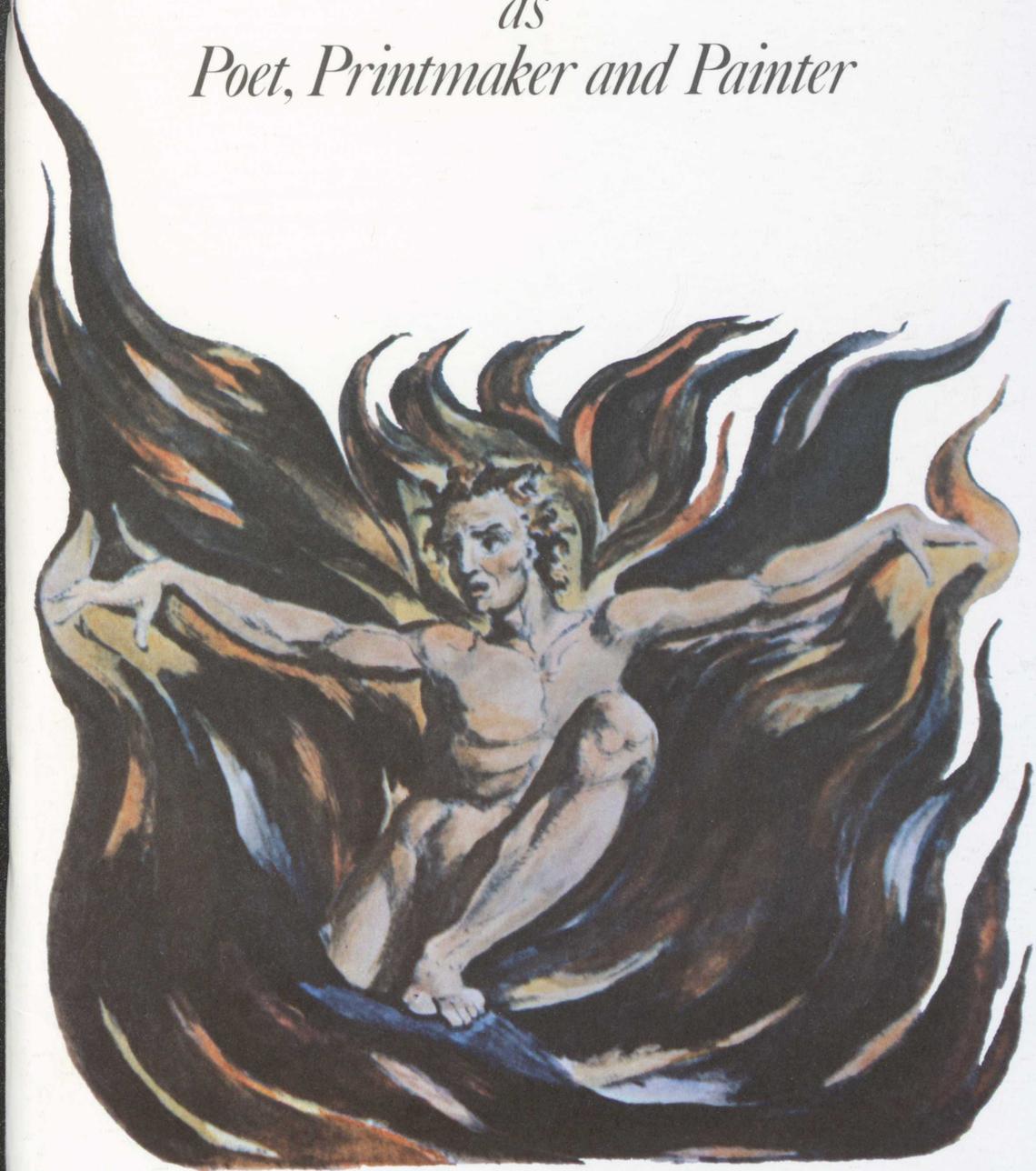


With Corroding Fires:
William Blake
as
Poet, Printmaker and Painter





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**With Corroding Fires: William Blake
as Poet, Printmaker and Painter**

I saw a mighty host folded in black clouds hovering on the
edge of the sky. They were not clouds but the following
sentences now followed by the number of lines they
contained.

How do you know that you will not die in any way
is an immense world of delight - for it is your sense that

The marriage of heaven and hell is man's
James McCall

Schenectady, New York
Schaffer Library, Union College
1900

I saw a mighty Devil folded in black clouds, hovering on the sides of the rock, with corroding fires he wrote the following sentence now perceived by the minds of men, & read by them on earth.

How do you know but ev'ry Bird that cuts the airy way,
Is an immense world of delight, clos'd by your senses five?

The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, plates 6 and 7

With Corroding Fires:

PREFACE

William Blake

as

Poet, Printmaker and Painter

A Descriptive Catalogue
Of An Exhibition Held at

Scribner Library, Skidmore College
from April 21 to May 11, 1980

and

Schaffer Library, Union College
from May 12 to June 15, 1980

by

James McCord

Schenectady, New York

Schaffer Library, Union College

1980

This catalogue is published by
The Friends of Union College Library
to honor the memory of Edwin Kirkman Tolan,
Librarian from 1962 to 1976. His taste and
foresight in acquiring the Trianon Press
Blakes proved to be the impetus for organizing
The Friends, and the foundation for Schaffer
Library's contribution to this exhibition.

Front Cover: William Blake, watercolored relief etching of "Orc in
Flames" for *America: A Prophecy*, plate 10.

