copy no. recorded, later half calf, illus. (\$12,500).

Blake, *Poetical Sketches*, W. Griggs facsimile, 1890. James Cummins, Nov. online cat., mistakenly described as published by “W. Briggs,” no. 24 of 50 copies, “morocco spine and boards, spine perished,” illus. (\$350). BB #130; the only copy I’ve seen on the market since 1990.

W. B. Yeats. Autograph letters signed, 1 to John Linnell, Jr. (1821–1906, son of Blake’s friend and patron John Linnell), 3 to William Linnell (1826–1906, son of Blake’s friend), and 1 typed and signed letter to Katherine Riches (W. Linnell’s daughter), 7 pp. in all. None dated, but all probably written 1895 and/or 1896. FM, 25 March, #69, “discussing the reproductions of William Blake’s drawing for Yeats’s articles in the *Savoy Magazine*” published in 1896 (BB #3051A), illus. (£4760).

A. C. Swinburne, *William Blake: A Critical Essay*, new edition, 1906. BHNY, 15 Dec., #204, signature Y1-8 of the text missing, inscribed on the half-title to “William Michael Rossetti | from | Algernon Charles Swinburne | Sept. 16<sup>th</sup> 1906”, with a further presentation inscription by Rossetti to his daughter Mary explaining why the half-title was inserted from another copy, illus. (\$1020).

Blake, *Songs of Innocence*, William Muir facsimile, 1927. EB, Aug., copy no. 47, original wrappers, illus. (\$1199 to Windle for stock); same copy, Windle, Sept. online cat., illus. (\$5750).

G. L. Lambert. Autograph manuscript handlist of the Blake collection formed by Grace Lansing Lambert (1899–1993) written in black ink in a half-calf album. Eleven pp., including title reading “William Blake | owned by Grace L. Lambert | Pink House, Province Line Road, | Princeton, New Jersey. | 1945–1949—”. Includes *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* copy g<sup>1</sup>, *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* copy L, *America* copy Q, *Night Thoughts* colored copy D, and the manuscript of *I asked a thief*, now all at Princeton University Library. Given 1 Jan. by Windle to Essick as a new year’s gift.

Leonard Baskin (American artist, 1922–2000). *Head of William Blake (After Life Mask)*. Bronze, 18.0 cm. high, initialed and dated “[19]54.” DRW, 12 Oct., #285, illus. (£1500; estimate £400-600).

Blake, *Poems from William Blake’s “Songs of Innocence,”* illus. by Maurice Sendak, 1967. Reader’s Books, May online cat., publisher’s wrappers, “very slight marks to front cover,” illus. (£3500). Battledore Ltd., online cat. for the New York Virtual Book Fair, 9-12 Sept., presentation inscription by Sendak, original wrappers, illus. (\$4500).

Blake, *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* (Manchester: Manchester Etching Workshop, 1983). Windle, Feb. online cat., *56 Works of Bibliography*, #16, issue limited to 40 copies with the pls. hand colored, with Joseph Viscomi's essay, "The Art of William Blake's Illuminated Prints," as issued, publisher's morocco album and cloth folding box, illus. (\$6750).

Blake, *Illustrations of the Book of Job*, ed. David Bindman (Paris: Trianon Press for the Blake Trust, 1987). Windle, Feb. online cat., *56 Works of Bibliography*, #15, deluxe issue limited to 22 sets, 3 vols., publisher's boards trimmed with morocco, slipcases, illus. (\$16,500). BHCNY, 15 Oct., #237, deluxe issue limited to 22 sets, 3 vols. bound as in the Windle set, illus. (\$7650).

### Blake's Circle and Followers

Works are listed under artists' names in the following order: paintings and drawings sold in groups, single paintings and drawings, letters and manuscripts, separate pls., book illus.

#### CALVERT, EDWARD

Early drawings, paintings, and original graphics

*Hamadryades Sketch* (so inscribed), with *Nymphs & Satyrs*, both pen and ink, 4.6 x 5.8 cm. and 3.6 x 8.4 cm. respectively. DW, 23 July, #358, illus. (£900). David Bindman suggests to me (e-mail, 18 Aug.) that the *Hamadryades* may be an early work.

"The Lady with the Rooks," wood engraving. Parker Fine Art auction, Farnham, Surrey, 21 Jan., #1, 3<sup>rd</sup> st., framed, illus. (£625).

"The Ploughman," wood engraving. Parker Fine Art auction, Farnham, Surrey, 21 Jan., #2, 3<sup>rd</sup> st., framed, illus. (£938). Larkhall Fine Art, Feb. online cat., 3<sup>rd</sup> st. from the *Memoir*, illus. (£975).

"The Return Home," wood engraving. Larkhall Fine Art, Feb. online cat., 2<sup>nd</sup> st. from the *Memoir*, illus. (£825).

#### FLAXMAN, JOHN

Drawings and sculpture

See also Flaxman under Letterpress Books with Engravings by and after Blake, above.

*Antony's Oration over the Dead Caesar*. Pencil, ink, and wash, 22.2 x 33.7 cm. LLY, Nov. list of "recent sales," illus. (not priced).

*The Bard*. Pencil, pen and ink, 27.7 x 28.7 cm., probably dating from the mid-1780s. Guy Peppiatt Fine Art, Oct. private offer (£4500); same price, Guy Peppiatt and Harry Moore-Gwyn, Dec. cat., #12, claiming that the "drawing relates to William Blake's poem 'The Voice of the Ancient Bard,'" illus. Previously offered SL, 31 March 1999, #6, illus. (not sold; estimate £2000-3000), and AH, March 2020 online cat. 501, #40, illus. (£4250). If a text prompted Flaxman's drawing, it is probably Thomas Gray's poem "The Bard: A Pindaric Ode" (1757), not Blake's poem 1<sup>st</sup> published in *Songs of Innocence*, 1789.

*Classical Figures*, attributed to Flaxman. Pencil, 11.4 x 17.8 cm. Burstow & Hewett auction, Battle, East Sussex, 25 March, #313, "tear on bottom edge running halfway up the sheet near bottom left-hand corner," illus. (£144). This would appear to be a preliminary drawing for several figures in pl. 17, "The Good Race," among Flaxman's Hesiod designs engraved by Blake and published in 1817 (*BB* #456), but David Bindman believes that this is a copy based on the engraving (e-mail, 10 April).

*Peace Keeping War Out of the Temple of Janus*. Pen and ink, gray wash, 25.0 x 34.0 cm., inscribed "Peace & War" in pencil lower left, "N<sup>o</sup> 4" in pencil lower right, and with "John Flaxman R. A." and the title inscribed in pencil lower right on the backing leaf, datable to c. 1787. Semley auction, Shaftesbury, Dorset, 23 Jan., #286, illus. (£2125 to a British private collector). David Bindman has informed me that this is a variant preliminary study for a Wedgwood plaque of 1787, *Peace Preventing Mars Opening the Gates of Janus* (e-mail, 24 Jan.). For illus. of the plaque and comments, see *John Flaxman*, ed. Bindman (London: Thames & Hudson, 1979) 63, no. 51.

*Study of Figures on a Frieze*. Pen and brown ink, pencil, gray wash, 16.7 x 19.3 cm. Woolley & Wallis auction, Salisbury, 11 Aug., #399, illus. (£875).

*Study of Oriental Figures*. Pencil, 12.4 x 16.7 cm. Woolley & Wallis auction, Salisbury, 11 Aug., #398, illus. (£600).

#### FUSELI, HENRY

Drawings, paintings, manuscripts, and separate pls.

*The Incubus Leaving Two Young Women*. CNY, 14 Oct., #57, described as a "recent discovery," illus. (\$3,510,000; estimate \$3,000,000-5,000,000). See illus. 8.

*Study of One of the Quirinal Dioscuri*. Pencil, pen and brown ink, 16.5 x 13.4 cm., datable to c. 1775-78. CL, 6 July, #76, illus. (£11,875). Previously sold CL, 14 April 1992, #47, illus. (£2420), and CL, 8 June 2000, #84, illus. (£4935). The 1992 auction cat. notes that the same subject appears



8. *The Incubus Leaving Two Young Women*. Stated to be by Henry Fuseli in the CNY auction cat. (14 Oct., #57). Oil on canvas, 86.4 x 110.5 cm., not dated. The extensive cat. entry compares the iconography of this composition with Fuseli's most famous painting, *The Nightmare*. Another version of *The Incubus*, datable to the early 1790s, is a slightly larger oil painting in the Muraltengut, Zürich. An engraving of the design by Theodor Falckeyesen (or Falckeyesen, 1765–1814) is not dated but must have been produced after 1794 (Weinglass #135). Photo courtesy of Christie's.

David Bindman (e-mail, 1 Oct.), Joseph Viscomi (e-mail, 8 Oct.), and I share some doubts that this work is by Fuseli. The painting illus. here is identical in its placement of major motifs and their outlines to the Muraltengut version. Did an artist as imaginative as Fuseli repeat himself this studiously? The colors are subdued in a way uncharacteristic of an artist notorious in his own time for

his unconventional, even lurid, palette. The right arm of the woman behind her companion is evenly washed in a single color with a highlight on her forearm; the same arm in the Muraltengut painting shows shaded and vigorously articulated folds of cloth that hint at underlying musculature. In comparison to that version, this newly discovered work lacks Fuseli's spirited brushwork and seems more than a little lifeless. Might it be a careful but blandly executed copy by another hand? For the Muraltengut version, see <[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Johann\\_Heinrich\\_Füssli\\_014.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Johann_Heinrich_Füssli_014.jpg)>.

Indications of the cloth folds noted above also appear in Falckeyesen's print. Thus, the suggestion in Christie's cat. that their version might have been the one copied by the engraver is probably wrong. This leaves the work at Christie's bereft of an early provenance record.

on both recto and verso, but no verso drawing is recorded in either the 2000 or 2021 auction cats.

*Study of "Prometheus"* (recto), *Study of "Jonah"* (verso), both after Michelangelo. Pen and ink over pencil (recto), pencil (verso), leaf 19.0 x 26.7 cm., recto inscribed in ink "M. A. B." (Michael Angelo Buonarroti) and "Feb. '89" (Feb. 1789) in pencil lower right. Clars auction, Oakland, California, 17 Jan., #2293, recto and verso illus. (\$8320).

Autograph receipt signed "H. Fusely" and dated 23 Oct. 1788. Issued to "M.<sup>r</sup> Alderman Boydell" for "fifty Guineas [£52.10s.] on account of a Picture of Hamlet delivered." James Cummins, Nov. online cat., illus. (\$2000). One of Fuseli's paintings for Boydell's Shakespeare Gallery.

"Chrysgone Conceives, in a Ray of Sunshine, Amoretta and Belphoebe," soft-ground etching by Fuseli after his own design, dated by Weinglass #154 to c. 1800–10. DW, 25 March, #339, "on heavy cream wove paper," leaf 21.5 x 29.2 cm., illus. (£6448; estimate £300–500). Joseph Viscomi tells me that Fuseli appears to have strengthened the dark hatching strokes by going over them with a needle after etching the pl. (e-mail, 7 March). The subject is based on Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, book 3, canto 6. The only impression I've ever seen on the market.

A soft-ground etching is made by covering a copperplate with an etching ground (acid-resistant material) to which a substance (such as tallow) is added to prevent the ground from fully hardening. A leaf of paper is placed over the copperplate and the artist uses a sharp instrument, such as a pencil, to draw the image on the paper. When carefully removed, the paper lifts the ground from the pl. wherever the artist has inscribed the lines delineating the design, thereby exposing the metal. The pl. is then etched in the usual way for intaglio printmaking.

"Lycidas," stipple etching/engraving by Moses Haughton after Fuseli with aquatint by F. C. Lewis, 1803. Ewbank's auction, Woking, Surrey, 2 Dec., #2208, leaf approximately 39.0 x 30.0 cm., illus. (£45.50). Weinglass #178, titled "Solitude, Twilight."

### LINNELL, JOHN

Early drawings, paintings, and original graphics

*A Baby Seated*. Pencil, 12.5 x 9.5 cm., signed and dated April 1822. Sworders auction, Stansted Mountfitchet, Essex, 15 Sept., #566, illus. (£325). Previously sold SL, 6 June 2007, #172, titled *Study of a Young Child* (£960). Possibly Linnell's first son, also John, born in 1821. See also *Study of a Sleeping Baby*, below.

*Fence Posts*. Pencil on gray paper, leaf 25.4 x 20.3 cm., initialed and dated "1806–7". EB, June, illus. (\$75).

*Gleaning before the Storm*. Oil, 30.0 x 37.0 cm., initialed and dated "1834". Stroud auction, Stroud, Gloucestershire, 7 July, #97, illus. (£590).

*Landscape with a Large Tree*. Watercolor, 49.0 x 54.0 cm. Auction Antiques auction, Hele, Devon, 22 April, #25, "signed and inscribed under mount, dated 1817," illus. (£250). Difficult to tell from the illus., but there may be condition problems with this work.

*Milking Time*. Oil, 19.1 x 22.9 cm., signed. Minster auction, Leominster, Herefordshire, 7 July, #249, illus. (£371.20). Probably a very early work. The barn in this painting would appear to be the same as the one in *Study of Buildings* (Tate Collection), dated on a label "1806".

*Portrait of Dr. Thomas Monro*. Pen and brown ink, watercolor, 19.7 x 14.2 cm., signed and dated 1827. SL online auction, 2–8 July, #188, illus. (£1386).

*Portrait of John Varley*. Oil, 20.2 x 15.8 cm., signed and dated 1823. Parker Fine Art auction, Farnham, Surrey, 8 July, #68, with a "companion piece," an oil portrait of an unidentified woman, apparently the same size as the portrait of Varley, both illus. (£4250). The woman is probably Varley's first wife, née Esther Gisborne, who died in 1824. Her nose and chin are very similar to those features in a pencil drawing of Mrs. Varley by John Flaxman illus. in Adrian Bury, *John Varley of the "Old Society"* (Leigh-on-Sea: F. Lewis, 1946) pl. 76.

*Portrait of Mrs. William Wilberforce and Child*. Oil, 32.5 x 26.5 cm., signed and dated 1824. SL online auction, 7–14 July, #46, illus. (£10,710). William Wilberforce (1759–1833) was a leader of the anti-slave-trade movement in the British parliament. By 1824 Wilberforce's six children were considerably older than the child pictured here; he may be a grandchild. The youthful woman may not be the parliamentarian's wife, born in 1777, but the wife of his eldest son, also William (born 1798).

*Shepherds*. Oil, 16.5 x 22.2 cm., signed, datable to the late 1820s. LLY, June online cat., illus. (£28,000).

*Study of a Sleeping Baby*. Pencil, leaf 19.5 x 24.5 cm., signed. DW, 13 Oct., #145, dated to "circa 1820," illus. (not sold; estimate £150–200). Possibly Linnell's first son, also John, born in 1821. See also *A Baby Seated*, above.

*View towards the Woods*. Watercolor, signed lower left, 13.3 x 19.1 cm. Potomack Company auction, Alexandria, Vir-

ginia, 10 June, #54, illus. (\$1187.50). Probably an early work.

“Sheep at Noon,” etching, 1818. Jones & Jacob auction, Watlington, Oxfordshire, 13 Jan., #321, oddly described as “after [rather than by] John Linnell” and as a “reprint,” with “six other topographical prints” not further described, illus. (£50).

### **PALMER, SAMUEL**

Drawings, paintings, and letters

*Hope, or the Lifting of the Cloud.* Watercolor, 26.0 x 38.0 cm., signed, datable to 1865. Given 2020 by the estate of Stephen Keynes to the Fitzwilliam Museum, accession no. PD.30-2020.<sup>15</sup>

*Porta di Posillipo and the Bay of Baiae, Italy, Ischia and Misenum Beyond.* Watercolor, 19.0 x 41.0 cm., datable to c. 1838. BHL, 22 Sept., #10, illus. (£8287.50). Previously offered SL, 28 Nov. 2002, #269, illus. (not sold; estimate £10,000-15,000); SL, 1 July 2004, #234, illus. (not sold; estimate £8000-12,000); and CL, 5 July 2011, #180, illus. (not sold; estimate £7000-10,000).

*A Shepherd Leading His Flock under the Full Moon.* SL, 7 July, #10, “from the Collection of the late Cyril and Shirley Fry,” illus. (£1,588,000; estimate £700,000-900,000). I have not been able to identify the new owner, probably a private collector. See illus. 9.

*Sketch for a Pastoral Scene.* Watercolor, 15.5 x 22.9 cm., datable to c. 1851. Hindman auction, Chicago, 3 May, #112, illus. (\$34,375). Previously sold SL, 7 July 1983, #112, titled *A Shepherd and His Flock Resting beneath a Spreading Tree*, illus. (£1980); previously offered Martyn Gregory Gallery, Feb. 1984 cat. 35, #102, titled *Sketch for “Sheep in the Shade,”* illus. (£5500).

*The Welsh Cottage* (recto), small sketch of an old man sitting surrounded by 2 children and a woman (verso). Recto pencil and watercolor, verso pencil, leaf 44.5 x 33.0 cm., datable to c. 1835. CNY online auction, 14-28 Jan., #86, illus. (\$100,000; estimate \$3000-5000).

*A Woodland Study—Possibly Clovelly Park, Devon.* Watercolor, 19.1 x 27.5 cm., datable to the 1830s or 1840s. SL, 4 Dec. 2020, #213, illus. (£10,710).

Autograph letters signed, 4 to John Linnell, Jr. (1821–1906, son of Blake’s friend and patron John Linnell), undated but

datable to c. 1860–64, 1 to William Linnell (1826–1906, son of Blake’s friend) dated Aug. 1861. FM, 25 March, #62, mostly concerning Palmer’s lease of Furze Hill House from John Linnell, Jr., these letters “apparently unpublished,” illus. (not sold; estimate £2000-2500); same group, 15 July, #226, illus. (£4352).

Autograph letter signed to Henry Mogford, 2 pp., n.d. Lion Heart Autographs, California Virtual Book Fair, 4-6 March, illus. (\$1600); same letter, University Archives auction, Wilton, Connecticut, 29 Sept., #112, illus. (not sold; estimate \$1500-1800).

### **RICHMOND, GEORGE**

Early drawings, paintings, and original graphics

*Portrait of Theodor Matthias von Holst.* Pen and ink over pencil, inscribed with the subject’s name, signed “GR” and dated “Decr 29 1827”. SL online auction, 2-8 July, #193, illus. (£6,930; estimate £1000-1500). The artist Theodor von Holst (1810–44) was a student of Henry Fuseli’s.