Back Cover: William Blake, watercolored relief etching of "Two Figures
Embracing in Flames" for *Jerusalem*, plate 99.

PREFACE

This exhibition complements the co-hosted symposium, "With Corroding Fires: William Blake as Poet, Printmaker and Painter," held at Skidmore and Union Colleges, May 9 and 10, 1980. Both the exhibition and symposium are designed to explore the range and versatility of Blake's achievements as a writer and artist.

Blake's many interests can be explained in part by the fact that he straddled two of the most complex and varied periods in modern European history — the so-called Age of Reason (or Neo-classicism) and the so-called Age of Revolution (or Romanticism) — both of which were filled with unresolved questions, problems, and ambiguities. But a better explanation would be that Blake was one of those rare individuals whose mind would not be still, who was never satisfied with the ways of the world, and who believed that he could change the world so that it would become more like his dream of what it might be. During his sixty-nine years, Blake did something of almost everything. He drew in pencil, chalk, and watercolor, and painted in watercolor and tempera. He made etchings, engravings, colorprints, woodcuts, and a lithograph. He wrote prose essays, prose satires, a play, epigrams, lyrics, and epics. As a poet and artist he took nothing for granted; he continually experimented with new possibilities; he never ceased from creative exploration. Like one of his major characters, Los, Blake hammered continually at his forge creating and destroying, composing and analyzing. That Blake did all this despite the fact he was little known to his contemporaries, and was probably not taken seriously by more than a dozen people during his lifetime, attests to the power of his imagination, and the strength of his belief in art and in the beauty and dignity of human life.

This belief was based on Blake's conviction that the human imagination, like refining fire, could burn away baseness and reveal truth. Blake literally applied acid as a corroding fire to copper when he etched the plates for his illuminated books. In a

passage from *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, this technical process is described in moral terms:

But first the notion that man has a body distinct from his soul, is to be expunged; this I shall do, by printing in the infernal method, by corrosives, which in Hell are salutary and medicinal, melting apparent surfaces away, and displaying the infinite which was hid.

Blake worked in the "infernal method" because he believed that

If the doors of perception were cleansed every thing would appear to man as it is, infinite.

For man has closed himself up, till he sees all things thro' narrow chinks of his cavern.

The logo for this exhibition and symposium is taken from Blake's *America: A Prophecy*, and pictures Orc enrapt by his own lustful fires. These are also the fires of the spirit of revolution in America, which from England's point of view are hellish, terrifying, and corrosive because they eat away at the established conventional values of the fatherland.

But fire can also cleanse and redeem, and the tongues of fire surrounding the two figures on the penultimate plate of *Jerusalem* (back cover) suggest the flames of Pentecost, which signify martyrdom and gave the apostles the ability to see an image of ultimate truth. Their doors of perception cleansed, and in the act of experiencing what Blake would have termed a vision of the Human Form Divine, the figures bathing in flames understand the principle of continuity and harmony between father and martyred son, Old Testament and New Testament, because they see the world as human-formed:

All Human Forms identified even Tree Metal Earth & Stone. all
Human Forms identified, living going forth & returning wearied
Into the Planetary lives of Years Months Days & Hours reposing
And then Awaking into his Bosom in the Life of Immortality.

In all of his works Blake would like us as his readers and observers to subject ourselves to similar corrosive flames, for once we burn away the falsehoods we hold about our lives, the world around us, and our image of the Godhead, we will perceive that there is nothing holier than *human* life.

This exhibition is divided into eight sections, each providing a different point of focus on Blake's life and work. These topical divisions were determined chiefly by the availability of materials, and the subjects of the talks by symposium speakers. Section one focuses on Blake's life, and the second section on

four of the philosophical and literary figures who most influenced (positively and negatively) his thinking. Section three emphasizes the popularity of songs and ballads in the late eighteenth century, and provides background information for Karl Kroeber's talk on "Blake and the Tradition of Song." The next two sections concentrate on Blake's work as an engraver, illustrator, and designer, and supplement Joseph Viscomi's conference workshop on "Blake's Printing Methods." Sections six and seven focus on the illuminated books, and the interrelationships of text and design, word and image, in them, which is the subject of Edward J. Rose's talk, "Blake's Windows Into Eden." The last section includes information on Blake's magnificent watercolors and engravings of *The Book of Job*, and on the tradition of the English bard, this last topic discussed by Robert Gleckner in his talk on Blake's "The Voice of the Ancient Bard." The catalogue commentary is intended to provide a comprehensive introduction to Blake the man, the poet, the print-maker, the illustrator, and the artist; it is also hoped that particular interpretations will be of value to students and scholars with a special interest in Blake.

Anyone studying Blake must rely heavily on the scholarly work of G.E. Bentley, Jr., David V. Erdman, Robert Essick, and Sir Geoffrey Keynes, and I am particularly indebted to these people for much of the bibliographical, biographical and technical information that appears in this catalogue. For their support and generous help with the exhibition and catalogue, I want to thank John DeMarco, Adrienne Klein, Harry Marten, Jean Pelletiere, Hans Rozendaal, Alvin Skipsna, and Joseph Viscomi. For their expert knowledge of the exhibition materials and their incisive suggestions for improving the catalogue, I am very grateful to Ruth Anne Evans and Ellen Fladger of Schaffer Library. And special thanks goes to Jon Ramsey of Skidmore College for his valuable help in selecting and mounting the exhibition items and compiling the bibliography, and, above all, for his unfailing energy and commitment to quality.

CATALOGUE OF THE EXHIBITION

I. BIOGRAPHY

1. EDWARD BURNEY. "The Royal Academy Drawing School." Pen and colored wash drawing, 1780. *The Complete Portraiture of William & Catherine Blake*. London: The Trianon Press for the William Blake Trust, 1977.

In 1830, three years after Blake died, Allan Cunningham, author of *Lives of the Most Eminent British Painters, Sculptors, and Architects*, mixed truth and speculation when he described Blake's early years:

He was the second son of James Blake and Catherine his wife, and born on the 28th of November, 1757, in 28, Broad Street, Carnaby Market, London. His father, a respectable hosier, caused him to be educated for his own business, but the love of art came early upon the boy; he neglected the figures of arithmetic for those of Raphael and Reynolds; and his worthy parents often wondered how a child of theirs should have conceived a love for such unsubstantial vanities.

In fact, Blake's father probably encouraged his son's interest in drawing and bought him plaster casts of antique subjects and prints after Dürer, Michelangelo, and Raphael. From the ages of ten to fifteen Blake learned the art of draughtsmanship at Henry Pars's drawing school in the Strand, and for the next seven years he was apprenticed to one of the finest and most highly respected copperplate engravers of the time, James Basire of Great Queen Street, Lincoln's Inn Fields. This drawing by Burney pictures the kind of training Blake would have received at Pars's school and at the Royal Academy where, in 1779, he was admitted as a student to draw plaster and living models and study engraving.

Special Collections, Schaffer Library

2. CATHERINE BLAKE. "William Blake as a Young Man." Pencil drawing, c. 1828. Reproduced from *The Complete Portraiture of William & Catherine Blake*. London: The Trianon Press for the William Blake Trust, 1977.

This drawing of Blake at about the age of twenty-eight was probably made from memory by his wife shortly after his death

in 1827. The penetrating eye and flaming hair recall Blake's devilish rebel, Orc, while the nose, mouth, and chin resemble Blake's features in more realistic portraits. By the time he was twenty-eight, Blake had shown seven biblical and historical watercolors in three Royal Academy Exhibitions, written his first book of verse, *Poetical Sketches*, become friends with painter and etcher George Cumberland and illustrator Thomas Stothard, engraved more than sixty commercial book illustrations, and set up a printselling and printmaking business. He had also begun what was to be his closest (though sometimes strained) lifelong friendship with his "Dear Sculptor of Eternity," John Flaxman, who, with Henry Fuseli, is Blake's best known friend from the world of English art as it was represented by the Royal Academy in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century.

3. BLAKE. *Milton*, plate 40. London: The Trianon Press for the William Blake Trust, 1967.

William Hayley might have known Blake's engraving work as early as 1783, but Blake probably did not meet this connoisseur, poet, biographer, and patron of poets and artists until he was introduced to him by John Flaxman in early spring, 1800. Hayley, who lived at Earham on the Sussex coast, warmed quickly to Blake, and in September, 1800, William and Catherine accepted an invitation from him to leave Lambeth in London and live in a cottage at Felpham, a short distance from Hayley's house. Blake wrote enthusiastically to Flaxman shortly before the move, "It is to you I owe All my present Happiness. It is to you I owe perhaps the Principal Happiness of my life," and again to Flaxman shortly after the move:

We are safe arrived at our Cottage, which is more beautiful than I thought it, & more convenient. It is a perfect Model for Cottages &, I think, for Palaces of Magnificence, only Enlarging, not altering its proportions, & adding ornaments & not principals. Nothing can be more Grand than its Simplicity & Usefulness. . . .

Mr. Hayley reciev'd us with his usual brotherly affection. I have begun work. Felpham is a sweet place for Study, because it is more Spiritual than London. Heaven opens here on all sides her golden Gates; her windows are not obstructed by vapours; voices of Celestial inhabitants are more distinctly heard, & their forms more distinctly seen. . . .

In this plate (which is incorrect in representing the positioning of the cottage and its proximity to the sea) Blake pictures his

encounter with "The Virgin Ololon" in his garden at Felpham, and briefly describes in visionary terms his departure from London and her visitation:

For when Los joind with me he took me in his firy whirlwind
My Vegetated portion was hurried from Lambeths shades
He set me down in Felphams Vale & prepar'd a beautiful
Cottage for me that in three years I might write all these Visions
To display Natures cruel holiness: the deceits of Natural Religion
Walking in my Cottage Garden, sudden I beheld
The Virgin Ololon & address'd her as a Daughter of Beulah

As this passage suggests, Blake's euphoria did not last; "Agues & Rheumatisms" plagued Catherine, and Hayley's demands on Blake's time and energy plagued him physically, mentally, and spiritually. In poor health and bitter about their "three years' Slumber on the banks of the Ocean," William and Catherine returned to London in 1803, and never resided outside the metropolis again.

Special Collections, Schaffer Library

4. ROBERT BLAIR. *The Grave*, frontispiece by Louis Schiavonetti after Thomas Phillips. New York: The Phoenix Press, 1926.

Blake's recovery from the disappointments and hardships at Felpham was shortlived. When he sat at the age of forty-nine for this portrait by the Royal Academician, Thomas Phillips, he was an embittered man who felt he had been betrayed by the book publisher R.H. Cromek, and abandoned by his friends John Flaxman and William Hayley. In the early fall of 1805, Cromek shared with Blake his plan to issue "A New and Elegant Edition" of Robert Blair's popular poem, *The Grave*, and Blake understood that he would design and engrave the illustrations. But the prospectus for the book distributed in November announced a different arrangement: "Blair's Grave, illustrated with Twelve Very Spirited Engravings by Louis Schiavonetti from Designs Invented by William Blake." This modern impression is printed from the original plate etched by Schiavonetti, a conventional "high finish" engraver, after the portrait painted by Phillips in 1806 or 1807. Except for the depressing details related to the utter failure in 1809 of Blake's only private exhibition, information about his life from 1808 to 1818 is sketchy.