*Study of a Nude Man.* Pencil, squared, 22.2 x 19.0 cm., indistinctly inscribed in ink. Parker Fine Art auction, Farnham, Surrey, 18 Feb., #35, copied after a sculpture, illus. (£375). Probably an early work extracted from a sketchbook and inscribed by Richmond at a later date. My best guess at the inscription: “Drawn by Richmond after Volteize.”

*Study of Soldiers.* Watercolor and gouache, 24.0 x 16.0 cm., signed and dated 1838. DRW, 27 May, #321, illus. (£2375). Previously sold SL, 21 March 2001, #226, illus. (£5040). Previously offered Fine Art Society, May-June 2012 “Samuel Palmer [and] His Friends and His Followers” cat., #28, illus. (£12,000), and SL, 5 Feb. 2019, #16, illus. (not sold; estimate £2000-3000).

*Study of the Prophet Daniel, after Michelangelo.* Watercolor, 63.5 x 49.2 cm., signed “GR” and datable to c. 1838. Roseberys auction, London, 20 July, #136, illus. (£1000).

### **Appendix: New Information on Blake’s Engravings**

Listed below are substantive additions or corrections to Essick, *The Separate Plates of William Blake: A Catalogue* (1983).

Pp. 55-59, “Enoch.” For a previously unrecorded impression, only the 5<sup>th</sup> known, see the listing under Separate Plates and Plates in Series and illus. 6.

15. Arts Council England, 2020 report (see note 4) 81.



9. Samuel Palmer, *A Shepherd Leading His Flock under the Full Moon*. Black watercolor over black chalk, heightened with scratching out, 14.8 x 17.8 cm., datable to c. 1829–30. Palmer executed 3 similar pastoral scenes also featuring a full moon and mammatus clouds: *A Kentish Idyll* (Victoria and Albert Museum), *Moonlight Landscape* (or *Moonlit Landscape*, Princeton University Art Museum), and *Shepherds under a Full Moon* (Ashmolean Museum). The

£1,588,000 (\$2,191,440) fetched by the present drawing is the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest price ever paid at auction for a work by Palmer, exceeded only by the \$2,415,000 paid for *A Church with a Boat and Sheep* at SNY, 31 Jan. 2018, #13. For illus. and comments on the latter, see the 2018 sales review in *Blake* 52.4 (spring 2019): illus. 7. Photo courtesy of Sotheby's.

“Seen in my visions”:  
Klüver Form-Constant Visual  
Hallucinations in William Blake’s  
Paintings and Illuminated Books

BY DAVID WORRALL

DAVID WORRALL (david.worrall@ntu.ac.uk) is Emeritus Professor of English at Nottingham Trent University. He is editor of *The Urizen Books* (1995), and (with Steve Clark) coeditor of *Historicizing Blake* (1994), *Blake in the Nineties* (1999), and *Blake, Nation and Empire* (2006). He was principal investigator (2004–06), with Keri Davies, on the AHRC project that helped uncover Blake’s Moravian heritage and (with Nancy Jiwon Cho) on a charity-funded project (2010–12) identifying Dorothy Gott, the prophetic author who—like the Blakes—attended the 1789 Swedenborg conference. He has published book chapters and journal articles on Blake, including, most recently, the section on the illuminated books in Sarah Haggarty, ed., *William Blake in Context* (2019).

1 THIS essay introduces a novel method for assigning the incidence of Klüver form-constants, one type of visual hallucination, to their occurrence in Blake’s visual art. It also outlines a specific neurophysiology for some of the events that Blake referred to as “visions.” In short, I will argue that Blake’s paintings, including the designs in the illuminated books, suggest that he experienced Klüver form-constant visual hallucinations beginning no later than 1793 and possibly as early as c. 1780. These entoptic percepts were first described and classified in 1926 by the biological psychologist Heinrich Klüver (1897–1979).<sup>1</sup> Klüver form-constants have neural correlates. They would have appeared to Blake, with his eyes open or closed, as self-luminous geometric patterns on his retina. Their distinctive geometric patterns enable the identification of their presence in Blake’s art and allow an association to be made be-

tween their occurrence and the origins of his creative processes. Form-constants were one of several visual and auditory phenomena he called “visions.” The methodology employed here, when used in conjunction with Martin Butlin’s catalogue raisonné and other scholarship on the materiality of Blake’s art, holds out the potential of charting the incidence, prevalence, and distribution of this specific type of “visionary” creative origin in Blake’s artistic output. It offers the possibility of disaggregating the neural basis of Blake’s “visions” and analyzing their individual phenomenological characteristics.

2 That Blake was a “visionary” who had “visions” is a claim that he made about himself and that his contemporaries repeated; it has also become a description routinely included in the discourses of museum curators and literary critics, and in communications to the reading and gallery-going public. The idea that his “visions” had a neurophysiological origin, with an identifiable pathology and phenomenology, has not been considered.

3 Blake experienced “visions” throughout his life, although, as I argue below, their phenomenology suggests several different modalities. Three data points help catalogue their childhood onset and persistence into late life. His earliest visual hallucination, recorded in 1863 as a third-party anecdote by Alexander Gilchrist, occurred on Peckham Rye, London, when he was about eight or ten years old (“Sauntering along, the boy looks up, and sees a tree filled with angels, bright angelic wings bespangling every bough like stars”).<sup>2</sup> This “vision” of bright, shimmering or glittering points of light is likely to have been migraine aura. About 7–11% of children and adolescents experience migraine, with about 25% of those having migraine with aura.<sup>3</sup> In 1809, when he was about fifty-two, Blake wrote in *A Descriptive Catalogue* that some of the pictures were painted from the “wonderful originals *seen* in my visions” (E 531; my italics). Less than two years before Blake’s death, Henry Crabb Robinson, visiting him at Fountain Court, Strand, recorded how “he reverted soon to his favorite expression ... my visions—.”<sup>4</sup>

2. G. E. Bentley, Jr., *Blake Records*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004) [hereafter *BR(2)*] 10, quoting Gilchrist. Samuel Palmer’s account is simpler: “When very young Blake used to go out for walks in the country & would frequently come home & describe the angels he had seen in the trees” (*BR(2)* 10).

3. A. A. Gelfand, H. J. Fullerton, and P. J. Goadsby, “Child Neurology: Migraine with Aura in Children,” *Neurology* 75.5 (2010): e16–19; I. Petrusic, V. Pavlovski, D. Vucinic, and J. Jancic, “Features of Migraine Aura in Teenagers,” *Journal of Headache and Pain* 15 (2014): 87.

4. 17 Dec. 1825; see *BR(2)* 427.

1. Heinrich Klüver, “Mescal Visions and Eidetic Vision,” *American Journal of Psychology* 37 (1926): 502–15; William A. Hunt, “Heinrich Klüver: 1897–1979,” *American Journal of Psychology* 93 (1980): 159–61.

- 4 Ignored by art historians and literary critics alike, the possibility of a neural origin for Blake's "visions" was the subject of a short but significant exchange of correspondence initiated by Bristol surgeon George Munro Smith (1856–1917) in 1909 in the *British Medical Journal (BMJ)*.<sup>5</sup> Munro Smith made an explicit connection between Blake's "visions" and migraine aura at a time when the disorder's neural basis was only just beginning to be understood. Migraine is one of several inducers of Klüver-type visual hallucinations. His insight was missed by subsequent generations of scholars. Blake's imputed insanity had already become academically institutionalized, as evidenced in the 1895 verdict of Richard Garnett, the British Museum's keeper of printed books, that Blake was "mentally warped."<sup>6</sup>

### Research Parameters and Methodology

- 5 There are several caveats and critical parameters that need to be stated in order to avoid misunderstanding about what is (and is not) being claimed.

(i) This essay covers only one type of Blake's visual hallucinations. It is likely that he experienced several other hallucinatory types, some of which occurred in both visual and auditory modalities.

(ii) The essay is confined to studying Klüver form-constant visual hallucinations. These are self-luminous geometric percepts that would have appeared to Blake within his visual field (both exoptical and entoptical)—that is, with eyes open or eyes closed, whatever the level of ambient light, including complete darkness. They were percepts propagated along Blake's neural pathways, originating in the primary visual cortex (V1) and signaled to his retina.

(iii) It is not claimed that "visions" were the only experiences or influences affecting Blake's creativity, his concept of self-identity, or his aesthetic preferences. There is abundant scholarship on environmental factors influencing his creativity, some of which, where relevant, is repeated here. Environment, for the purposes of this essay, means all aspects of nurture and the determination of self- and social identity (for example,

nativity, social and political culture, race, class, aesthetics, and religion).

(iv) The perception of Klüver form-constant hallucinations, as the outcome of neural networks, occurs in *Homo sapiens* as a species, without regard to historical time or environment (although different cultural attitudes, historical and contemporary, affect its reporting). I am not aware that Klüver-type visual hallucinations are physiologically different across genders.

(v) This essay has little to say about connections between Blake's neural pathways and his mind or consciousness (for example, the state of his psychological health). Nevertheless, V1 is an area of cortex. The clinical neuroscientist Dominic H. ffytche makes a helpful suggestion for more easily conceptualizing V1's cognitive status: "If we use the folk terminology of a *mind's eye* (the inner space in which we consciously experience visual imagery), activity in specialized visual cortex could be conceived as the *eye's mind*. In the *eye's mind*, visual experience becomes related to mind."<sup>7</sup> As ffytche states elsewhere, there is evidence of "co-localization of perceptual and non-perceptual activity within individual cortical areas."<sup>8</sup>

(vi) The essay's working assumption is that Blake incorporated Klüver form-constants into his visual art by copying and creatively developing the percepts he saw in his visual field—see (ii). Klüver geometric patterns originating in V1 created a hallucinatory image directly onto his retina through retinocortical mapping.<sup>9</sup> V1, as described in (v), is a cognitive area of cortex, "the *eye's mind*," as ffytche puts it.

### The Physiology and Phenomenology of Blake's "Visions"

- 6 Blake's "visions" persisted throughout his life. Today they would be called hallucinations, a term not available clinically until Jean Étienne Dominique Esquirol's *Des maladies mentales, considérées sous les rapports médical, hygiénique et médico-légal* (Paris, 1838). Because Blake lacked such a conceptual vocabulary, his ability to self-diagnose (or be diagnosed) and articulate his experiences was limited. That

5. George Munro Smith, "Literary Notes," *BMJ* 2541 (11 Sept. 1909): 710, and "William Blake's Drawings," *BMJ* 2544 (2 Oct. 1909): 1012. They are not included in Bentley's *Blake Books* (1977) or *Blake Books Supplement* (1995), but appear in "William Blake and His Circle: A Checklist of Publications and Discoveries in 2012," *Blake* 47.1 (summer 2013).

6. Colin Trodd, *Visions of Blake: William Blake in the Art World, 1830–1930* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2012) 375–78, quoting Richard Garnett, *William Blake: Painter and Poet* (1895) 75.

7. Dominic H. ffytche, "The Hallucinating Brain: Neurobiological Insights into the Nature of Hallucinations," *Hallucination: Philosophy and Psychology*, ed. Fiona Macpherson and Dimitris Platchias (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2013) 45–63 (on 53).

8. Dominic H. ffytche, "Neural Codes for Conscious Vision," *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 6 (2002): 493–95.

9. S. W. Wilson, "On the Retino-Cortical Mapping," *International Journal of Man-Machine Studies* 18.4 (1983): 361–89.

he copied his entoptic percepts, as remarked in (vi) above, should not be controversial. On account of the absence of external stimuli, hand-drawn illustrations have always played an important part in understanding the phenomenology of visual hallucinations.<sup>10</sup>

7 Although this essay is limited to the presence of Klüver form-constants, it is important to note that this type of visual hallucination is only one modality among several that Blake encountered. Most are common, or reasonably common, hallucinatory phenomena, the majority with a neural foundation. That Blake in mid- to late life experienced hypnagogic- and hypnopompic-induced auditory and visual hallucinations is most clearly evidenced in *Jerusalem* (written no earlier than 1804): “This theme calls me in sleep night after night, & ev’ry morn / Awakes me at sun-rise, then I see the Saviour over me / Spreading his beams of love, & dictating the words of this mild song” (4.3-5, E 146). In this example, expressed through the figure of Albion, hypnagogic triggers of hallucination occur in the phrase “This theme calls me in sleep night after night” and hypnopompic in “& ev’ry morn / Awakes me.”

8 Even this short passage contains complexities. Auditory verbal hallucinations in command mode (“This theme *calls me*,” “*dictating* the words”; my italics) sometimes indicate psychosis, but in Blake’s case, in the absence of any social dysfunction, they are more likely to have been misattributed inner speech. This is congruent with the normal subvocalized inner speech that most of us practice as a cognitive aid for encountering our environment.<sup>11</sup> Blake hears “words,” which are specifically in grapheme mode (not hallucinations experienced as other types of sound or as colors). His seeing “the Saviour over me / Spreading his beams of love” may also imply a felt-presence experience, a phenomenologically distinct third modality of hallucination, in addition to visual and auditory. Felt-presence hallucinations have been recorded in cases of migraine aura.<sup>12</sup> Blake’s experience of several hallucinatory types, possibly concurrently—as *Jerusalem* suggests—is consistent with a hodological model. ffytche has argued that hallucinations originate not from changed activities within specific brain areas (a brain “topology” argument) but from altered con-

nections between brain areas (a brain “hodology” argument).<sup>13</sup>

9 In order to understand the physiological background and the phenomenology of Blake’s visual hallucinations, it is important to set out, as far as possible, the status of his general health, particularly where this might have a bearing on his susceptibility to hallucinations, illusions, or delusions. Apart from the possibility of childhood migraine (a condition that may have persisted into adulthood), indicated by the description of the Peckham Rye “vision,” he was in good neurological health. The clarity of his perception of Klüver patterns, which form the basic building blocks of vision, suggests that he had a neurologically healthy V1. He appears to have avoided the motor and neurological damage caused by lead poisoning from pigments, despite the high probability of its presence in similarly prolific artists, such as Michelangelo and Blake’s contemporary Goya.<sup>14</sup> Dangers to watercolorists from lead and copper poisoning were understood in Britain by 1784.<sup>15</sup> Blake may have taken steps to avoid the worst dangers. A modern retropathology of his physical morbidity did not note any cognitive impairment.<sup>16</sup> The astonishing manual dexterity and visual acuity of *Illustrations of the Book of Job* (1826), produced by engraving (a method requiring much greater motor control than etching), evidence no decline in late life.

10 Beyond the possibility of intermittent migraine with aura, the occurrence of hallucinations in visual modalities does not imply any unusual disorder, impairment, or deterioration in Blake’s normal visual field. He may have introduced measures to correct his sight for aging. Seymour Stocker Kirkup recalled Blake’s copying (the copy of) the Laocoön statue at the Royal Academy, wearing “his spectacles up

10. G. D. Schott, “Exploring the Visual Hallucinations of Migraine Aura: The Tacit Contribution of Illustration,” *Brain* 130 (2007): 1690-1703.

11. Sam Wilkinson, “Accounting for the Phenomenology and Varieties of Auditory Verbal Hallucination within a Predictive Processing Framework,” *Consciousness and Cognition* 30 (2014): 142-55. Another possibility is that this was one of the variants of synaesthesia, a topic beyond the scope of this essay.

12. Klaus Podoll and Derek Robinson, *Migraine Art: The Experience from Within* (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 2008) 123.

13. Dominic H. ffytche, “The Hodology of Hallucinations,” *Cortex* 44 (2008): 1067-83; Rowena Carter and Dominic H. ffytche, “On Visual Hallucinations and Cortical Networks: A Trans-diagnostic Review,” *Journal of Neurology* 262 (2015): 1780-90.

14. Julio Montes-Santiago, “The Lead-Poisoned Genius: Saturnism in Famous Artists across Five Centuries,” *The Fine Arts, Neurology, and Neuroscience: Neuro-Historical Dimensions*, Progress in Brain Research vol. 203, ed. Stanley Finger, Dahlia W. Zaidel, François Boller, and Julien Bogousslavsky (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2013) 223-40. Bartłomiej Piechowski-Jozwiak and Bogousslavsky consider migraine in the same volume, but their chapter, “Neurological Diseases in Famous Painters,” makes no reference to Blake.

15. John Fothergill, “Observations on Disorders to Which Painters in Water-Colours Are Exposed,” *The Works of John Fothergill, M.D. ... with Some Account of His Life by John Coakley Lettsom*, 3 vols. (1784) 3: 377-81; Margaret DeLacy, “Fothergill, John (1712-1780),” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004; online ed., Oct. 2007) <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/9979>>, accessed 3 March 2015.

16. Lane Robson and Joseph Viscomi, “Blake’s Death,” *Blake* 30.2 (fall 1996): 36-49.

side down & he says they were made on purpose to be worn so. ... Reversing the spectacles assisted him, as it raised them, the convexity resting upon his nose—he said it was better so than a double concave as they sometimes are.”<sup>17</sup> His eccentric appearance notwithstanding, Blake was quite reasonably modifying his sight with adjustments he could easily implement. A pair of contemporary iron-framed spectacles (Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge), traditionally associated with Blake at the time of his death, was dispensed within a normal prescription range for correcting short sight.<sup>18</sup> Robin Hamlyn, referencing the spectacles and the close work required for engraving, suggests that Blake “was ‘moderately’ myopic ... his near vision was much sharper than his distance vision, so close work would have come more naturally to him.” Incidentally, Hamlyn provides a useful examination of the direction of natural light in the houses that Blake worked in (also comparing it to light preferences among his more successful contemporaries). He notes that “during his working life Blake’s studio or workroom light came from all points of the compass.”<sup>19</sup>

- 11 These factors reduce the possibility that his “visions” were visual illusions or delusions arising from the misinterpretation of shadows or unusual light sources. A visual delusion hypothesis was rejected no later than 1964 by Nobel Prize co-winner Sir John Eccles: “The optical reality of the visions involved no act of credence on Blake’s part, because the eidetic image is actually seen. Nor did he confuse his visions with the appearance of material objects.”<sup>20</sup> Blake would fail many modern tests for visual delusion, mainly on the grounds that he functioned normally on a day-to-day basis (no face recognition problems, for example).<sup>21</sup> His auditory hallucinations, including the “Visionary Heads” (c. 1819–25), which were triggered by responses to speech, have pathologies beyond the scope of the present essay.