Scribner Library

5. JOHN LINNELL. "Portrait of William Blake." Pencil drawing, 1820. Reproduced from *The Complete Portraiture of William & Catherine Blake*. London: The Trianon Press for the William Blake Trust, 1977.

Shortly after meeting Blake in 1818, when he was twenty-six and Blake was sixty-one, John Linnell wrote in his *Journal*: "we soon became intimate and I employed him to help me with an engraving. . . ." Thus began one of Blake's happiest friendships, the two men attending exhibitions, visiting picture galleries, and spending evenings in talk together, and Linnell introducing the aging engraver, poet, and painter to his young friends. But most importantly, Linnell looked after the welfare of Catherine and William, and commissioned Blake to work on the two projects that reflect most clearly his genius as a designer and engraver: the sets of watercolor drawings and engravings of *The Book of Job* and Dante's *Divine Comedy*. This quiet but powerful drawing expresses beautifully Linnell's warm admiration and respect for Blake.

6. JOHN LINNELL. "William Blake at Hampstead." Pencil drawing, c. 1825. Reproduced from *The Complete Portraiture of William & Catherine Blake*. London: The Trianon Press for the William Blake Trust, 1977.

This portrait of Blake on the heath was drawn during one of Blake's visits to Linnell's permanently rented cottage on Home Farm of the Wylde's estate. On the verso of the drawing Linnell identified the approximate site and date: "Mr. Blake on the hill before our cottage at Hampstead c 1825 I guess." Blake thoroughly enjoyed his visits to Hampstead, but, as he wrote in a letter to Linnell a year and a half before his death, his health suffered because of them:

. . . I am again laid up by a cold in my stomach; the Hampstead Air, as it always did, so I fear it always will do this, Except it be the Morning air; & That, in my Cousin's time, I found I could bear with safety & perhaps benefit. I believe my Constitution to be a good one, but it has many peculiarities that no one but myself can know. When I was young, Hampstead, Highgate, Hornsea, Muswell Hill, & even Islington & all places North of London, always laid me up the day after, & sometimes two or three days, with precisely the same Complaint & the same torment of the Stomach, Easily removed, but excruciating while it lasts & enfeebling for some time after.

Over the next eighteen months Blake continued to work, often in bed because of his failing health, on his watercolor illustrations and seven engravings of the *Divine Comedy*. When he

knew death was imminent, he wrote with undiminished conviction and eloquence on the holiness of life and the human imagination:

I have been very near the Gates of Death & have returned very weak & an Old Man feeble & tottering, but not in Spirit & Life, not in The Real Man The Imagination which Liveth for Ever.

Blake died on August 12, 1827.

II. PHILOSOPHICAL BACKGROUNDS

7. FRANCIS BACON. *Of The Advancement and Proficiency of Learning*. Oxford: for Rob Young & Ed Forrest, 1640.

Blake classified Francis Bacon (the inventor of experimentalism), John Locke (the philosopher of the five senses) and Sir Isaac Newton (the father of natural philosophy) as an infernal trinity who:

Deny a Conscience in Man & the Communion of Saints & Angels
Contemning the Divine Vision & Fruition, Worshiping the Deus
Of the Heathen, The God of This World, & the Goddess Nature

More specific in his annotations to Bacon's *Essays Moral, Economical and Political*, Blake links Bacon to satanic systems of thought that include an exclusive belief in rational truth, the primacy of political power and property, and a denial of the significance of art. After his summarizing critique on the title page of Bacon's *Essays*, "Good Advice for Satans Kingdom," Blake attacks with vehemence and specificity Bacon's philosophical principles:

Self Evident Truth is one Thing and Truth the result of Reasoning
is another Thing Rational Truth is not the Truth of Christ but of
Pilate. . . The Increase of a State as of a Man is from Internal Improvement
of Intellectual Acquirement. Man is not Improved by the hurt of another
States are not Improved at the Expense of Foreigners Bacon has no notion
of any thing but Mammon: . . . Nothing of Arts or Artists or learned Men
or of Agriculture or any Useful Things His Business & Bosom was to be
Lord Chancellor.

Adler Collection, Scribner Library

8. JOHN LOCKE. *The Works of John Locke in Nine Volumes*. Vol. 1. London: for T. Longman, B. Law and Son, J. Johnson et al, 1794.

Blake often yoked John Locke with Lord Bacon, as in this scathing annotation to the *Discourses* of Sir Joshua Reynolds:

I read Burkes Treatise when very Young at the same time I read Locke on Human Understanding & Bacons Advancement of Learning on Every one of these Books I wrote my Opinions & on looking them over find that my Notes on Reynolds in this Book are exactly Similar. I felt the Same Contempt & Abhorrence then; that I do now. They mock Inspiration & Vision Inspiration & Vision was then & now is & I hope will always Remain my Element my Eternal Dwelling place.

Blake's scornful "Opinions" of Locke's "philosophy of the five senses" and denial of innate knowledge are best documented in his illuminated books *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, *Milton*, and *Jerusalem*, and in this marginal comment in Reynolds' *Discourses*:

Knowledge of Ideal Beauty. is Not to be Acquired It is Born with us
Innate Ideas. are in Every Man Born with him. they are truly Him-
self. The Man who says that we have No Innate Ideas must be a Fool
& Knave. Having No Con-Science or Innate Science.

Special Collections, Schaffer Library

9. SIR ISAAC NEWTON. *Observations upon the Prophecies of Daniel and the Apocalypse of St. John*. London: for J. Roberts, J. Tonson et al, 1733.

Newton chose *Daniel* and the *Apocalypse* for these observations because the "predictions of things to come relate to the state of the Church in all ages: and amongst the old Prophets, *Daniel* is most distinct in order of time, and easiest to be understood: and therefore in those things which relate to the last times, he must be made the key to the rest." Blake included Newton as one of the unholy trinity chiefly because he was responsible for perpetrating the view that the universe was an impersonal machine that ran efficiently, systematically, and reasonably. In his system, Newton, the philosophical materialist, did not allow for knowledge acquired through "Divine Vision" or the human imagination, and so Blake also regarded him a charter member of the Deist church. In "The Everlasting Gospel," Blake defines Bacon and Newton as Atheists who mock the idea of a Human Form Divine:

Like d^r Priestly & Bacon & Newton
Poor Spiritual Knowledge is not worth a button

For thus the Gospel S^r Isaac confutes
God can only be known by his Attributes
And as for the Indwelling of the Holy Ghost
Or of Christ & his Father its all a boast
And Pride & Vanity of the imagination
That disdains to follow this Worlds Fashion
To teach doubt & Experiment
Certainly was not what Christ meant

Special Collections, Schaffer Library

10. BLAKE. *America*, plate 8. London: The Trianon Press for the William Blake Trust, 1963.

To force his reader to examine critically church dogma, Blake often plays subtle allusive games in his illuminated books, as he does here with Newton's interpretation of "the vision of the Image composed of four Metals" in *Daniel*. In this plate text and design clash violently, Orc as the spirit of revolution crying in the wilderness against the dark sea, night, and clouds, and against Blake's image of Jehovah as a stony, impersonal God-head who reigns insensitively from on high. In the last three lines of text, Orc struggles by means of voice only to displace the false image of God we see in the design with his ideal description of man. Newton, his feet firmly planted in the physical world, had interpreted historically Daniel's metallic man: gold represents the head, Babylonia, Nebuchadnezzar; silver the breast, arms, and Persia; brass the belly, thighs, and Greece; iron the legs and Rome; and iron and clay the feet, toes, and smaller kingdoms from the time of Theodosius to Emperor Philip. Orc, on the other hand, interprets the passage from *Daniel* prophetically, and makes his version of redeemed man purer by omitting the inferior ingredients of iron and clay from his composition.

Special Collections, Schaffer Library

11. JOHN MILTON. *Paradise Lost*. London: S. Simmons, 1674.

The two literary and philosophical works Blake knew best were the Bible and *Paradise Lost*, and to Blake, Milton wrote in the tradition of the prophets who gave voice to what they had seen in vision. But as much as he revered Milton, Blake also believed that classicism had led England's great epic poet astray:

The Stolen and Perverted Writings of Homer & Ovid: of Plato & Cicero. which all Men ought to contemn: are set up by artifice against the Sublime of the Bible. . . .Shakespeare & Milton were both curbd by the general malady & infection from the silly Greek & Latin slaves of the Sword.

Special Collections, Schaffer Library

12. BLAKE. *Milton*, plate 1. London: The Trianon Press for the William Blake Trust, 1967.

Blake was inspired to wrestle in a grand way with Milton's thought and influence when he resided in Felpham, where he composed most of his illuminated book *Milton*. In his earliest known references to the poem, Blake defined the spiritual milieu that led to the project, his epic ambitions, and his prophetic role in the divine composition:

But none can know the Spiritual Acts of my three years' Slumber on the banks of the Ocean, unless he has seen them in the Spirit, or unless he should read My long Poem descriptive of those Acts; for I have in these three years composed an immense number of verses on One Grand Theme, Similar to Homer's Iliad or Milton's Paradise Lost, the Persons & Machinery intirely new to the Inhabitants of Earth (some of the Persons Excepted). . . .I may praise it, since I dare not pretend to be any other than the Secretary; the Authors are in Eternity. I consider it as the Grandest Poem that this World Contains.

On this title page "immortal" Milton is portrayed as a pilgrim embarking on his journey toward truth. The dark clouds of doctrinal error he faces are of his own making because he believes that Reason is man's supreme faculty. Throughout the poem "The Author & Printer W Blake" is both Milton's critic and guide, and it is Blake's intelligence and humane understanding that enables Milton to reevaluate his identity as a philosopher (a reevaluation suggested by the peculiar break of "Milton"), and reconsider his pronounced intention in *Paradise Lost*: "To Justify the Ways of God to Man."

Lent by Dr. Hans Rozendaal

13. BLAKE. *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, plate 5. London: The Trianon Press for the William Blake Trust, 1960.

This text includes Blake's "infernal" interpretation of the psychological conflicts in *Paradise Lost*. The design of a falling warrior, horse, and chariot wheel appears to illustrate the opening three lines of the plate. Phaeton, the classic example of adolescent energy, and a type of Milton's Lucifer, is "restrained" by a rational "Governor" or despotic Godhead who prohibits the expression of "desire" precisely because he knows his own desires are weak. After turning Milton's trinitarian family on its head, Blake in the next plate assigns each member shocking new allegorical value, and praises Milton for his unwitting genius:

But in Milton; the Father is Destiny, the Son, a Ratio of the five senses. & the Holy-ghost, Vacuum!