17. *BR*(2) 290.

18. G. E. Bentley, Jr., with the assistance of Keiko Aoyama, “William Blake and His Circle: A Checklist of Publications and Discoveries in 1995,” *Blake* 29.4 (spring 1996): 140–41.

19. Robin Hamlyn, “William Blake at Work: ‘Every thing which is in Harmony,’” *William Blake: The Painter at Work*, ed. Joyce H. Townsend and Robin Hamlyn (London: Tate Publishing, 2003) 12–39 (on 24–25).

20. Joseph Burke, “The Eidetic and the Borrowed Image: An Interpretation of Blake’s Theory and Practice of Art,” *In Honour of Daryl Lindsay: Essays and Studies*, ed. Franz Philipp and June Stewart (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1964) 110–27 (on 116).

21. P. R. Corlett, “Delusions,” *Encyclopedia of Human Behavior*, 2nd ed., ed. V. S. Ramachandran (San Diego: Academic Press, 2012) 667–73. For a wider discussion, see Richard Dub, “Delusions, Acceptances, and Cognitive Feelings,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 94 (2017): 27–60. P. R. Corlett, J. R. Taylor, X. J. Wang, P. C. Fletcher, and J. H. Krystal cite some of the more common pathologies of delusion in “Toward a Neurobiology of Delusions,” *Progress in Neurobiology* 92 (2010): 345–69.

- 12 Of the testimonies of contemporaries as to the subjective or phenomenological nature of Blake’s “visions,” perhaps the most interesting is an anecdote by the painter Samuel Palmer, who met Blake for the first time in the early 1820s, no later than May 1824. On 11 May 1859, J. C. Strange noted, “I had a lengthy discussion with M<sup>r</sup>. P. on the nature of Blakes visions—M<sup>r</sup>. P. on the whole thought they were seen as real objects by his outward eyes and as such painted.”<sup>22</sup> Palmer gave the impression that Blake’s “visions” were usually tangible “objects”; this is consonant with the nature of Klüver form-constants, which are projections from V1 onto the retina and would have been “seen as real objects by his outward eyes.” Palmer’s report is significant because of his close friendship with Blake,<sup>23</sup> his testimony accords with the understanding of Crabb Robinson, who wrote to Dorothy Wordsworth in 1826 that Blake’s “paintings are copies of what he sees in his Visions.”<sup>24</sup>

- 13 Yet it is important to realize that Blake’s Klüver form-constant “visions” were not passive retinal events. He says that “Vision is seen by the [*Imaginative Eye*] of Every one” (E 554; italics and square brackets in E, indicating a deletion), which is consistent with ffytche’s comments about the “*eye’s mind*” (noted in [v] above). “Vision,” based on visual hallucinations propagating from V1, is a cognitive event—or, as Blake tentatively describes it, it is “Imaginative,” using a term with a high cultural valency in European Romanticism. As he may have suspected, without being aware of the physiological basis, it is “seen by ... Every one” because all members of the species *Homo sapiens* have the same neurological wiring.

### Klüver Form-Constants

- 14 As noted, Klüver form-constants are the percepts of a specific type of visual hallucination originating in V1. They are geometric-patterned phosphenes perceived as self-luminous entoptic hallucinations in the visual field.<sup>25</sup> Klüver defines four form-constant patterns: tunnel, spiral, net or lattice, and cobweb or concentric circles (see illus. 1):

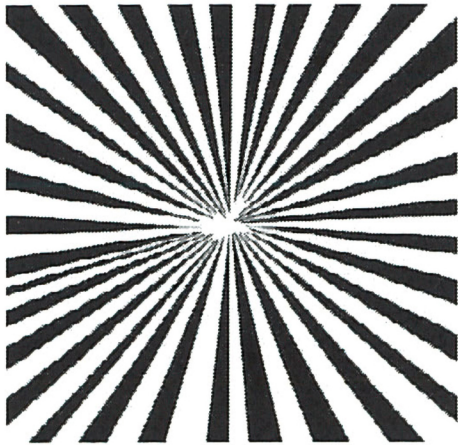
The author’s analysis of the hallucinatory phenomena appearing chiefly during the first stages of mescaline intoxication yielded the following form-constants: (a) grating, lattice, fretwork, filigree, honeycomb, or chessboard; (b) cobweb; (c) tunnel, funnel, alley, cone, or vessel; (d) spiral. Many [hallucinatory] phenomena are, on close exami-

22. *BR*(2) 729.

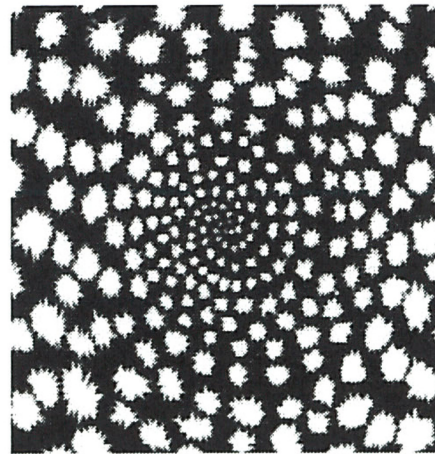
23. G. E. Bentley, Jr., *The Stranger from Paradise: A Biography of William Blake* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001) 404–09.

24. *BR*(2) 437.

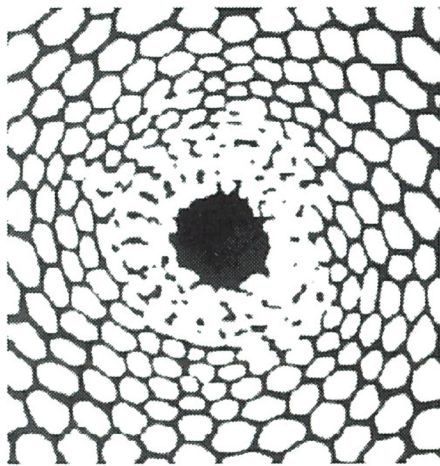
25. Phosphenes (from the Greek *phos*, light, and *phainein*, to show) are entoptic flashes of light propagated from V1.



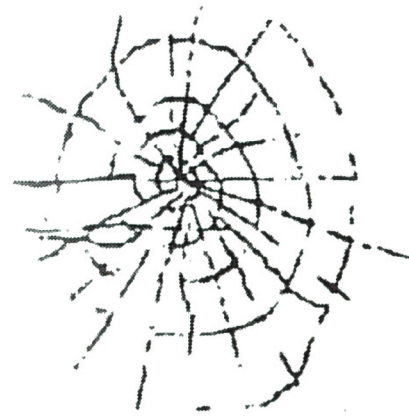
(I)



(II)



(III)



(IV)

1. Hallucinatory form-constants: (I) tunnel/funnel; (II) spiral; (III) lattice/honeycomb; (IV) cobweb.

Figure 1 in Paul C. Bressloff, Jack D. Cowan, Martin Golubitsky, Peter J. Thomas, and Matthew C. Wiener, "What Geometric Visual Hallucinations Tell Us about the Visual Cortex," *Neural Computation* 14.3 (March 2002): 473-91. © 2002, Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Bressloff et al. redrew (I), (II), and (III) from representations of drug-induced hallucinations by David

Sheridan in Ronald K. Siegel and Murray E. Jarvik, "Drug-Induced Hallucinations in Animals and Man," *Hallucinations: Behavior, Experience, and Theory*, ed. R. K. Siegel and L. J. West (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1975) 81-161. They redrew (IV) from Alex Patterson, *A Field Guide to Rock Art Symbols of the Greater Southwest* (Boulder: Johnson Books, 1992).

nation, nothing but modifications and transformations of these basic forms.<sup>26</sup>

These shapes occur repeatedly in Blake's paintings and in the designs to the illuminated books.

- 15 There are no other patterns associated with Klüver form-constants, although all four may appear, wholly or in part, in amalgamation, overlaying each other. Klüver's categories have been validated by two key sets of mathematical proof, by Ermentrout and Cowan (1979) and Bressloff, Cowan, et al. (2001).<sup>27</sup> These two studies, foundational to this essay, establish that the four form-constants have neural correlates in V1—that is, the neural architecture of V1 is configured so as to produce those four patterns as the basic elements of vision. The enduring importance of Klüver form-constants lies in their stability (on account of their occurring in only these patterns), which affords the opportunity to study the neural architecture of V1.
- 16 Klüver form-constant hallucinations are propagated by neural activity in V1 projecting onto the retina through retinocortical mapping (see [vi]). In normal exoptical vision, stimuli in the external visual field (a tree, a horse, etc.) are signaled from the retina to V1; in the case of Klüver form-constants, the signaling of stimuli or neural activity moves in the opposite direction, propagating from V1 but perceived on the retina. As Bressloff and Cowan state, "Any spontaneously generated or stimulus-evoked cortical activity pattern in V1 maps to a corresponding real or hallucinatory image on the retina."<sup>28</sup> Or, as Cowan puts it, this model of exoptical and entoptical perception "treats V1 as a cortical retina."<sup>29</sup> The four Klüver patterns enable V1 to process the basic contours of images that *Homo sapiens* has most urgently needed to prioritize (V2, V3, etc.—later visual cortex—process less frequently encountered shapes). In this sense, V1 has had a primary evolutionary role in the development of *Homo sapiens*. Discovering the neural correlates

26. Heinrich Klüver, "Mechanisms of Hallucinations," *Studies in Personality*, ed. Q. McNemar and M. A. Merrill (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1942) 175-207.

27. G. B. Ermentrout and J. D. Cowan, "A Mathematical Theory of Visual Hallucination Patterns," *Biological Cybernetics* 34 (1979): 137-50; Paul C. Bressloff, J. D. Cowan, M. Golubitsky, P. J. Thomas, and M. Wiener, "Geometric Visual Hallucinations, Euclidean Symmetry and the Functional Architecture of Striate Cortex," *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London B: Biological Sciences* 356 (2001): 299-330.

28. Paul C. Bressloff and Jack D. Cowan, "The Functional Geometry of Local and Horizontal Connections in a Model of V1," *Journal of Physiology—Paris* 97 (2003): 221-36.

29. Jack D. Cowan, "Geometric Visual Hallucinations and the Structure of the Visual Cortex," *The Neuroscience of Visual Hallucinations*, ed. Daniel Collerton, Urs Peter Mosimann, and Elaine Perry (London: John Wiley & Sons Ltd., 2014) 217-53 (on 228).

of visual hallucination has also had a profound impact on understanding the relationship between vision and cortical function. Crucially, V1's role as cortex means that it is not just a passive signaler of percepts. This may have been something that Blake was trying to grasp when he referred to the "Imaginative Eye."

### Agents Inducing Klüver Form-Constants

- 17 The physiological mechanisms producing Klüver geometric-pattern formations arise from inhibition and activation series in neurons on V1, with activated neurons suppressing inhibited neurons and reinforcing their own activations.<sup>30</sup> There are multiple agents known to bring about these hallucinations.
- 18 Klüver gave mescaline (which, of course, would not have been available to Blake) to his volunteer subjects (and took it himself) in order to induce visual hallucinations for controlled experiments. Tobacco with high concentrations of nicotine is also known to give rise to Klüver-pattern hallucinations (it is not known whether Blake smoked).<sup>31</sup> There are also several naturally occurring agents of induction, the most basic of which is probably digital pressure on the eyeballs (although, in this case, there are vascular as well as neural elements).<sup>32</sup> One of the earliest records of the incidence of Klüver form-constants, suggesting light deprivation as the agent, comes from the philosopher Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679), who wrote that "a man shall in the dark, (though awake) have the Images of Lines, and Angles before his eyes."<sup>33</sup> Light deprivation during sleep may be implicit in the hypnagogic and hypnopompic hallucinations referred to in plate 4 of *Jerusalem*.
- 19 As mentioned earlier, Klüver form-constants are also a comorbidity of migraine aura. Propagated from V1, they are perceived by the retina as networks and patterns of phosphenes, self-luminous entoptical percepts caused by the migraine's cortical spreading depression (CSD), which crosses the visual field at a rate coincident with the period of the migraine attack. The shimmering arc of the CSD's phosphenes (often referred to as fortification spectra) replicates the shape of the depression's transit. In the words of Vincent A. Billock and Brian H. Tsou, "Simple hallucina-

30. H. Henke, P. A. Robinson, P. M. Drysdale, et al., "Spatiotemporal Dynamics of Pattern Formation in the Primary Visual Cortex and Hallucinations," *Biological Cybernetics* 101 (2009): 3-18.

31. Ronald K. Siegel, "Hallucinations," *Scientific American* 237 (1977): 132-41.

32. Christopher W. Tyler, "Some New Entoptical Phenomena," *Vision Research* 18 (1978): 1633-39.

33. Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan, or The Matter, Forme and Power of a Commonwealth Ecclesiasticall and Civill* (1651) 6.

tions (phosphenes and fortification auras) are linked to the Klüver forms and to pattern-forming cortical mechanisms.”<sup>34</sup> The combination of migraine aura with “chequered” or lattice Klüver form-constants was observed in forty-six of 397 paintings made by anonymous artists who drew their migraine percepts in surveys conducted in the 1980s.<sup>35</sup>

- 20 Light flickering at a frequency above 3Hz (just enough to feel uncomfortable) induces a variety of phosphenes, including Klüver-type percepts. When twenty modern German graphic-design students were subjected to flickering light, they identified a large range of entoptic percepts, including ripples, tunnels, suns, rasters, honeycombs, cracks, drains, bows, clouds, spots, stars, crosses, spirals, and wheels, some of which seem to include Klüver elements.<sup>36</sup>
- 21 Although it is unlikely that Blake would have encountered the research, flickering-light hallucinations, together with hallucinations caused by the close work required by printmaking, were the subject of important investigations in the late 1810s. This is the groundbreaking work of the Bohemian anatomist and physiologist Jan Evangelista Purkinje (Purkině) (1787–1869).<sup>37</sup> In his doctoral dissertation at the University of Prague in 1819, republished in 1823, Purkinje recorded the first scientific observations of flicker-light and electrically induced visual hallucinations.<sup>38</sup> His experiments produced patterned hallucinatory phenomena (although apparently not Klüver-type percepts) cognate with phosphenes or photopsias.<sup>39</sup> Sometimes they were induced by digital pressure on the eyes; at other times waving his spread-out fingers in front of his eyes while looking at the sun resulted in flickering light.
- 22 Other experiments involved looking closely and fixedly at the parallel printed lines produced by copperplate etchings

34. Vincent A. Billock and Brian H. Tsou, “Elementary Visual Hallucinations and Their Relationships to Neural Pattern-Forming Mechanisms,” *Psychological Bulletin* 138 (2012): 744–74.

35. Podoll and Robinson 176, 201–12, table 7.5.

36. Carsten Allefeld, Peter Pütz, Kristina Kastner, and Jiří Wacker-mann, “Flicker-Light Induced Visual Phenomena: Frequency Dependence and Specificity of Whole Percepts and Percept Features,” *Consciousness and Cognition* 20 (2011): 1344–62, figure 9.

37. P. Schweitzer, “Profiles in Cardiology: Jan Evangelista Purkinje (Purkině),” *Clinical Cardiology* 14 (1991): 85–86; Andrzej Grzybowski and Krzysztof Pietrzak, “Jan Evangelista Purkynje (1787–1869),” *Journal of Neurology* 261 (2014): 2048–50.

38. Jan Purkinje, *Beobachtungen und Versuche zur Physiologie der Sinne (Observations and Experiments Investigating the Physiology of Senses)* (Prague, 1823). An English translation is included in Nicholas J. Wade and Josef Brožek, *Purkinje’s Vision: The Dawning of Neuroscience* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2001). Subsequent references to Purkinje use Wade and Brožek’s edition.

39. fytche, “The Hodology of Hallucinations.”

and engravings (“Parallellinienfeld in einem Kupferstiche”). This is how Purkinje describes one experiment:

XV. For some time I have noted an unclear glimmering when I looked steadily at a field of parallel lines precisely engraved on a copper plate [print]. When I move the page forward or backward or around a central point, the vision reveals blurry streaks and the individual lines become undistinguishable. When the lines are horizontal, the streaks are also horizontal but somewhat irregular. The vertical lines remain vertical, whereas in a field of concentric lines the shadowy segments move in a circle. For a long time I was unable to interpret the phenomenon.<sup>40</sup>

Purkinje’s “unclear glimmering,” “blurry streaks,” and “shadowy segments mov[ing] in a circle” were flicker-light-induced afterimages caused by “mov[ing] the page forward or backward or around a central point.” It is possible that Blake, while etching or engraving, slowly rotated the “engraver’s boss,” the sand-filled leather pillow that helped embed the copperplates as he worked on them, altering their orientation to his line of sight (although it seems unlikely that he did this with any rapidity).<sup>41</sup> Although the single illustrative etching that accompanies Purkinje’s book (based on his sketches of the percepts) does not show Klüver shapes, Billock and Tsou remind us of “the blurry distinction between phosphenes and Klüver forms”—that is, phosphenes scaled up into clusters appear to adopt the same symmetries of shape as form-constants.<sup>42</sup>

- 23 Purkinje deliberately set out to induce hallucinations, but we cannot rule out the possibility that, on occasion, Blake hallucinated some types of percept during his professional practice as an engraver. In such a case, apart from the Peckham Rye episode of his childhood, this might date his hallucinatory experiences back to 1772 and the beginning of his apprenticeship to James Basire.

#### Example 1: *Jacob’s Ladder*, c. 1805

- 24 Those with even a cursory knowledge of the range of Blake’s images will probably know his pen and watercolor drawing *Jacob’s Dream* (c. 1805, British Museum) (illus. 2),

40. Wade and Brožek 87.

41. David Drakard and Paul Holdway, *Spode: Transfer Printed Ware 1784–1833*, rev. ed. (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Antique Collectors’ Club, 2002) 45.

42. Vincent A. Billock and Brian H. Tsou, “Neural Interactions between Flicker-Induced Self-Organized Visual Hallucinations and Physical Stimuli,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 104 (2007): 8490–95; “Elementary Visual Hallucinations and Their Relationships to Neural Pattern-Forming Mechanisms,” *Psychological Bulletin* 138 (2012): 744–74.

exhibited first at the Royal Academy in 1808.<sup>43</sup> A year after the Royal Academy exhibition (where it remained unsold), Blake retitled it *Jacob's Ladder*, a "Drawing," and showed it at his private exhibition off Oxford Street in 1809. At some point, probably during his lifetime, it was acquired by his long-term patron Thomas Butts. Its status as one of Blake's rare Royal Academy pictures, its place in the 1809 exhibition, and the reliability of its provenance make it a significant composition.

- 25 The picture has attracted limited critical attention, although a recent essay by Jonathan Roberts (see below) is an exception. It is not discussed in David Bindman's *Blake as an Artist* (1977) or Christopher Heppner's *Reading Blake's Designs* (1995), still the two most substantial monographs on Blake's visual art. Perhaps the most pertinent comment is that of Anthony Blunt, who describes it as "a complete novelty in the iconography of this subject."<sup>44</sup>
- 26 As the subject is Blake's visualization of a biblical figure's dream, it would be difficult to argue that it is anything other than a representation of an experience known to lack external stimuli. *Jacob's Ladder* is dominated by an image of a symmetrical spiral staircase, apparently made of stone, on which are seen "the angels of God ascending and descending." The stairs rise in at least two vertical revolutions. Near the top, they disappear into a circle radiating spoke-like bars of light, representing the entrance into heaven. The two compositional structures in the picture are a spiral and a funnel or tunnel, conforming to two of the four form-constants described by Klüver.
- 27 There are good neurophysiological reasons why a spiral form was adopted by Blake for this work. The perception of the orientation of optical objects, principally through their edges or contours, is a crucial function of cortex. Spirals, lattices, and cobwebs have distinct edges and contours, facilitating fluent visual perception. The process of decoding these signals by the cortex is only beginning to be understood, offering the theoretical prospect of being able to "read out the detailed contents of a person's mental state."<sup>45</sup> The discrimination of spiral and radial forms, two of Klüver's form-constants, is foundational to visual percep-

tion on account of their structural role in V1. Recent research has detected a radial orientation bias in early visual cortex, including V1—that is, radial edges (such as those represented by the spokes of light in *Jacob's Ladder*) are processed by the cortex more fluently than other shapes. One paper claims that there is "evidence for an enhanced sensitivity to radial orientations in human perception," arguing that the evidence is so "robust" that "a radial bias may be neurally fundamental."<sup>46</sup> Such a neurophysiology appears to be consistent with fytche's observation that there is "co-localization of perceptual and non-perceptual activity within individual cortical areas" (see [v] above). I believe that the choice of dominant Klüver-pattern spiral and radial structures in *Jacob's Ladder* provides a good demonstration of V1's cognitive role and implies that Blake had insight into his visual hallucinations.

- 28 Spiral forms are important in Blake's art and poetry.<sup>47</sup> As part of an explanation of "the hermeneutic of his [Blake's] Christological 'fourfold vision,'" Jonathan Roberts offers an elegant discussion of *Jacob's Ladder* by setting it in the context of poems that Blake sent to friends upon his arrival in Felpham in September 1800. He makes an important connection between imagery in "To my dear Friend M<sup>rs</sup> Anna Flaxman" and the spiral structure of *Jacob's Ladder*.<sup>48</sup> Blake refers to "Sweet Felpham," where "The Ladder of Angels descends thro the air / On the Turret its *spiral* does softly descend / Thro' the village then winds at My Cot i[t] does end" (E 709; my italics). The emphasis on the descent of a kind of spiral divine creativity in this poetic image provides an important correlate for the role of the Klüver form-constant patterns at what was a significant moment in Blake's artistic life.
- 29 For the first time, *Jacob's Ladder* and one of Blake's poetic images can reliably be associated with the cognitive outcome of a specific type of visual hallucination (Klüver spiral form-constants), or what Blake later called, in an attempt to describe the experience of V1's cognitive capacity, a "Vision ... seen by the [*Imaginative Eye*]."

43. Blake inscribed "Genesis XXVIII c.12v", which reads: "And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it"; Martin Butlin, *The Paintings and Drawings of William Blake*, 2 vols. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981) [hereafter Butlin] #438.

44. Anthony Blunt, *The Art of William Blake* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959) 37.

45. Y. Kamitani and F. Tong, "Decoding the Visual Subject and Subjective Contents of the Human Brain," *Nature Neuroscience* 8 (2005): 679-85.

46. Yuka Sasaki, Reza Rajimehr, Byoung Woo Kim, Leeland B. Ekstrom, Wim Vanduffel, and Roger B. H. Tootell, "The Radial Bias: A Different Slant on Visual Orientation Sensitivity in Human and Non-human Primate," *Neuron* 51 (2006): 661-70.

47. For spirals derived from religious and scientific texts that Blake might have known, see Marsha Newman, "'Milton's Track' Revisited: Visual Analogues to Blake's Vortex in the 'Law Edition' of Boehme," *Interdisciplinary Literary Studies* 5.2 (2004): 73-93.

48. Jonathan Roberts, "William Blake's Visionary Landscape near Felpham," *Blake* 47.2 (fall 2013): 39 pars.



2. William Blake, *Jacob's Ladder* (c. 1805). 39.8 x 30.6 cm. British Museum. 1949,1112.2. Photo: © The Trustees of the British Museum. All rights reserved.



3. William Blake, *Milton's Mysterious Dream* (c. 1816–20). 16.3 x 12.4 cm. Morgan Library & Museum. 1949.4:11. Purchased with the assistance of the Fellows with the special support of Mrs. Landon K. Thorne and Mr. Paul Mellon. Image courtesy of the *William Blake Archive*.

**Example 2: Milton's *Mysterious Dream*, c. 1816–20**

- 30 No later than 1816–20 and his watercolor *Milton's Mysterious Dream* (Morgan Library, Butlin #543.11) (illus. 3), Blake had identified, named, and discriminated three out of the four form-constant hallucinatory types. In a brief commentary written to accompany the picture, he refers to "Scrolls & Nets & Webs" (E 685); these are the spiral, lattice, and cobweb percepts defined by Klüver a hundred years later. There is no conceivably relevant textual origin for scrolls, nets, or webs in Milton's poetic corpus.<sup>49</sup> Scrolls always end in a spiral, even if it is truncated. It is easy to see that, within the visual grammar that Blake used throughout his work, scrolls and spirals fitted in with convenient iconographies he could frequently redeploy. Of course, the spiral's appearance in *Milton's Mysterious Dream* is consistent with Blake's lifetime assertion of his experience of "visions" and how they formed the basis of his "visionary" art. The naming of three Klüver form-constants is a significant contribution toward understanding the cultural history of visual hallucinations, confirming that Blake had cognitive insight into those events and was able to provide an accurate nomenclature and taxonomy.
- 31 *Milton's Mysterious Dream* is the eleventh in a set of twelve particularly magnificent watercolors that Blake produced to illustrate Milton's poems *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* (1645). According to his commentary, the Milton passage he chose to illustrate is "Entice the dewy featherd Sleep / And let some strange mysterious Dream / Wave on his Wings in airy stream." As with *Jacob's Ladder*, his selection of a "strange mysterious Dream" may suggest that his Klüver-type percepts were the outcome of hypnagogic or hypnopompic hallucinations, similar to those he refers to in *Jerusalem*.
- 32 The *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* watercolors demonstrate Blake's art at the height of his creativity. They are of special interest because they relate to Milton, the poet whose dominant poetic presence had already been the subject of the illuminated book *Milton* (1804–11). Some of the drawings bear the watermark "M & J LAY 1816", indicating the earliest possible date for their execution (assuming, as looks stylistically likely, that Blake painted them as a group). Their provenance is fully traceable: they were acquired and probably commissioned by Thomas Butts, sold in 1853 as one lot by his son Thomas, and then passed through several hands before arriving at the Morgan in 1949. It is conceiv-

49. The only matches are: "The Lord shall write it in a Scrowle," Psalm 87; "Rove without rein, till in the amorous Net," *Paradise Lost* 11.586; "Part good, part bad, of bad the longer scrowle," *Paradise Lost* 12.336; "Hearts after them tangl'd in Amorous Nets," *Paradise Regained* 2.162. For webs or its synonyms, there are no matches.

able that Butts requested the unusual set of descriptive commentaries (also held at the Morgan), written in Blake's hand on a separate piece of paper for each picture in the series (E 682–86).

- 33 Critical opinion has not been particularly helpful in determining either the compositional contents of *Milton's Mysterious Dream* or its meaning. Butlin lists the already considerable body of critical literature on the set by 1981, commenting that it contains "contradictory" interpretations.<sup>50</sup> In relation to the details considered here, John E. Grant obliquely notices the netting; Bette Charlene Werner suggests the presence of a wider—if vaguer—symbolism ("the waters and nets of materiality"); and Stephen C. Behrendt, offering one of the more nuanced perspectives on the series, simply characterizes *Milton's Mysterious Dream* as "far more intense, far less conventional" than the rest.<sup>51</sup>
- 34 It is Blake's short additional descriptive commentary that is so remarkable: "Milton sleeping on a Bank. Sleep descending with a Strange Mysterious Dream upon his Wings of *Scrolls & Nets & Webs* unfolded by Spirits in the Air & in the Brook around Milton are Six Spirits or Fairies hovering on the air with Instruments of Music" (E 685; my italics). In the picture, winged Sleep swoops around the supine and sleeping Milton, bearing on its wings "Scrolls & Nets & Webs." The nets, Klüver's lattice percepts, are the hardest to discern, but their meshes (highlighted by Blake in black ink) reach from two small soaring figures to a single huddled figure in the lower section of the picture, all borne on the back of Sleep's right wing.<sup>52</sup> On the same wing are scrolls, Klüver's spiral percepts. They are represented as the ends of what seems to be a parchment, which is associated with a robed figure who touches it with both hands, its folds enclosing an embracing man and woman. Scrolled ends of garments also feature in the group encircled in spokes of light at the top of the picture.
- 35 The third and final Klüver pattern in this composition, a lattice or cobweb form-constant borne on the back of Sleep's left wing, dominates the upper portion of the design.

50. The most detailed treatment after 1981 is J. M. Q. Davies, *Blake's Milton Designs: The Dynamics of Meaning* (West Cornwall, CT: Locust Hill Press, 1993) 113–52.

51. John E. Grant, "Blake's Designs for *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, with Special Attention to *L'Allegro* 1, 'Mirth and Her Companions,'" *Blake* 4.4 (spring 1971): 117–34; Bette Charlene Werner, *Blake's Vision of the Poetry of Milton* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1986) 162; Stephen C. Behrendt, "Bright Pilgrimage: William Blake's Designs for *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*," *Milton Studies* 8 (1975): 123–47.

52. The nets in Blake's pictorial narrative (which departs in this detail from *Il Penseroso*) seem to be associated with figures living in the "brook" and "waters murmuring" mentioned in Milton's poem.

Describing it as a “rainbow sphere,” J. M. Q. Davies notes that “it is a highly unusual motif.”<sup>53</sup> Its status as apparently a depiction of radiant light is, of course, consistent with the self-luminous qualities of Klüver percepts. Instead of being a conventional symbol of radiance, it forms a set of very distinct concentric circles, differentiated by color but noticeably radially segmented. This fits Blake’s description of “Webs.” It is also a reminder, as with the spokes of light in *Jacob’s Ladder*, that “a radial bias may be neurally fundamental” to visual perception.<sup>54</sup>

- 36 That *Milton’s Mysterious Dream* contains three out of the four Klüver form-constants brings it into phenomenological unity with the details described in Blake’s commentary. These three elements in the painting can now be assigned with a precise neurophysiology based on the traces in the composition of the exact type of visual hallucination that Blake had experienced in one of the “visions” that inspired it. Indeed, Blake’s text could hardly be less ambiguous: “Sleep” has “a Strange Mysterious Dream upon” its “Wings,” explicitly made up of “Scrolls & Nets & Webs,” percepts that Blake had experienced no later than c. 1805 (as suggested by *Jacob’s Ladder*) and now, apparently, associated with Milton.
- 37 Although it is not certain that the image of Milton depicted here refers to the period after he lost his sight (he was completely blind by the age of about forty-four), Blake may have surmised that Klüver’s patterns could be perceived by the blind (in the same way that Milton’s contemporary, Hobbes, knew that they were visible in the dark).<sup>55</sup> One might speculate that self-luminous hallucinations held a special fascination for an artist who held the blind Milton in such high esteem. Whether this is the case or not, “Scrolls & Nets & Webs” make little other narrative sense in what was clearly a complex response to *Il Penseroso* except for their phenomenological unity within the range of the Klüver hallucinations that likely inspired Blake’s design—that is, Klüver spiral, lattice, and cobweb percepts are deposited in the picture as distinct markers of one of Blake’s “visions,” perhaps the true medium through which he felt continuing affinity with Milton.

### Example 3: The Illuminated Books (up to 1794)

- 38 Because the illuminated books were enterprises exploiting Blake’s printmaking skills for the admiration of affluent, socially and politically progressive bibliophiles,<sup>56</sup> it is perhaps

not surprising that Klüver form-constant patterns occur frequently in works less open to scrutiny than those that might have been exhibited in domestic or public spaces. They proliferate to such a degree that the discussion here is limited to just three of the works up to 1794.

- 39 That Blake used recurrent patterns in the illuminated books is not a new idea. In 1978, W. J. T. Mitchell observed that “abstract linear forms such as the vortex or the circle ... are repeated so systematically that they suggest a kind of pantomimic body-language, a repertoire of motifs.”<sup>57</sup> The vortex and circle (although they are not assigned by Mitchell to neurological causes) approximate to two of the four Klüver form-constants. Of course, sometimes they appear decoratively, although in such cases they may still be aesthetically selected echoes of entoptic percepts first seen in the “visions” that Blake claimed as integral to his art.
- 40 Until c. 2015 it was possible to quickly collect a range of results for Klüver-type shapes in the illuminated books by means of the visual motif search engine in the *William Blake Archive*. The feature is currently slightly less useful for this type of exercise because it appears not to gather tagged hits into totals in quite the same way as it did when the original research was done for this article. Its principal virtue for the present study was that the archive had independently deliberated and agreed descriptors to match the images they decided Blake’s works presented. By checking a box, a user could find out how often, for example, spiral shapes had been tagged in Blake’s visual art and collate them with the image search function. The results are both complicated and, perhaps, surprising.
- 41 The number of distinct spirals logged by the archive, when restricted to the illuminated books produced between c. 1788 and 1795, is sixty-seven.<sup>58</sup> The definition of these features (as well as the three other form-constant shapes), together with their locations in Blake’s work, is not my determination, but rests on the editorial decisions of the archive.
- 42 In *America a Prophecy* (1793) there are at least eight spirals, each potentially capable of being designated as a Klüver form-constant. Perhaps the most striking is on plate 7 (illus. 4), which has a cone-shaped, spiraling serpent, standing on its tail, and also includes an apparent revolu-

53. Davies 146.

54. Sasaki, Rajimehr, et al.

55. A. E. Krill, H. J. Alpert, and A. M. Ostfield, “Effects of a Hallucinogenic Agent in Totally Blind Subjects,” *Archives of Ophthalmology* 69 (1963): 180-85.

56. Rebekah Bliss (1749–1819), who may have bought copies of *Songs* and *For Children: The Gates of Paradise* by the end of the 1790s, was

affluent enough to have acquired an extensive library of fine printed books and manuscripts; see Keri Davies, “Mrs. Bliss: A Blake Collector of 1794,” *Blake in the Nineties*, ed. Steve Clark and David Worrall (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999) 212-30.

57. W. J. T. Mitchell, *Blake’s Composite Art: A Study of the Illuminated Poetry* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978) 37.

58. *Blake Archive* image search, 6 Nov. 2015.



Albion's Arigel stood beside the Stone  
of night, and saw  
The terror: like a comet, or more like the  
planet red  
That once includ'd the terrible wandering comets in its sphere.  
Then Mars thou wast our center, & the planets three flew round  
Thy crimson disk; so e'er the Sun was rent from thy red sphere;  
The Spectre glow'd his horrid length staining the temple long  
With beams of blood; & thus a voice came forth, and shook the  
temple

4. William Blake, *America* copy E, Bentley plate 7 [Erdman plate 5] (composed and printed 1793). 23.3 x 16.6 cm. Library of Congress, Lessing J. Rosenwald Collection. Catalogue no. 1804. Image courtesy of the William Blake Archive.

tionary tribunal condemning a hunched-up human figure to be forced through the tunnel of the serpent's folds.

43 The judicial ensemble and serpent spiral are fairly baffling. They possibly allude to political fractures in British society and national identity that occurred as a result of the American War of Independence; equally, they may refer to the Terror of the French Revolution. Reprising critical debate up to 1995 about the plate's meaning, Detlef Dörrbecker rightly remarks on its "reduction of the conventional pictorial pattern which has given rise to the contradictory interpretations in modern Blake criticism." In this particular detail, a "tormented figure is plunging headlong into a funnel or vortex that is formed by the seven coils ... of a hissing serpent that rises from the flames."<sup>59</sup>

44 Dörrbecker's description of "coils" in a "funnel or vortex" shape invokes two of Klüver's form-constants. Quoting verbatim from reports in his survey sample, Klüver writes that "a third important form-constant is the *spiral*. ... "There appears a brown spiral, a wide band, revolving madly around its vertical axis."<sup>60</sup> This account is certainly consistent with Blake's unusual image in plate 7. The human figure, described by Dörrbecker as "plunging headlong into a funnel or vortex," corresponds with what Klüver (incorporating feedback from his volunteers) describes as

a second form-constant ... designated by terms [such] as *tunnel*, *funnel*, *alley*, *cone* or *vessel*. To illustrate: "Sometimes I seemed to be gazing into a vast hollow revolving vessel ..."; "the field of vision is similar to the interior of a cone the vertex of which is lying in the center of the field directly before the eyes (or vice versa)" ... ; [a] "vision of a tunnel in copper-brown color ... lines seem to converge in the infinite"; ... "deep beautiful perspectives ... growing into the infinite ..."; ... "I was standing in a very long and wide tunnel."<sup>61</sup>

45 In contrast to the complexities of plate 7, *America* plate 4 (illus. 5) has merely a spiral-shaped piece of foliage (with its vegetable roots visible) edging the left-hand side of the page. Of course, it may be argued that while the spiral on plate 7 is meaningful, the other is simply decorative, but whatever the intention, the basic shape is dominant—that is, a limited range of motifs (here spiral and funnel forms) are visually modulated or repeated within the work.