Note: The reason Milton wrote in fetters when he wrote of Angels & God, and at liberty when of Devils & Hell, is because he was a true Poet and of the Devils party without knowing it

Special Collections, Schaffer Library

III. THE TRADITION OF SONG AND BALLAD

14. THOMAS PERCY. *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*. London: for J. Dodsley, 1765. 3 vols.

Thomas Percy's objective in compiling this very popular and influential collection was to pay tribute to England's "ancient Bards and Minstrels, an order of men who were once greatly respected. . .and contributed to soften the roughness of a martial and unlettered people by their songs and their music." This work, which appeared thirty-three years before Wordsworth and Coleridge's *Lyrical Ballads*, enchanted, especially, the young Sir Walter Scott, who wrote in his *Autobiography*:

. . .above all I then first became acquainted with Bishop Percy's *Reliques of Ancient Poetry*. . .it may be imagined, but cannot be described, with what delight I saw pieces of the same kind which had amused my childhood, and still continued in secret the Delilahs of my imagination, considered as the subject of sober research, grave commentary, and apt illustration by an editor who showed his poetical genius was capable of emulating the best qualities of what his pious labour preserved.

Adler Collection, Scribner Library

15. JOSEPH RITSON. *A Select Collection of English Songs*. London: for J. Johnson, 1783. 3 vols.

This "National Repository of Melody and Song" (so-called by its immodest author) was published at a time when songs and ballads were immensely popular. Ritson's aims were "to exhibit all the most admired, and intrinsically excellent specimens of lyric poetry in the English language at one view; to promote real, instructive entertainment; to satisfy the critical taste of the judicious; to indulge the nobler feelings of the pensive; and to afford innocent mirth to the gay." He selected and arranged the songs accordingly under four classes: "Love Songs," "Drinking Songs," "Miscellaneous Songs," and "Ancient Ballads." His broad definition of song as "the expression of a sentiment, sensation or image, the depiction of an action, or the narrative of an event, by words differently measured, and attached to certain sounds, which we call melody or tune" was an early effort to describe the form that so obviously influenced the composition of Blake's *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, and Wordsworth and Coleridge's *Lyrical Ballads*. All seven of Blake's signed engravings for this work are after designs by a friend of his early years, Thomas Stothard, the successful book illustrator.

Special Collections, Schaffer Library

16. SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE. *Poems on Various Subjects*. London: for G.G. and J. Robinsons, 1796.

This first collection of Coleridge's poetry appeared thirteen years after Blake's first volume, *Poetical Sketches*. In his preface, Coleridge argues that sonnets and monodies provide great emotional and intellectual pleasure, and ought not to be condemned for their "querulous egotism;" and in language that anticipates Wordsworth's statements in "Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*," he describes the problems of adopting this poetic stance:

Poems on various subjects written at different times and prompted by very different feelings, but which will be read at one time and under the influence of one set of feelings — this is an heavy disadvantage: for we love or admire a poet in proportion as he develops our own sentiments and emotions, or reminds us of our own knowledge.

This statement would have appealed to Blake whose poetry, especially *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, is deliberately

diversified in point of view, voice, and feeling, and yet also attempts to engage the reader completely and develop his emotional and intellectual sympathies.

Special Collections, Schaffer Library

17. [WILLIAM WORDSWORTH AND SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE.] *Lyrical Ballads, with A Few Other Poems*. London: for J. & A. Arch, 1798.

This landmark publication, which is more firmly anchored in the lyric tradition than Wordsworth would have us believe, appeared nine years after Blake's *Songs of Innocence* and four years after his combined *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*. It opens and closes with two of the best-known poems of the Romantic period: Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," and Wordsworth's "Lines written a few miles above Tintern Abbey"; between these two pieces appear conversational poems, contemporary ballads, contemporary narratives, dramatic dialogues, and a variety of lyrics. In the advertisement Wordsworth writes that the majority of the poems are to be considered "experiments" in their use of language, phraseology, voice, and style, Wordsworth here using the word "experiment" in much the same way Blake uses the related word, "experience:" to make trial of, to put to the test, to try.

Special Collections, Schaffer Library

18. WILLIAM WORDSWORTH [AND SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE]. *Lyrical Ballads with Other Poems*. London: for T.N. Longman and O. Rees, 1800. 2 vols.

For this expanded collection of *Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth prefaces the first volume with his historic manifesto on poetics, shifts the order of the poems so that his short conversational lyrics, "Expostulation and Reply" and "The Tables Turned," are placed first and Coleridge's "The Ancient Mariner" is placed next to last, and adds a second volume of his own poems. Blake and Wordsworth probably never met, but they did know each other's poetry. After he read several *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, Wordsworth is reported to have said: "There is no doubt this poor man was mad, but there is something in the madness of this man which interests me more than the Sanity of Lord Byron & Walter Scott!" Blake's response to Wordsworth's poetry and thought was more ambivalent. The diarist Henry

Crabb Robinson wrote in his *Reminiscences* that Blake's "delight in Wordsworth's poetry was intense nor did it seem less. . . by the reproaches he continually cast on W for his imputed worship of nature — which in the mind of Blake constituted Atheism." Blake summarized his objections to Wordsworth in his annotations to the 1815 edition of Wordsworth's *Poems*: "I see in Wordsworth the Natural Man rising up against the Spiritual Man Continually & then he is No Poet but a Heathen Philosopher at Enmity with God. . . Natural Objects always did & now do Weaken deaden & obliterate Imagination in Me Wordsworth must know that what he Writes Valuable is Not to be found in Nature."