59. Detlef W. Dörrbecker, ed., *William Blake: The Continental Prophecies* (London: William Blake Trust/Tate Gallery, 1995) 55-57 (commentary on this plate).

60. Heinrich Klüver, *Mescal and Mechanisms of Hallucinations* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966) 23 (Klüver's italics).

61. Klüver, *Mescal and Mechanisms of Hallucinations* 23 (Klüver's italics).

46 *Europe a Prophecy* (1794) presents another series of Klüver form-constants. Although Blake lived over a hundred years before Klüver, form-constants are the products of neural activity common to *Homo sapiens* as a species (see [iv] above). The neurophysiology of their triggers might be experienced differently, but their geometric patterning is identical. Their presence is so clear in *Europe* that it is best to identify them briefly before offering a discussion. Predating Klüver's work, Munro Smith's 1909 *BMJ* article drew attention to the phenomenological similarities of migraine aura fortification spectra, which are known to include form-constants, and the frontispiece, "The Ancient of Days." While I do not claim that Klüver patterns necessarily influenced "The Ancient of Days," I will argue that the title page and plate 13 are based upon spiral form-constants, and plate 15 on cobweb form-constants. Consonant with Munro Smith's claim about "The Ancient of Days," the known phenomenological variants of migraine aura would certainly provide a plausible neurophysiological basis for the Klüver form-constants in *Europe*.

47 The *Blake Archive* tagged nine *Europe* plates for spiral and web features and their synonyms.<sup>62</sup> Some, such as the calligraphic flourish at the end of the "Y" of "Prophecy" (*Europe* plate 6), appear functionally decorative, although, of course, this is because their decorative role reproduces the Klüver patterns of Blake's original visual hallucination. The incidence of decorative features suggests that the cognitive input experienced through V1 was processed by Blake both during and after what can now be recognized as a "vision."

48 The first Klüver form-constant is the title page (plate 2) (illus. 6), which is dominated by a single motif of a coiled serpent. Only a piece of foliage in the foreground and the suggestion of low rising hills in the background provide other visual elements in a starkness of composition best seen in copy H, the uncolored Houghton Library copy.<sup>63</sup> As to the iconographic tradition in which this plate might be said to stand, Dörrbecker concludes that "not just in Blake, but in British late eighteenth-century culture in general the meaning of all serpent imagery was nothing if not ambiguous."<sup>64</sup>

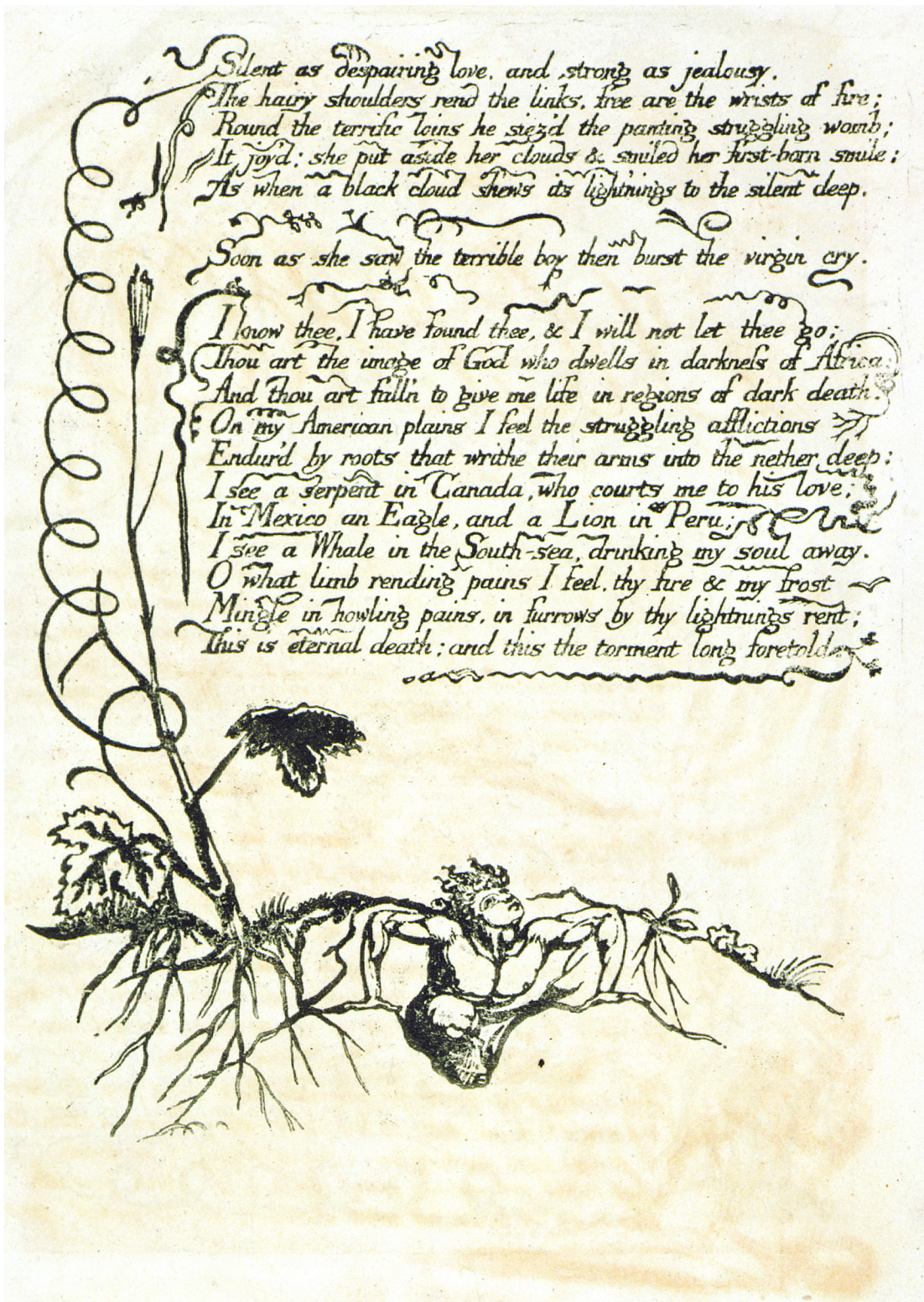
49 The explanation for its meaning comes in the next example, plate 13 (illus. 7), which shows a spiral-shaped serpent, standing on its tail, taking up the entire left-hand margin of the page and ending with a crested head radiating fire.<sup>65</sup>

62. *Blake Archive* image search, 8 Nov. 2015.

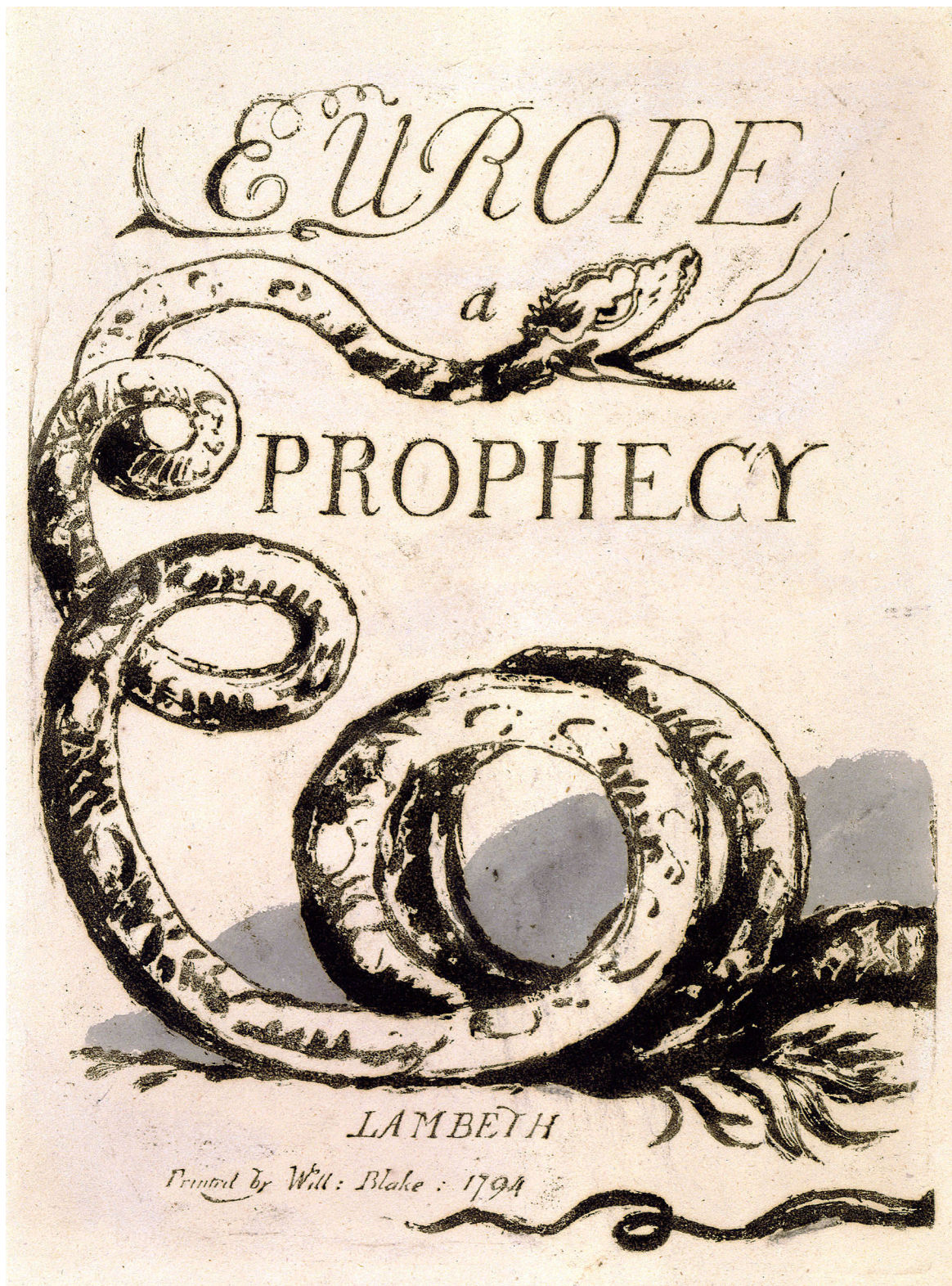
63. In most copies, this plate is preceded by "The Ancient of Days," which acts as a frontispiece. In copy H, however, a "Fairy" plate (plate 3) starts the book, followed by the title page, which is then followed by "The Ancient of Days."

64. For commentary on this plate, see Dörrbecker 168-74.

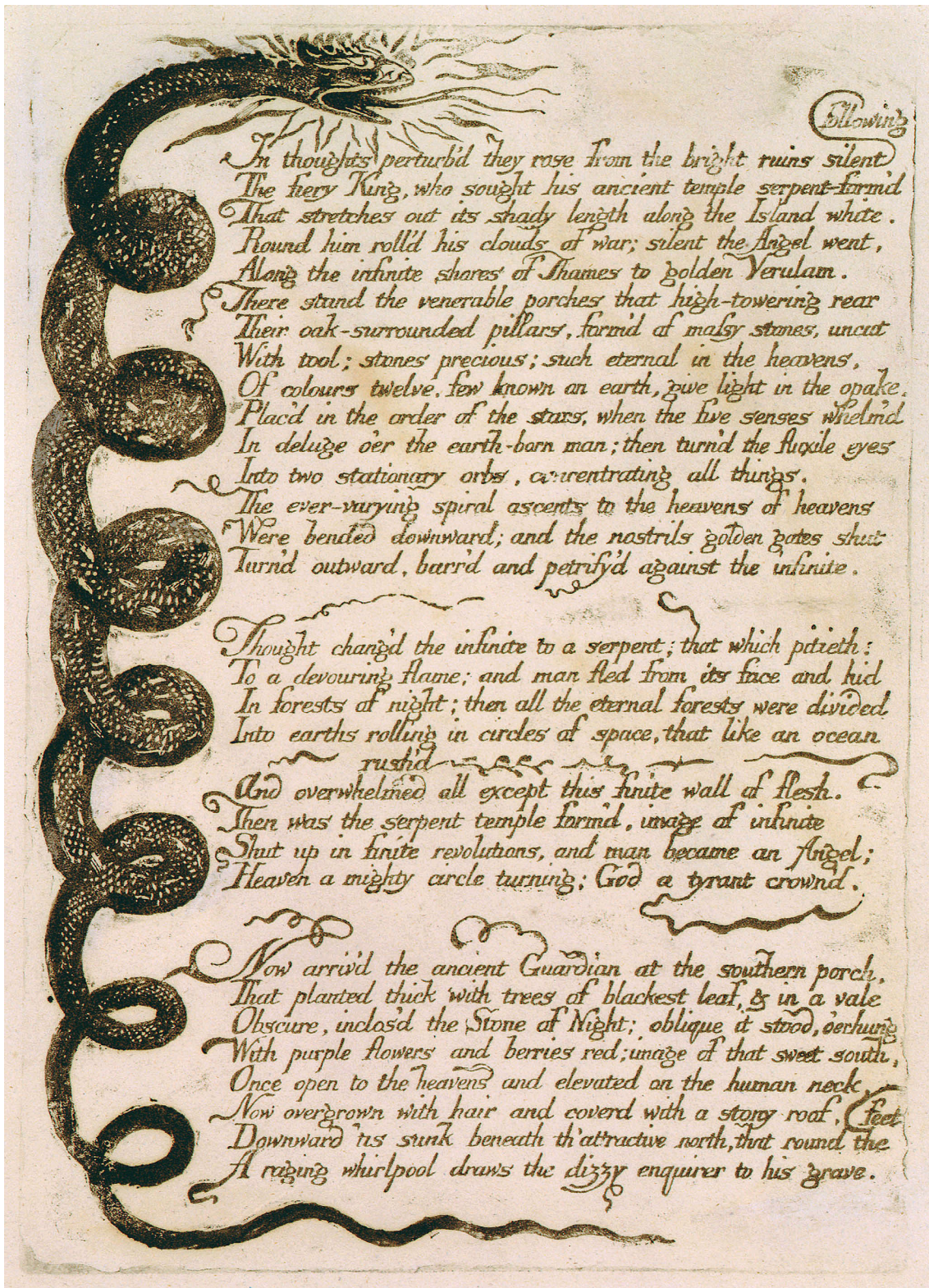
65. For commentary on this plate, see Dörrbecker 194-96.



5. William Blake, *America* copy E, Bentley plate 4 [Erdman plate 2] (composed and printed 1793). 23.8 x 16.6 cm. Library of Congress, Lessing J. Rosenwald Collection. Catalogue no. 1804. Image courtesy of the William Blake Archive.



6. William Blake, *Europe* copy H, plate 2 [Erdman plate ii] (composed 1794, printed 1795). 23.9 x 17.3 cm. Houghton Library, Harvard University. Typ 6500.41h. Image courtesy of the *William Blake Archive*.



(Following)

In thoughts perturbid they rose from the bright ruins silent  
The fiery King, who sought his ancient temple serpent-formid  
That stretches out its shady length along the Island white.  
Round him roll'd his clouds of war; silent the Angel went,  
Along the infinite shores of Thames to golden Verulam.

There stand the venerable porches that high-towering rear  
Their oak-surrounded pillars, formid of malsy stones, uncut  
With tool; stones precious; such eternal in the heavens,  
Of colours twelve, few known an earth, give light in the opaque.  
Plac'd in the order of the stars, when the five senses whirlwind  
In deluge o'er the earth-born man; then turn'd the fluxile eyes  
Into two stationary orbs, concentrating all things.

The ever-varying spiral ascents to the heavens of heavens  
Were bended downward; and the nostrils golden gates shut  
Turn'd outward, barr'd and petrify'd against the infinite.

Thought chang'd the infinite to a serpent; that which pitieth:  
To a devouring flame; and man fled from its face and hid  
In forests of night; then all the eternal forests were divided  
Into earths rolling in circles of space, that like an ocean

rush'd  
And overwhelmed all except this finite wall of flesh.  
Then was the serpent temple formid, image of infinite  
Shut up in finite revolutions, and man became an Angel;  
Heaven a mighty circle turning; God a tyrant crown'd.

Now arriv'd the ancient Guardian at the southern porch,  
That planted thick with trees of blackest leaf, & in a vale  
Obscure, inclos'd the Stone of Night; oblique it stood, overhung  
With purple flowers and berries red; unage of that sweet south,  
Once open to the heavens and elevated on the human neck  
Now overgrown with hair and cover'd with a stony roof, feet  
Downward 'tis sunk beneath th'attractive north, that round the  
A raging whirlpool draws the dizzy enquirer to his grave.

7. William Blake, *Europe* copy H, plate 13 [Erdman plate 10] (composed 1794, printed 1795). 23.4 x 16.7 cm. Houghton Library, Harvard University. Typ 6500.41h. Image courtesy of the William Blake Archive.

Plate 13 is concerned with a loss of revelation replaced through the intermedial presence of an “ancient temple serpent-form” (E 63). The spiral form-constant, accessed by Blake through one of his “visions,” may in this guise indicate a distortion or corruption of his own founding hallucinatory revelation. Yet, as Dörrbecker hints, much of the serpent symbolism in Blake is a communicative dead end. In an analogous fashion, humankind’s synaesthesia-like powers of perception are exalted in *There is No Natural Religion* (series b), but then described as oppressively narrowed in *The [First] Book of Urizen* when Blake wants to comment on a different set of contexts. The serpent’s connection to the biblical story of Satan and its pervasiveness among the cultures of the eastern Mediterranean, as Jacob Bryant discovered, made it a cumbersome symbol.

50 Another form-constant in *Europe* is not only much clearer, it would be taken up by Blake with some vigor, and rather more successfully, as a continuum of images and symbols referring to concepts at the heart of his cultural and ideological positions about contemporary society. Pictured across much of plate 15 (illus. 8) is a large cobweb, fairly naturalistically rendered, accompanied by at least five spiders and several other insects.