Adler Collection, Scribner Library

19. WALTER SCOTT. *Ballads and Lyrical Pieces*. Edinburgh: for Archibald Constable and Co., 1806.

Inspired by Percy's *Reliques* — "nor do I believe I ever read a book half so frequently, or with half the enthusiasm" — young Walter Scott began collecting his own versions of old ballads and tunes on his country rambles "in quest of castle and other remains of antiquity." This anthology of ballads, all of which had been published previously in Lewis's *Tales of Wonder* (1801) and Scott's own *The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Borders* (1802-1803), reflects the continued popularity of the form, and draws attention to the special "romantic" qualities of the Scottish, or "North Countrie" ballad. In his "Essay on Ancient English Minstrels," Thomas Percy had observed,

There is hardly an ancient Ballad or Romance, wherein a Minstrel or Harper appears, but he is characterized by way of eminence to have been "of the North Countrie:" and indeed the prevalence of the Northern dialect in such kinds of poems, shews that this representation is real. The reason of which seems to be this; the civilizing of nations has begun from the South: the North would therefore be the last civilized, and the old manners would longest subsist there. . . . The Reader will observe in the more ancient ballads of this collection, a cast of style and measure very different from that of contemporary poets of a higher class. . . .

Adler Collection, Scribner Library

20. SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE. *Christabel: Kubla Khan, A Vision; The Pains of Sleep*. London: for John Murray, 1816.

This volume includes the three poems on the title page and Coleridge's two prefaces that explain why the first poem is incomplete and the second a "fragment." It was published at a time when we know very little about Blake beyond the facts that John Flaxman helped him considerably by securing engraving commissions during these trying years, and that Blake was probably hard at work engraving, painting, and composing his last illuminated book, *Jerusalem*. It is tempting to imagine Blake's Los in *Jerusalem* as a version of Coleridge's sublime bard in "Kubla Khan," for like Los, Coleridge's prophetic singer and architect struggles to become a holy and terrifying figure who harmonizes apparent contraries by building a stately palace of the mind:

Could I revive within me
Her symphony and song,
To such a deep delight 'twould win me,
That with music loud and long,
I would build that dome in air,
That sunny dome! those caves of ice!
And all who heard should see them there,
And all should cry, Beware! Beware!
His flashing eyes, his floating hair!
Weave a circle round him thrice,
And close your eyes with holy dread,
For he on honey-dew hath fed,
And drunk the milk of Paradise.

Blake never mentions Coleridge, though he may have talked with him two or three times at the home of the Aders, wealthy friends of John Linnell. Coleridge, on the other hand, speaks very enthusiastically about Blake in a letter of 1818 written after he had read a friend's copy of *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*:

I have this morning been reading a strange publication — viz. Poems with very wild and interesting pictures, as the swathing, etched (I suppose) but it is said — printed and painted by the Author, W. Blake. He is a man of Genius — and I apprehend, a Swedenborgian — certainly, a mystic *emphatically*. You perhaps smile at my calling another Poet, a *Mystic*; but verily I am in the very mire of commonplace common-sense compared with Mr Blake, apo- or rather ana-calyptic Poet, and Painter!

In a letter written a few days later to C.A. Tulk, the owner of the copy he borrowed, Coleridge ranked Blake's *Songs* in order

of preference, "The Divine Image," "The Little Black Boy," and "Night" giving him "pleasure. . . in the highest degree."

Special Collections, Schaffer Library

IV. COMMERCIAL ENGRAVER

21. J. OLIVIER. *Fencing Familiarized*, "4.e Position de l'allongement du Coup de quatre." London: for John Bell, 1780.

During most of his adult life Blake engraved commercial plates after designs by other artists to illustrate the works of other writers, and was dependent upon commissions from London publishers to make his living. This slight plate is his first signed commercial engraving and was probably executed when he was twenty-two, about the time he decided to leave his brief period of study at the Royal Academy.

Lent by John DeMarco

22. GEORGE MORLAND. "The Idle Laundress." Stipple engraving, 1788.

Over a period of fifty years Blake issued close to fifty "separate plates," engravings and etchings that were not included in the illuminated books, not part of a series, and not commercial book illustrations. This delicately colored separate plate is one of a pair of prints after paintings by George Morland, a genre and landscape painter of rustic scenes who was popular in the late 1780's. Stipple engraving is distinguished by its soft tonal surface achieved through the use of roulettes or stipple-gravers that dot the plate. The majority of Blake's stipple work was executed between 1782 and 1788, when he was attempting to establish a reputation for himself in London as a commercial engraver. He later expressed his aesthetic and moral objections to this mode in his condemnation of several popular "high finish" engravers of his time:

I account it a Public Duty respectfully to address myself to The Chalcographic Society & to Express to them my opinion the result of the incessant Practise & Experience of Many Years That Engraving as an Art is Lost in England owing to an artfully propagated opinion that Drawing spoils an Engraver. . . .

While the works of Pope & Dryden are looked upon as the Same Art with those of Milton & Shakespeare while the works of Strange & Woollett [Hall or Bartolozzi] are looked upon as the same Art with those of Rafael & Albert Durer there can be no Art in a Nation but such as is Subservient to the interest of the Monopolizing Trader. . . .

A Machine is not a Man nor a Work of Art it is destructive of Humanity & of Art

Lent by John DeMarco

23. MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT. *Original Stories from Real Life*, "Look what a fine morning it is." London: for J. Johnson, 1791.