51 This is the cobweb hallucinatory percept identified by Klüver, which, as discussed above, is also a prominent feature of *Milton’s Mysterious Dream*. “Web shapes” and “spiderwebs” motifs show up as eight examples defined and categorized in Klaus Podoll and Derek Robinson’s *Migraine Art*, with their case history of sources identifying such percepts dating as far back as W. R. Gowers’s paper of 1895.<sup>66</sup> Like the editorial team of the *Blake Archive*, Podoll and Robinson were independent assessors of the images presented to them. Cobwebs are percepts associated in some forms of epileptic hallucination with a neural disturbance of the cortex (although, as noted above, there is no evidence that Blake had this disorder).<sup>67</sup> In the late twentieth century, Klüver’s lattice and cobweb form-constants proved particularly difficult to correlate mathematically with VI; Cowan states that it took him and his colleagues from 1979 to 1993 to work out the mathematics of their geometry.<sup>68</sup> One of the more striking things about *Europe* plate 15 is Blake’s willingness to give dramatic articulation to the cobweb percept. In addition to the web with spiders, a reclining, huddled human figure, hands together in prayer or

entreaty and tightly bound or wrapped in a net, is clearly pictured at the bottom right of the plate.

52 The uncolored (save for touches of gray wash) copy H demonstrates that these shapes were made as relief-etched outlines on the plate and not added later (although in most copies of *Europe* Blake strengthened with ink the lines binding the netted human). As a decorative echo, the lattices of a fragmentary cobweb with spider form an interlinear design on plate 16. This detail is probably meant simply to enrich the depiction of the jailed and manacled figure in the prison scene, which may allude to the suspension of habeas corpus between May 1794 and July 1795.

53 The presence in plate 15 of both the cobweb and the netted human provides a significant example of Blake’s creative use of hallucinatory percepts. Moreover, these designs have a bearing on a specific strand of his poetics. Their incidence marks a distinction between the neural correlates of visual hallucination and the role of the cognitive environment of VI. “The Net of Religion” develops as a particularly effective metaphor in Blake’s work, graspable as a symbol of repression yet also directly linked to a characteristic visual percept experienced in his “visions.” From cobweb to net, the allusive symbolism is easily capable of extension. As referenced above, Klüver points out that the four form-constants may appear in amalgamation, occurring as “modifications and transformations of these basic forms.” Indeed, as one traces Blake’s development of these images from their original Klüver patterns, it is not hard to see how adapting the net of his lattice form-constant percept solved the expressive problem of following up the spiral images that *America* had explored. The serpent-like meaning of the spiral form-constants that Blake labored with elsewhere had become, as Dörrbecker argues, confusingly embedded in eighteenth-century mythological lore, and not readily translatable into commonplace activities. Nets of Religion, on the other hand, are much more memorable, on account of their association with snares and traps. For the first time, it is possible to trace how some of Blake’s “visions,” in their original visual hallucinatory modes, promoted the development of a particular poetics; in this example, they are strikingly linked to his perspective on contemporary religion.

54 This strand of imagery appears to reach a heightened stage of evolution and cultural valency in the poetic narrative of *The [First] Book of Urizen* (1794). Enitharmon’s strategy in *Europe* (and European history) to “Spread nets in every secret path” (5.2-10, E 62) is implicit in Blake’s use of the cobweb and lattice form-constants in that book, but in *Urizen* Blake provides a much more challenging direction in projecting an alternative to the Genesis story of creation. The incorporation of Klüver form-constants into its poetics

66. Podoll and Robinson 201-04, figs. 242, 244, 245. The reference is to W. R. Gowers, “Subjective Visual Sensations,” *Transactions of the Ophthalmological Societies of the United Kingdom* 15 (1895): 1-38.

67. P. Tass, “Cortical Pattern Formation during Visual Hallucinations,” *Journal of Biological Physics* 21 (1995): 177-210.

68. Cowan, “Geometric Visual Hallucinations and the Structure of the Visual Cortex.”



8. William Blake, *Europe* copy H, plate 15 [Erdman plate 12] (composed 1794, printed 1795). 23.4 x 17.3 cm. Houghton Library, Harvard University. Typ 6500.41h. Image courtesy of the William Blake Archive.

makes *Urizen* not only an alternative narrative but also one that alludes to an alternative basis for revelation. For Blake, these alternatives were validated by his experience of visual hallucinations, or what he preferred to call “my visions.”

- 55 *Urizen* ends with a created material world held captive, self-enslaved by “narrowing perceptions,” as memorably pictured on plate 28. Although one cannot be sure of priority, the cobweb and netted figure of *Europe* plate 15 appear to have developed into the “spiders web” and “Net of Religion” of *Urizen*. These provide fascinating examples of Blake’s cognitive processing of Klüver’s hallucinatory percepts and their transformation into poetry. It is worth tracing how he attaches poetic meaning to these entoptic visual images:

[6.] A cold shadow follow’d behind him [Urizen]  
Like a spiders web, moist, cold, & dim  
Drawing out from his sorrowing soul  
The dungeon-like heaven dividing,  
Where ever the footsteps of Urizen  
Walk’d over the cities in sorrow.

7. Till a Web dark & cold, throughout all  
The tormented element stretch’d  
From the sorrows of Urizens soul  
And the Web is a Female in embryo  
None could break the Web, no wings of fire.

8. So twisted the cords, & so knotted  
The meshes: twisted like to the human brain

9. And all call’d it, The Net of Religion. (25.9-22, E 82)

Blake’s utilization of Klüver form-constants in his poetics does not celebrate visual hallucinations but, on the contrary, describes their debasement, an insight perhaps prompted by the “dark & cold” environment of wartime Britain in the 1790s. In a remarkable development of the entoptic images he had experienced, the “spiders web,” a “Web dark & cold,” becomes a “Net” of “narrowing perceptions.”<sup>69</sup> Still retaining symmetrical stability, one percept (a Klüver cobweb) changes into a “Web,” or “a Female in embryo,” and another (a Klüver lattice) into a “Net of Religion.” Although the visual hallucinations—“the dark visions of Los” (*Urizen* 15.12, E 78)—have become acculturated (gendered and assigned a religion), they maintain the integrity of their form-constant patterns. In *Urizen*, the Klüver cobweb and lattice form-constants of Blake’s original “visions” are modified into their abstractions, offering a vivid example of how, in the 1790s, he developed a poetics based upon visual hallucination.

69. Podoll and Robinson treat nets as a subgroup of web forms, suggesting their close alliance within V1’s architecture (see 203-04).

- 56 What makes *Urizen* particularly noteworthy is the sophistication with which, by 1794, Blake has aligned the corruption (“the dark visions”) of Klüver form-constants with the “narrowing perceptions” he experienced in the repressive atmosphere of contemporary Britain. The degree of his cognitive insight into his visual hallucinations is remarkable, probably unparalleled. Tracing the developmental route of his transformation of the percepts of visual hallucination into literary poetics is challenging. Perhaps the most striking feature of these developing poetics, however, is their unswerving fidelity to the hallucinatory origins of Blake’s “visions.”

## Conclusion

- 57 The neural correlates of Klüver form-constants have been validated by Ermentrout and Cowan (1979) and Bressloff, Cowan, et al. (2001), who have successfully traced their source to V1. Klüver form-constant visual hallucinations are one of several types of “visions” that Blake claimed to have experienced. He would have perceived their distinctive patterns within his visual field through retinocortical mapping. Their propagation from V1, an area of cortex, means that each episode was a cognitive event. The evidence presented here suggests that Blake had insight into these episodes and reflected and responded to them creatively. His discrimination, categorization, and, above all, accurate naming of three of the four form-constant patterns in the commentary accompanying *Milton’s Mysterious Dream* revise the history of visual hallucinations, not only because they substantially precede Klüver but on account of his degree of cognitive insight into his experiences. Blake’s status as a healthy, well-educated, socially integrated individual who claimed a lifelong experience of hallucinations has the potential to provide a high-value point of reference for clinicians working with disorders such as psychosis, eye disease, dementia, and Parkinson’s disease.<sup>70</sup>

- 58 I am not suggesting that the majority, or even a large fraction, of Blake’s paintings and designs are founded on Klüver form-constant visual hallucinations. For most of the time, and in most of his works, he was *not* a “visionary” artist painting from “originals seen in my visions.” Nevertheless, the designs originating from Klüver percepts are not trivial in number or significance. Distinguishing between the form-constants and similar shapes in Blake’s art is, of course, a matter of judgment. It may be that what originated as a form-constant in one of his “visions” then got used decoratively. On balance, since Blake was so insistent on the role of “visions” in his creativity, their identification

70. Renaud Jardri et al., “Hallucination Research: Into the Future, and Beyond,” *Schizophrenia Bulletin* 45, supplement 1 (2019): S1-S4.

should take hermeneutical precedence where, as in the case of the traces of Klüver visual hallucinatory patterns in his work, his “visions” can be shown to have had neural correlates. Doing so necessitates honoring the origins of “visions,” something that ought to be uncontroversial for a poet who declared himself to be a “visionary.” Blake’s corpus needs reevaluation, not simply to look for evidence of hallucinatory types but also to revise our understanding of

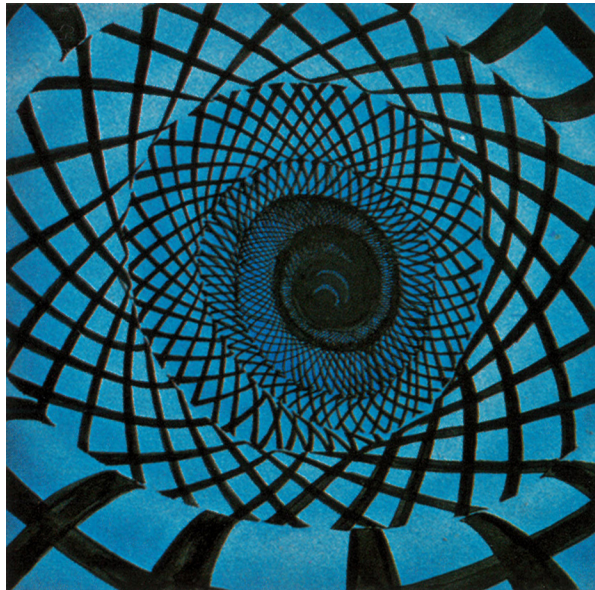
his contemporary and modern reception now that his “visions” can often be attributed with neural, rather than psychotic, correlates.

- 59 For example, a good case could be made that the very early watercolor *An Allegory of the Bible* (c. 1780–85, Tate Britain, Butlin #127) (illus. 9) is composed around Klüver’s lattice and tunnel/funnel form-constants. Its curious com-



9. William Blake, *An Allegory of the Bible* (c. 1780–85). 61.5 x 34.9 cm. Tate. T01128. Bequeathed by Miss Rachel M. Dyer, 1969. Photo: Tate.

position of curving tracery panels, black-and-white square tiles or flagstones, and receding and approaching figures is brought into phenomenological unity by the two form-constants structuring it. The picture (without the figures, of course) readily maps over a much-reproduced drawing used as a standard reference for Klüver percepts (illus. 10).



10. David Sheridan, representation of lattice-tunnel from reports of drug-induced hallucinations.

Figure 6 in Ronald K. Siegel and Murray E. Jarvik, "Drug-Induced Hallucinations in Animals and Man," *Hallucinations: Behavior, Experience, and Theory*, ed. R. K. Siegel and L. J. West (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1975) 81-161 (following 146). Reproduced by permission of John Wiley & Sons; permission conveyed through Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.

That Blake painted from his visual hallucinations as early as c. 1780–85 would be consistent with his first "vision," on Peckham Rye, with migraine perhaps being the agent of induction and Klüver percepts a comodality of the aura.

- 60 As far as identifying the phenomenological characteristics of Blake's other "visions" is concerned, there are many traps for the unwary. His only written account of a "Vision," in the poem "To my Friend Butts I write / My first Vision of Light" (E 712-13), composed in October 1800 on his arrival in Felpham, almost certainly describes Scheerer's phenomenon. Scheerer's (or blue field entoptic) phenomenon was first reported by Richard Scheerer in 1924. It is essentially a vasogenic-induced perception of moving points or stars of light caused by white blood cells visible against a blue back-

ground.<sup>71</sup> This would have been a fleeting, chance experience (Blake never repeated its description) probably induced by Felpham's unfamiliar expanses of early autumn blue sky, blue sea, and smoke-free sunlight. His classification of it as a "Vision" is immensely revealing of how, by 1800, he readily pathologized such events, placing them on a continuum of "visions," both visual and auditory, that he had experienced since the incident on Peckham Rye.

- 61 A lot has been missed over the years. A humble starting point might be to return to George Munro Smith's long-forgotten correspondence with the *BMJ* in 1909.

71. Richard Scheerer, "Die entoptische Sichtbarkeit der Blutbewegungen im Auge und ihre klinische Bedeutung," *Klinische Monatsblätter für Augenheilkunde* 73 (1924): 67-107; S. H. Sinclair, M. Azar-Cavanagh, K. A. Soper, R. F. Tuma, and H. N. Mayrovitz, "Investigation of the Source of the Blue Field Entoptic Phenomenon," *Investigative Ophthalmology and Visual Science* 30 (1989): 668-73.

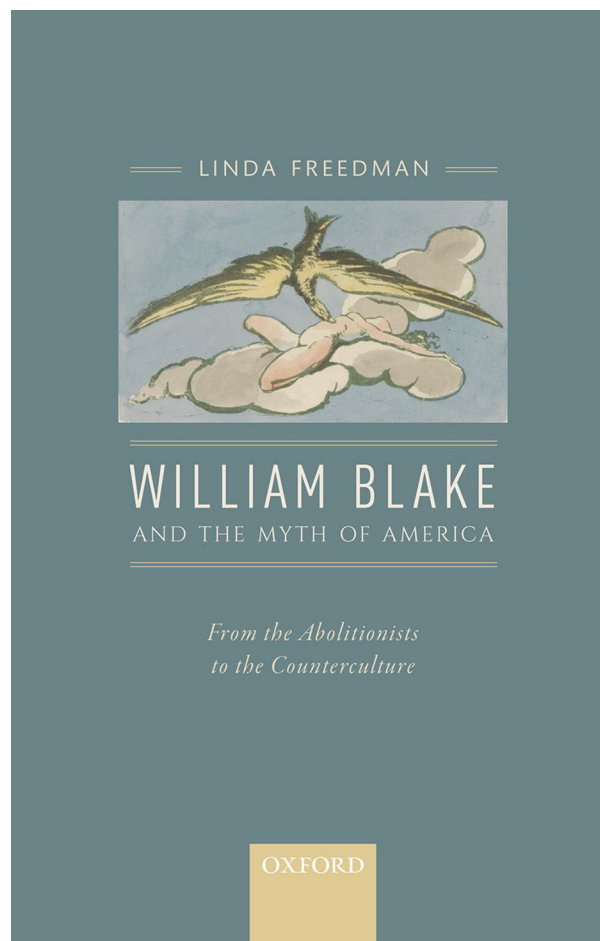
Linda Freedman. *William Blake and the Myth of America: From the Abolitionists to the Counterculture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018. xiii + 273 pp. £61.00/\$82.00, hardcover; also available as an e-book.

Reviewed by Luke Walker

LUKE WALKER (luke77walker@hotmail.com) is the author of the forthcoming book *William Blake and Allen Ginsberg: Romanticism, Counterculture and Radical Reception* (Manchester University Press), and he recently coedited a special issue of the *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* on “The Artist of the Future Age: William Blake, Neo-Romanticism, Counterculture and Now” (spring 2022). He has published widely on related topics, including articles in the journals *Romanticism* and *Comparative American Studies* and chapters in the edited collections *Rock and Romanticism: Blake, Wordsworth, and Rock from Dylan to U2* (2018), *The Routledge Handbook of International Beat Literature* (2018), and *The Beats, Black Mountain, and New Modes in American Poetry* (2021).

1 WE seem to be living in a golden age of scholarship on Blake’s reception, and Linda Freedman’s *William Blake and the Myth of America* is a welcome addition to this critical canon. As Freedman notes, the recent scholarly antecedents of her study include the collections *Blake 2.0: William Blake in Twentieth-Century Art, Music and Culture* (ed. Steve Clark, Tristanne Connolly, and Jason Whittaker, 2012), *Blake, Modernity and Popular Culture* (ed. Clark and Whittaker, 2007), and *The Reception of Blake in the Orient* (ed. Clark and Masashi Suzuki, 2006), as well as Colin Trodd’s monograph *Visions of Blake: William Blake in the Art World, 1830–1930* (2012) and Edward Larrissy’s *Blake and Modern Literature* (2006). Freedman’s book, which benefits from sixteen color illustrations embedded throughout the text, also follows hot on the heels of the even more lavishly illustrated *William Blake and the Age of Aquarius* (ed. Stephen F. Eisenman, 2017).<sup>1</sup> Yet, as

1. Since the publication of Freedman’s book, this burgeoning critical genre has been expanded further by *The Reception of William Blake in Europe*, ed. Sibylle Erle and Morton D. Paley (2 vols., 2019). My



she acknowledges, the contents of *William Blake and the Myth of America* connect it more specifically to *William Blake and the Moderns*, the 1982 collection edited by Robert J. Berthoff and Annette S. Levitt, which prepared the ground for the current crop of Blakean reception studies; figures from that book who reappear in Freedman’s monograph include Walt Whitman, Hart Crane, T. S. Eliot, Theodore Roethke, Robert Duncan, and Allen Ginsberg.

2 A key strength of Freedman’s work, as she revisits these reception contexts and introduces others, is that she weaves them into an ambitious overarching argument of her own, illuminating “a particularly American story, which spans both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and connects Blake’s reception with mythopoeic visions of America” (14). Looking back from the perspective of her conclusion, she is able to summarize “four interrelated areas in which Blake’s American reception really matters to Blake studies,

own study, *William Blake and Allen Ginsberg: Romanticism, Counterculture and Radical Reception*, is forthcoming from Manchester University Press.

transatlantic meanings of Romanticism, and the idea of America” (251); these are “religion,” “readings of the body,” “the relationship between Romanticism and modernity,” and lastly “the subject of America itself” (251-54). As Freedman shows, this “myth of America” has a dark side, and her introductory chapter draws lines of connection from the rape of Oothoon—“the soft soul of America” in *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*—to Blake’s horrific engravings after Stedman for the latter’s Surinam *Expedition*, and onward via American wars in Vietnam and Iraq to the “endemic racism, persistent sexism, [and] violent nationalism” of the Trump era (3), although, as she notes, Mike Goode’s story of Trump’s direct appropriation of Blake’s proverbs “turned out to be an irony that was indeed too good to be true” (14).

- 3 A major argument in chapter 1, “Spirit and Society: Blake’s Early American Appeal,” is that it was easier for interest in Blake to take hold in America than it was in his native Britain. This assertion should be evaluated in the context of a broader movement within recent Blake scholarship to challenge the long-held idea that Blake really was a “*Pictor [and Poeta] Ignotus*” before Gilchrist’s 1863 biography. Nonetheless, Freedman convincingly argues that “Blake’s peculiar brand of religious enthusiasm was better suited to mid-nineteenth-century America than it was to Victorian England,” making him a “kindred spirit” to figures such as Ralph Waldo Emerson (17). In part, this was a result of the lively American interest in Swedenborg, although Freedman goes on to show how Emerson, who first encountered Blake’s poetry through J. J. G. Wilkinson’s 1839 edition of *Songs*, in fact shared Blake’s own more critical approach to Swedenborg, in marked contrast to Wilkinson himself.
- 4 Partly drawing on the work of Clare Elliott, Freedman explores the relationship between imagination and vision in Blake and Emerson, noting the American author’s particular fascination with Blake’s observation that “the Eye altering alters all,” which resonated with his own writing on this topic (although, oddly, Freedman never refers directly to the famous image of the “transparent eye-ball,” which originated in Emerson’s 1836 essay *Nature*).<sup>2</sup> The chapter then

2. Elliott’s substantial body of work on Blake’s nineteenth-century American reception is yet to be published in monograph form, so in places Freedman draws (with due acknowledgment) on Elliott’s doctoral dissertation. Elliott’s published work includes “William Blake’s American Afterlives,” *Transatlantic Literature and Transitivity, 1780–1850: Subjects, Texts, and Print Culture*, ed. Annika Bautz and Kathryn N. Gray (New York: Routledge, 2017) 195–211; “A Backward Glance O’er the (Dis)United States: William Blake, Ralph Waldo Emerson and the ‘Authentic American Religion,’” *European Journal of American Culture* 28.1 (2009): 75–93; and “William Blake and America: Freedom and Violence in the Atlantic World,” *Comparative American Studies* 7.3 (2009): 209–24.

moves on to a subtle investigation of the complex contexts within which Lydia Maria Child (like Emerson and Blake, a disillusioned Swedenborgian) published Blake’s “The Little Black Boy” in the *National Anti-Slavery Standard* in 1842. Next, Freedman uses her own research in the London archives of the Swedenborg Society to reveal the significance of the friendship between Wilkinson and Henry James, Sr., which led directly to the publication in 1848 of several Blake poems in the *Harbinger*, the journal of the utopian Brook Farm movement. In the final section of this excellent chapter, Freedman—also the author of a monograph on Emily Dickinson—shows how even though there is no evidence that Dickinson read Blake, he nonetheless had a significant impact on her reception, as evident, for example, in Christina Rossetti’s praise for Dickinson’s “wonderful Blakean gift” (38).

- 5 This discussion of how Dickinson was read through Blakean eyes prepares the ground for chapter 2, on Walt Whitman. Once again, the Rossetti siblings and their wider circle play a major role, and Freedman explores the complexities, ironies, and tensions within these transatlantic intersections, as A. C. Swinburne’s influential comparison of Blake and Whitman not only Americanizes Blake, but also makes Whitman subject to the English poet; this leads to “acute anxieties of nationalism and influence” (54).
- 6 Figures covered in the next chapter, “Early Twentieth-Century America: New Versions of the Prophet,” include Waldo Frank, Hart Crane, T. S. Eliot, Marianne Moore, Stanley Kunitz, and Theodore Roethke; Freedman notes that for left-leaning “cultural nationalists” such as Frank and Crane, “Blake’s Hebraism and mysticism once again allowed him to be seen as a prophet who promised spiritual redemption and social rejuvenation” for America (63–64). This is contrasted with the conservatism of Eliot, although, as Freedman makes clear, Eliot’s relationship to Blake was more complex than he himself indicated. The highlights of this chapter are the extended close readings of works by Crane and Roethke, with Roethke’s position between the modernists and the Beats nicely illuminated: this is a literary and cultural boundary that is not as clear as is often assumed. The chapter also opens up several avenues for further research. For example, a fascinating figure only briefly mentioned here is the poet H. D. (Hilda Doolittle), who was first introduced to Blake’s work by Ezra Pound; as Freedman notes, the shared Moravian family backgrounds of Blake and H. D. provide a potentially rich area for future exploration. One interesting study that is not mentioned is Tony Trigilio, “*Strange Prophecies Anew*”: *Rereading Apocalypse in Blake, H. D., and Ginsberg* (2000). It was written before the revelation of Blake’s mother’s Moravianism, but Trigilio’s combination of subjects does provide further support for the idea that Blake’s postwar countercultural iden-

tity needs to be considered in relation to the earlier American modernist interest in Blake.

- 7 Chapters 4 to 8 consider various aspects of Blake's counter-cultural influence. Given the centrality of Blake to Allen Ginsberg's life and poetics, and of Ginsberg himself to American counterculture, it is appropriate that the first of these chapters should be given over to him. Yet the sheer extent of Ginsberg's lifelong engagement with Blake—together with the ambitious scope of the book overall, with its large cast of characters and periods to be researched—leads Freedman to make several errors and missteps. For example, it is surprising to see her describe Ginsberg's famous 1948 "Blake vision" as "drug-induced" (109), when Ginsberg explicitly denied this on numerous occasions (including in sources cited by Freedman); in fact, he wrote and spoke in detail about the complex relationship between this early "natural" vision and his later use of psychedelics, which he had not yet encountered in 1948. More broadly, the discussion of this key event is overly reductive; by relying entirely on the account given by Ginsberg in his 1965 interview for the *Paris Review* (here misdated as 1967), Freedman misses the way in which Ginsberg's perspective on this vision, and on Blake's work, developed over time, under the twin influences of Buddhism and of his increasingly studious post-1960s engagement with Blake scholarship.
- 8 Other questionable assumptions include the bland statement that, in contrast to Ginsberg, "Blake never took drugs" (91). A better phrasing would be that, with the exception of alcohol, there is no evidence that Blake used any drugs recreationally, though it would not be surprising if he took tinctures of opium in a medicinal context. Freedman probably also misjudges her readers when she somewhat laboriously explains the typical atmosphere of a 1950s San Francisco poetry reading and spells out the meaning of Timothy Leary's famous "turn on, tune in, drop out" dictum. Despite occasional misjudgments, there is much that is valuable in this chapter, such as the astute close readings of several Ginsberg poems; these are aided by the fact that, throughout the book, Freedman is not afraid to quote at length from her subjects. The chapter also perceptively draws attention to the significance of the body for Ginsberg's reading of Blake; this topic forms an important thematic link with the next two chapters, which cover Ginsberg's friends Robert Duncan, Gary Snyder, and Michael McClure.
- 9 Duncan was associated with the San Francisco Renaissance as well as the Black Mountain poets; both groups also intersected with the Beat movement. This web of connections leads to a couple of minor errors, as Freedman assumes that Black Mountain College (rather than San Francisco) was

the location of Duncan's momentous first encounter with Blake's poetry in 1953 and erroneously states that Ginsberg also taught at the college (he never even visited), but overall "Blake, Duncan, and the Politics of Writing from Myth" is an illuminating introduction to a fascinating figure.<sup>3</sup> Drawing on sources including Duncan's long 1968 essay *The Truth and Life of Myth* and on her close readings of his poetry, she skillfully shows Duncan's familiarity with Blake's myth of America, as well as his self-consciously Blakean struggle to reconcile "the relationship between revelation and revolution" in the context of the Vietnam War (122).

- 10 Equally illuminating is chapter 6, in which Freedman considers Beat poets Michael McClure and Gary Snyder alongside the objectivist George Oppen. It benefits from an interweaving of two strong thematic strands: first, a continuation of the theme of Blakean embodiment, and second, a consideration of the practice of ecopoetics. As Freedman notes, Snyder's and McClure's poetic styles differed significantly from one another, but their shared environmentalist approach to poetry was "ahead of the critical trend" (140). She mentions recent ecocritical scholarship on Blake and Romanticism, but the chapter is particularly notable for its close and productive engagement with Tristanne Connolly's *William Blake and the Body* (2002). These critical sources assist in the exploration of the tensions between McClure's forceful co-option of the figure he described as "the great MAMMAL William Blake" into his poetic project and Blake's own ambivalent attitude to the natural world (147).
- 11 The idea behind "'Break on Through': Musical Openings of the Doors of Perception" is promising: linking a range of 1960s and 1970s musicians who were influenced by Blake, including Bob Dylan, Ed Sanders, Jim Morrison, and Patti Smith. Unfortunately, this turns out to be the weakest chapter in the book, as Freedman fails to provide the strong thematizing arguments that the previous chapter had used so well, and even the tone and language seem at variance with the tight expression of most of the rest of the book. Given the close personal and professional ties between all these musicians and the Beat poets (in particular Ginsberg and McClure), there is also a missed opportunity to investigate more fully these interwoven lines of Blakean transmission.
- 12 In contrast to Freedman's apparent difficulty in mustering scholarly enthusiasm for the musical side of Blake's countercultural appropriation, her chapter on Blake's influence

3. On the relationship between Ginsberg and the Black Mountain poets, including shared interests in Blake and other strands of Western esotericism, see my "'One physical-mental inspiration of thought': Allen Ginsberg and Black Mountain Poetics," *The Beats, Black Mountain, and New Modes in American Poetry*, ed. Matt Theado (Clemson: Clemson University Press, 2021) 35-46.

on the radical 1960s theology of Thomas J. J. Altizer and Norman O. Brown is a triumph, and she seems aware that she is breaking new ground here. It begins with a succinct but insightful discussion of the complex question of Blake's theology and a summary of scholarship in this field, followed by some context on Altizer's and Brown's place in the history of American theology and culture. Linking back to her opening chapters, Freedman argues that the distinctive American response to Blake had "always been theological as well as social, political, and literary" (193). We get a strong sense of the individual characters and literary oeuvres of Altizer and Brown, and of their relationship to the historical moment. The connection between revelation and revolution is once again at the heart of this chapter. Freedman shows how the theology of both men involves an understanding of "America itself as satanic—in its imperialism, its capitalism, its racism, and its war in Vietnam" and also a celebration of the revolutionary energies of Los and Orc that are embodied in its arts and counterculture (202).

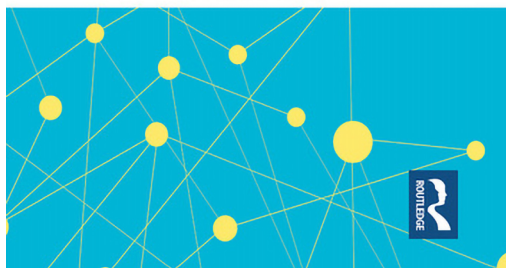
- 13 If "Romanticism after Auschwitz: Blake and Bellow" lacks something of the verve of "The Poetics of Belief: Blake and Countercultural Theology," it nonetheless contains some interesting and original material. Here, Saul Bellow's brand of Blakeanism is presented as a foil to what he saw (in Freedman's paraphrasing) as "the sham Romanticism of the counterculture" (215). This makes a nice coda to the suite of chapters on countercultural Blake, and Freedman does uncover a number of Blake references in Bellow's work, but she admits that his influence on Bellow is "subtle" (215). The chapter could perhaps have been energized by an expansion of the short section where she makes comparisons with the work of Ray Bradbury and Kurt Vonnegut.
- 14 The book's conclusion is an effective restatement of Freedman's central argument, but prior to this she gives us "Continuing Visions," which brings together Ridley Scott's 1982 film *Blade Runner*, Jim Jarmusch's 1995 "acid western" *Dead Man*, and a 2004 artwork by the activist Paul Chan, who belongs to a New York network called the Friends of William Blake. While Freedman introduces the late twentieth-century and early twenty-first-century period as being "long after the counterculture had diffused" (232), the influence of the 1960s on all three of these artworks is implicit throughout the chapter, and on occasion brought to the fore more explicitly, as at the end of the discussion of *Dead Man*. Indeed, it is this text in particular that gives Freedman the opportunity to return to the book's powerful central thread, as she notes that "Jarmusch implies that the frontier mentality is Urizenic in its brutal colonization of land and genocide of native people. As the naive Bill [Blake's namesake in the film] is told in no uncertain terms: 'this is America'" (240).



## SEXUAL PRIVATISM IN BRITISH ROMANTIC WRITING

A PUBLIC OF ONE

Adam Komisaruk



R E V I E W

Adam Komisaruk. *Sexual Privatism in British Romantic Writing: A Public of One*. New York: Routledge, 2019. xii + 216 pp. \$160.00/£120.00, hardcover; \$48.95/£36.99, paperback; \$44.05/£33.29, e-book.

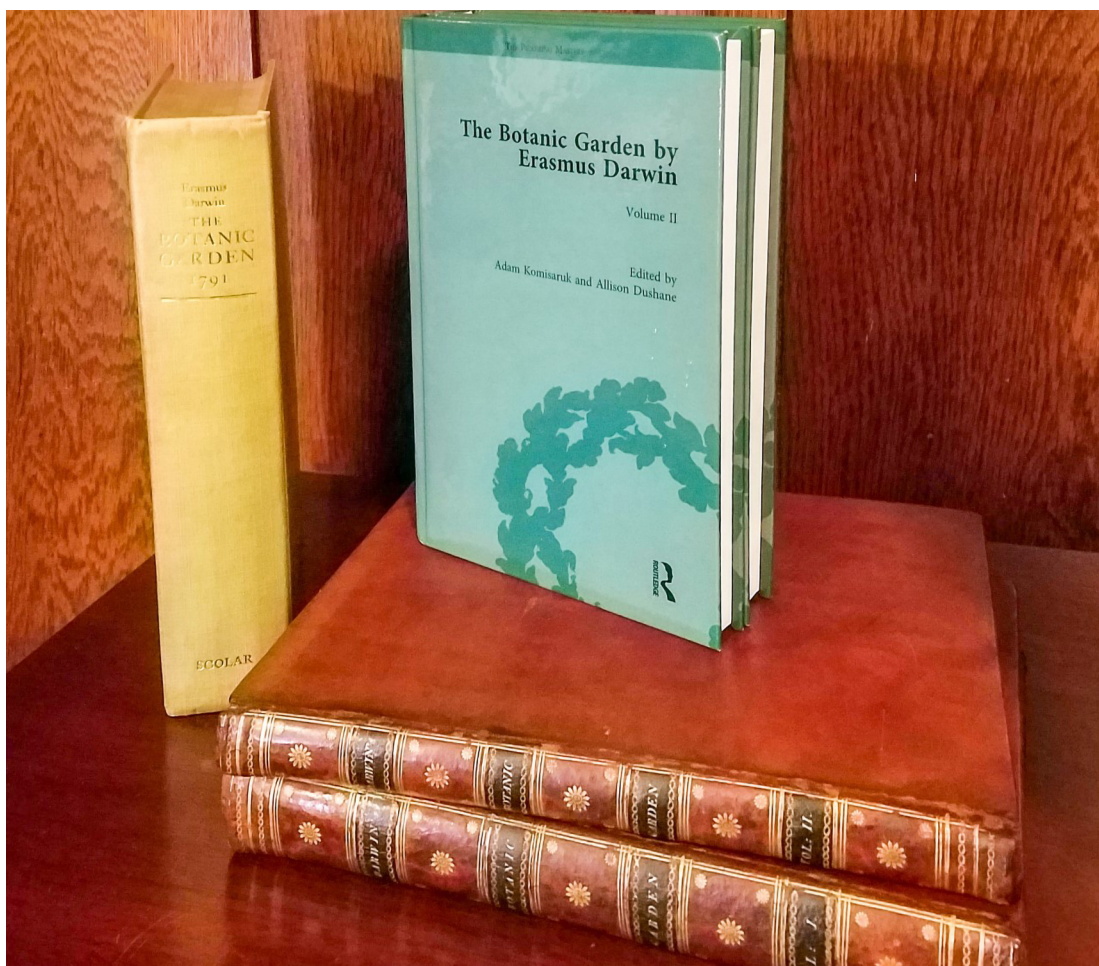
Reviewed by Marsha Keith Schuchard

MARSHA KEITH SCHUCHARD is an independent literary historian who has recently published the books *Masonic Rivalries and Literary Politics: From Jonathan Swift to Henry Fielding* (Amazon/Gauthier Pierozak Editeur, 2018) and *A Concatenation of Conspiracies: "Irish" William Blake and Illuminist Freemasonry in 1798* (Plumbstone Academic Press, 2021).

1 ADAM Komisaruk examines "the varieties of erotic experience in an age of revolution" (1), covering British writings from c. 1780 to 1830. He posits an overriding theme of the relation between "sexual privatism" and "the

public sphere," and he cites most of the theorists (Habermas, Derrida, Foucault, Lacan, Laqueur, Sedgwick, etc.) whose ideas have long dominated such discourse. He organizes his study "according to some different sexual 'publics' in the period: legal treatments of rape, sodomy and adultery; high-profile sex scandal; population theory; and club culture" (7). While a large part of his narration focuses on these modern theoreticians, he also includes thematic readings of imaginative literature by Mary Hays, William Beckford, Mary Wollstonecraft, William Godwin, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Erasmus Darwin, and finally William Blake. Though the early chapters contain much (sometimes too much) background information on the laws of rape, land enclosure, criminal conversation, and Malthusian economics, the later chapters provide readings of literary texts that are more relevant to Blake studies (Wollstonecraft's *Maria*, Shelley's *Swellfoot the Tyrant*, and Darwin's *The Botanic Garden*).

- 2 In chapter 6, "Love among the Ruins," he argues that Richard Payne Knight and his "erotic antiquarianism" emerged within a "province of polite connoisseurs" who maintained a "strangely orthodox agenda" (154-58). Though Blake was familiar with their work, he differed from their "anti-populist bent" (159). Placing the supposedly radical Darwin in this conservative province, Komisaruk discusses Blake's illustrations to the Portland Vase in *The Botanic Garden* in the context of the exploitative capitalism of Darwin and Josiah Wedgwood (170-75). Characterizing *The Economy of Vegetation* as an "encomium to industrialization," he interprets Darwin's "erotic cosmology" as an attempt to "sublimate the ontologically and socially destabilizing effects of sexuality itself."
- 3 Of most interest to Blakeans will be Komisaruk's analyses of the erotic drawings in *The Four Zoas*, in which he draws upon and argues with the earlier explications of Peter Otto's *Blake's Critique of Transcendence: Love, Jealousy, and the Sublime in "The Four Zoas"* (2000) and "A Pompous High Priest: Urizen's Ancient Phallic Religion in *The Four Zoas*" (2001), and of Christopher Hobson's *Blake and Homosexuality* (2000). Though he finds Blake's eccentric and religious complexity especially difficult to define within his private-public thesis, his willingness to confront the intellectual contradictions and gender confusions in the artist's controversial (and often effaced) erotic images is provocative: "Priapus should not be conflated with Jesus, even in Blake's syncretic myth; but in a sense he serves as a trial run for Jesus, in that he is both necessarily embodied and a staunch reminder of bodily limitations" (185). Komisaruk's subtitle, "A Public of One," sums up both the possibilities and reduction of placing such an iconoclastic visionary as Blake within a modern theoretical framework, but he earnestly takes on the challenge.



## R E V I E W

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Erasmus Darwin. *The Botanic Garden*. Ed. Adam Komisaruk and Allison Dushane. 2 vols. Abingdon: Routledge, 2017. Vol. 1, xiv + 404 pp.; vol. 2, x + 236 pp. £270.00/\$350.00, hardcover; £243.00/\$315.00, e-book.

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1 **B**LAKE evidently read parts of *The Botanic Garden* by Erasmus Darwin, grandfather of Charles, and certainly helped to illustrate it. The most striking verbal and picto-

rial responses in Blake are found in the *Songs*, *The Book of Thel*, and other early works, but if we count faint echoes of Darwin's peculiar hybrid of natural science and poetry, his influence can be detected even in late projects, like *Jerusalem*. In Blake's distinctive appropriative procedure, images were often derived from verbal sources and vice versa, as in the title page of *Thel*, in which he draws on Darwin's Ovid-based account of the apparent sexual destruction of Anemone, the windflower, by Zephyr, the west wind.<sup>1</sup> Darwin, who represented his philosophical garden as a war zone in which the competition between good and evil powers is mediated by vegetable eroticism, kept his moral, erotic, scientific, and poetic sensibilities segregated, even while deploying them simultaneously. As a result, it is difficult to read *The Loves of the Plants* as an expression of a coherent worldview, much less as an updated Book of Nature; whereas that medieval doctrine held that the natural world encodes Christian truths, for Darwin the mechanisms of natural phenomena are the tenor, not the vehicle.

1. See my appendix.

- Blake seems to have rejected some implications of Darwin's multivalent metaphors, but he was clearly taken by the erotically charged neomythic elaborations on natural phenomena. Other writers and thinkers found and transmuted this material in their own ways; Darwin's influence pervaded the intellectual life of his times, turning up in unexpected forms and in surprising contexts. Positive and negative references and reactions to his (originally anonymous) poetic works appear in the public and/or private writings of many other notable intellectuals. It's not surprising that he was a friend of Benjamin Franklin, or a founder of the Lunar Society, but he was also a teetotaler, a feminist of sorts, an ardent abolitionist, and claimed to be an M.D. (he had a substantial practice, if not a degree). Further, he dabbled in both liberal and radical politics, befriended and advised technologists and industrialists, and contributed significantly to most domains of scientific inquiry in his day (and, of course, he provided much of the groundwork for his grandson's theories).
- 2 The most basic function of a scholarly edition is to make an uncommon text more available. Early printings ("editions" doesn't quite apply—see below) of *The Botanic Garden* are not particularly rare: my unsystematic impression of the market is that copies of the two volumes are widely offered, and further, that most surviving volumes are in good condition (both suggesting that the work's initial explosive popularity was short lived). If Blake owned a copy, it has not turned up, so he may have read it to tatters, or, more likely, he simply remembered broad outlines of a prepublication manuscript or borrowed a copy of the published work (most of the recognizable echoes in Blake of Darwin's forgettable verse are general, and none is a direct quotation). Furthermore, there is a very good one-volume facsimile edition with an introductory essay by the monarch of Darwin studies, Desmond King-Hele, that is nearly as satisfactory for readability as the original (Scolar Press, 1973). And for those who aren't fussy, book-search sites are glutted with offers of abominable print-on-demand "editions" of one or both volumes; these are derived from assemblages of digital page images that vary in quality and completeness.
  - 3 Perhaps because Darwin's verse is clogged with multisyllabic Latinity and insipid even when it is trying hard to be sublime, much of the literary scholarship to date has dwelt on contemporary reactions to him by actual poets. The apparatus in this edition is more focused on identifying Darwin's diverse sources (his borrowings range from subtle allusion to shameless plagiarism) and somewhat less on revealing overarching themes and ideas. As one might expect, Darwin's literary appropriations are predominantly from the usual classical authors (especially Virgil and Ovid) or their more recent neoclassical imitators, even while alluding to phenomena far outside the customary domain of literary reference.
  - 4 As a physical presentation of Darwin's work, this edition is more difficult to read than most of the originals or the Scolar facsimile: the two new volumes are considerably smaller; the "eclectic reading text" (based on the first printings) is set in smaller type; and the images, though good, are reduced in scale. But there are many other reasons why a scholarly edition is welcome, especially one that adroitly navigates the many editorial pitfalls and dilemmas. The publication history of *The Botanic Garden* is complicated, to say the least, but if one is patient one can determine from the bibliography that, say, three editions of volume 2, *The Loves of the Plants*, were published anonymously before volume 1, *The Economy of Vegetation*, appeared, which ensured mismatched pairs in the libraries of those who bought *Loves* first. Further, booksellers apparently sold arbitrary combinations of volumes 1 and 2, some bound together, even when copies with matching dates were available. Early copies of *The Botanic Garden* are handsome quartos with large type for the verse, profusely (and variously) illustrated with images ranging from emblematic frontispieces and visionary scenes by Fuseli and others to dry botanical prints, scientific illustrations, diagrams, and charts. (Blake's chalcographic contributions to the book are not his greatest commercial work; he probably didn't engrave any of the technical illustrations, but he collaborated with Fuseli on a memorably sublime vision of the "Fertilization of Egypt," and also drew and engraved faithful images of the reliefs on the Portland Vase, the subject of a major excursion in volume 1.) In addition to the images, the selection of which varies from one printing to another, Darwin's obsessive-digressive intellect led him to stuff the poetic text with ludicrously thorough "Philosophical Notes" cross-correlated with other notes, appendices, indexes, and tables, along with "Argument" and "Interlude" sections. These notes and other adjunctive material are so plentiful and so much more spirited than the precious pseudo-Popean couplets of his verse that it is clear where his greatest interest and talent lay.
  - 5 Editorial presentation of a text is usually governed by an implicit or explicit rationale that determines the level of sophistication in the notes and other guides, as well as the aspects of the text that are mapped in the apparatus. As editors, Komisaruk and Dushane are careful, thoughtful, and evidently well informed in the many fields of knowledge that the text demands, but Darwin's own array of supplemental materials is so diverse, unpredictable, and extensive that the whole defies the kind of systematic editorial supplementation that a particular audience could count on to supply a particular kind of information.

- 6 The introductory biographical and contextual matter provided here is efficient, if not very adventurous. Because neither textual nor editorial notes are signaled in the text, readers should be in the habit of checking for both species (as well as Darwin's supplementals), lest they miss important unsought information. It would be beyond the power of editing to make such a warren of versified, illustrated, and annotated biopoetic miscellanea easy to manage, but the Komisaruk/Dushane edition is nevertheless a thoroughly creditable performance.

#### Appendix: Darwin's Anemone and Blake's Thel

- 7 Recognizing elements of Darwin in Blake's work is not usually essential to understanding the latter; even when his debt was substantial, Blake often changed so much that familiarity with his source adds little to the reader's experience, and by shifting from textual to pictorial imagery and vice versa, he further obscured the appropriation. In some cases Blake appears to have treated Darwin's works as repositories of raw semiotic material, rather than coherent cultural artifacts. Even though it seems likely that both parody and irony are involved in his responses to Darwin, there are no explicit mentions of Darwin or *The Botanic Garden* anywhere in Blake's writings that could help readers to recognize references.<sup>2</sup>
- 8 The passage in *The Loves of the Plants* (canto 1, lines 283-312) relating the love life of the anemone was especially rich for Blake. Anemones, like other plants with showy flowers, are actually pollinated by insects, but Ovid and other classical sources describe spring winds opening and then destroying the anemone blossom (the name means "wind-flower"). Darwin's primary narrative begins with images of cold and lonely Anemone as a virgin female, associated with tears, paleness, and pearls, pining limply for the warmth of the spring air:

All wan and shivering in the leafless glade  
The sad ANEMONE<sup>3</sup> reclin'd her head;  
Grief on her cheeks had paled the roseate hue,  
And her sweet eye-lids dropp'd with pearly dew.

Her lament, which follows, represents a garden world poised between the cold, heavy, evil Fiend of Frost, who is associated with Earth and Water, and hot, spirited Zephyr,

2. For an attempt at characterizing Blake's view of Darwin, see Ya-Feng Wu, "Blake's Critique of Erasmus Darwin's *Botanic Garden*," *Wordsworth Circle* 50.1 (2019): 55-73.

3. A footnote (beginning "Many males, many females") describes the botanical properties of the anemone blossom and provides a relatively unpoetic account of its relationship with the wind.

aligned with Air, Fire, and such phenomena as amorous aggression, poetic seduction, and cherubic inspiration:

"—See from bright regions, borne on odorous gales,  
"The Swallow,<sup>4</sup> herald of the summer, sails;  
"Breathe gentle AIR, from cherub-lips impart  
"Thy balmy influence to my anguish'd heart  
"Thou, whose soft voice calls forth the tender blooms,  
"Whose pencil<sup>5</sup> paints them, and whose breath perfumes;  
"O chase the Fiend of Frost, whose leaden mace  
"In death-like slumbers seals my hapless race;  
"Melt his hard heart, release his iron hand,  
"And give my ivory petals to expand  
"So may each bud that decks the brow of spring,  
"Shed all its incense on thy wafting wing!"—  
To her fond prayer propitious Zephyr yields,  
Sweeps on his sliding shell through azure fields,  
O'er her fair mansion waves his whispering wand,  
And gives her ivory petals to expand:  
Gives with new life her filial train to rise,  
And hail with kindling smiles the genial skies.

At first the attentions of Zephyr seem straightforwardly benign, but shortly after "fond" Anemone achieves the pinnacle of beauty and sexual maturity, the "rude" wind tears away her beautiful petals and apparently destroys her:

So shines the Nymph in beauty's blushing pride,  
When Zephyr wafts her deep calash<sup>6</sup> aside;  
Tears with rude kiss her bosoms gauzy veil,  
And flings the fluttering kerchief to the gale.

Darwin's narrator doesn't miss a beat, and blithely compares the exposed sexual structures that remain—stamens and pistils—to fashionable revelers crowded in a carriage with the top down:

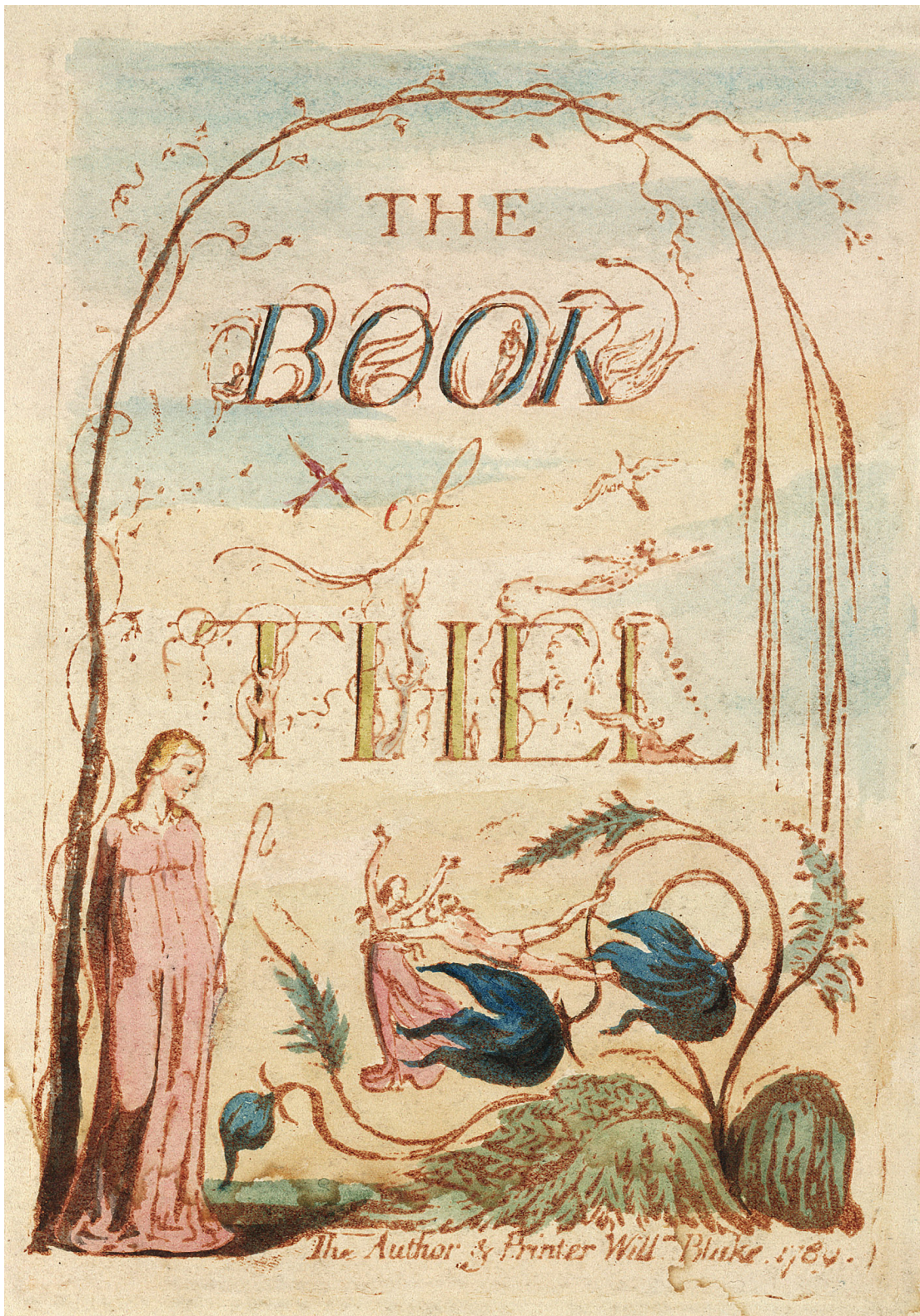
So bright, the folding canopy undrawn,  
Glides the gilt Landau o'er the velvet lawn,  
Of beaux and belles displays the glittering throng;  
And soft airs fan them, as they roll along.

- 9 Some evidence of Blake's debt to this text is distributed throughout *The Book of Thel*: like Miss Anemone, Thel is a pale and pearly virgin in a universe divided between seductive, fiery sky-males and cold, damp, terrestrial females, for instance. The most substantial borrowing is in the image on the title page, even if there are many turns in the road from one to the other. Many of the botanical narratives in

4. At this point Darwin provides an extensive note about the "conformity" of the advent of the swallow and the flowering of the anemone, together with a long list of similar relationships.

5. A small paintbrush.

6. A large hood.



*The Book of Thel* copy E (composed 1789 and printed c. 1789), title page. 15.5 x 10.7 cm. Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. Tinker +271.

*The Loves of the Plants* include accurate, detailed engravings of floral specimens, but the anemone is not among those depicted. Blake must have done some independent research on the appearance of *Anemone pulsatilla*, the species he chose for his image: it is scrupulously correct in leaves and blossoms, though the plant as a whole is artificially “posed.” In creating his picture, he paid careful attention to Darwin, but revised the two-level narrative into a single story. He then combined the emblem he had derived from Darwin with another, more familiar pictorial motif, the subject known as “*Et in Arcadia Ego*,” in which a shocked Arcadian (often a shepherdess) contemplates a newly discovered tomb, skull, or other emblem of mortality.<sup>7</sup> The anemone that replaces the usual reminder of death in Blake’s title page is an ingenious invention in the Darwinian ero-botanical idiom, even if it follows the story of Darwin’s flower maiden only loosely. Blake omitted from his emblem the chilly Fiend of Frost and warm humanoid Zephyr (who may have inspired Luvah elsewhere in the poem), but the image shows the effect of the powerful wind rippling blossoms and blowing some of the leaves of the anemone from right to left, even while indicating by the other leaves that the plant is passive unless externally motivated. He also consolidated the anemone maiden and the “many males, many females” in Darwin’s landau into two anemone spirits, one male and one female. The nude male, presumably representing windborne pollen, rides the breeze impetuously out of the right-hand flower (his left toes are inside the petals) to strip the static flower maiden, who throws up her arms in the gesture associated in art with rape victims. These two active flowers are “opened” (to use a term from Swedenborg), or “expanded” in Darwinese, in contrast with the limp, unopened bud next to Thel.<sup>8</sup> In combining “*Et in Arcadia Ego*” with the new pictorial subject, “Love and Death among the Anemones,” adapted from Darwin, Blake created an emblematic title page that introduces the epistemological thematics of the poem: innocent quasi-Arcadian Thel sees the flowers, but her morose attitude indicates that she discerns only examples of evanescent beauty, not the agitated sexual encounter enacted by the flower spirits.<sup>9</sup> The division of awareness in-

verts that of the Arcadians of “*Et in Arcadia Ego*,” for whom sex is old hat but the thought of death, and concomitant guilt, are novelties. By adapting Darwin’s verbal images and incorporating them in a familiar visual context, Blake assembled a richly articulate compound emblem that silently suggests that at this point Thel sees the beautiful beings around her dying gently and pointlessly, but is oblivious to both the vicissitudes of sex and the reward of an afterlife.

7. See Alexander S. Gourelay and John E. Grant, “The Melancholy Shepherdess in Prospect of Love and Death in Reynolds and Blake,” *Bulletin of Research in the Humanities* 85 (1982): 169-89, and Gourelay, “Iphigenia in England: A Postscript to ‘The Melancholy Shepherdess,’” *Bulletin of Research in the Humanities* 86 (1983): 223-26.

8. The buds and flowers recall a similar device in many copies of the title page of *Songs of Innocence*, where four unpicked apples on the large tree appear to correspond to the four most prominent virgins: the two children, the maid (a sort of shepherdess), and the lonely shepherd in the foliage/lettering who blows his horn in another geographical dimension.

9. Compare her listless posture here to her depicted reactions to human forms of other entities.