Blake probably met Mary Wollstonecraft, author of *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, and a daughter of Albion who voiced her opinions on the psycho-sexual and social enslavement of women, at Joseph Johnson's bookshop. In the late 1780's, Johnson was a friend and publisher to a number of freethinkers such as William Godwin, Henry Fuseli, Tom Paine, and Joseph Priestley. With *Original Stories* Blake had his first opportunity to design as well as engrave a series of commercial illustrations, which allowed him some freedom to interpret Wollstonecraft's text. At the time of this commission he had completed *Songs of Innocence* and was working on *Songs of Experience*, which include observations on education that are puzzling and unsettling when compared to the direct moralizing of *Original Stories*. Wollstonecraft's views that "we suffer children to be bound with fetters, which their half-formed faculties cannot break," that knowledge should "flow more from example than teaching," and that works of this sort ought "to assist the teacher as well as the pupil" would have appealed to Blake. But her method of presentation is altogether different, as this saccharine frontispiece illustration with accompanying legend suggests.

Lent by Dr. Hans Rozendaal

24. WILLIAM HAYLEY. *An Essay on Sculpture*, "Thomas Hayley, the Disciple of John Flaxman." London: for T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1800.

This portrait was the result of Hayley's wish to add to his epistles on sculpture "a neat small Head [of his illegitimate son,



John Linnell, pencil drawing of "William Blake at Hampstead" (cat. 6)



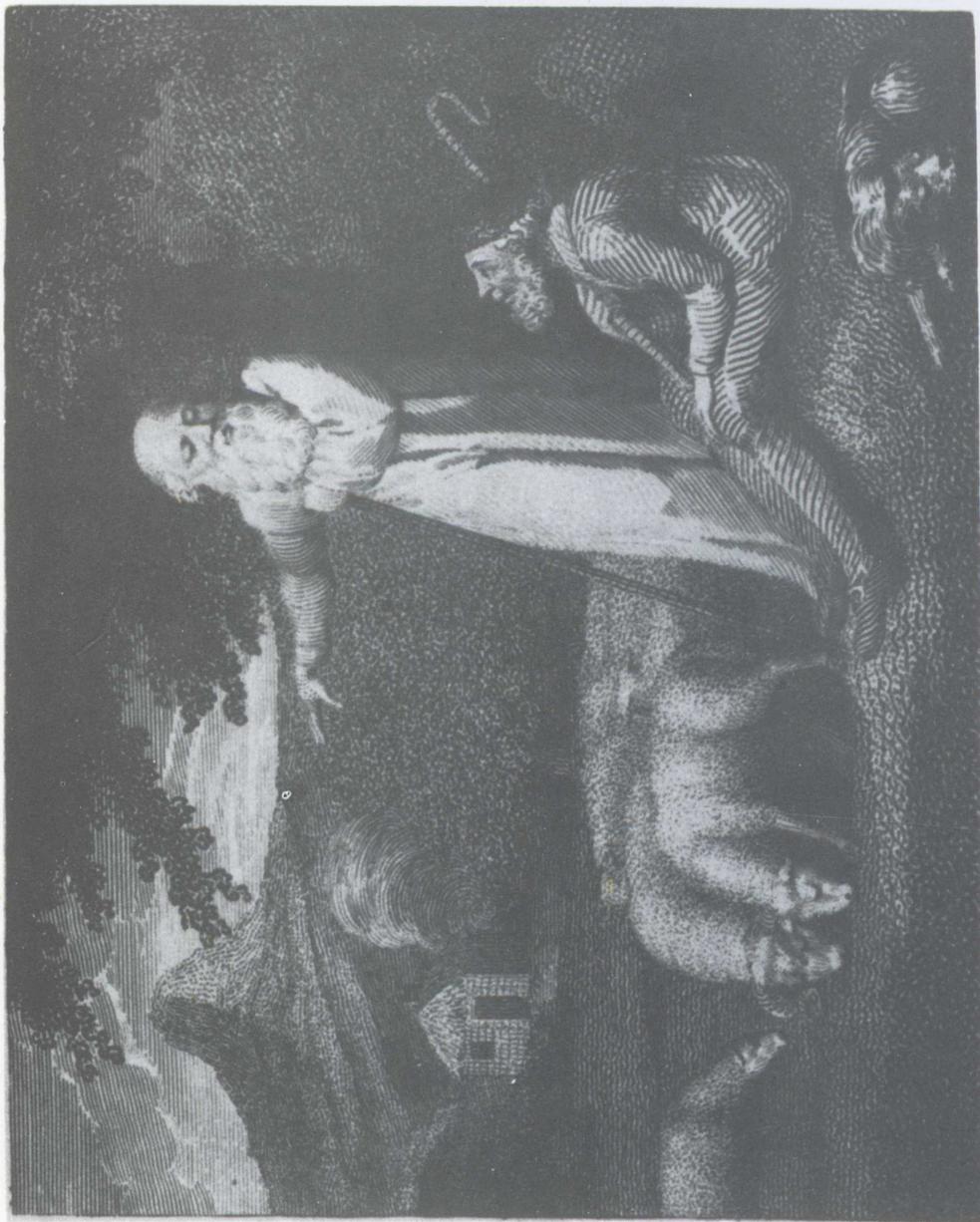
William Blake, headpiece engraving to "Drinking Songs" for Joseph Ritson's *A Select Collection of English Songs* (Cat. 35)



William Blake, engraving of "The Eagle" for William Hayley's *Ballads* (Cat. 27)



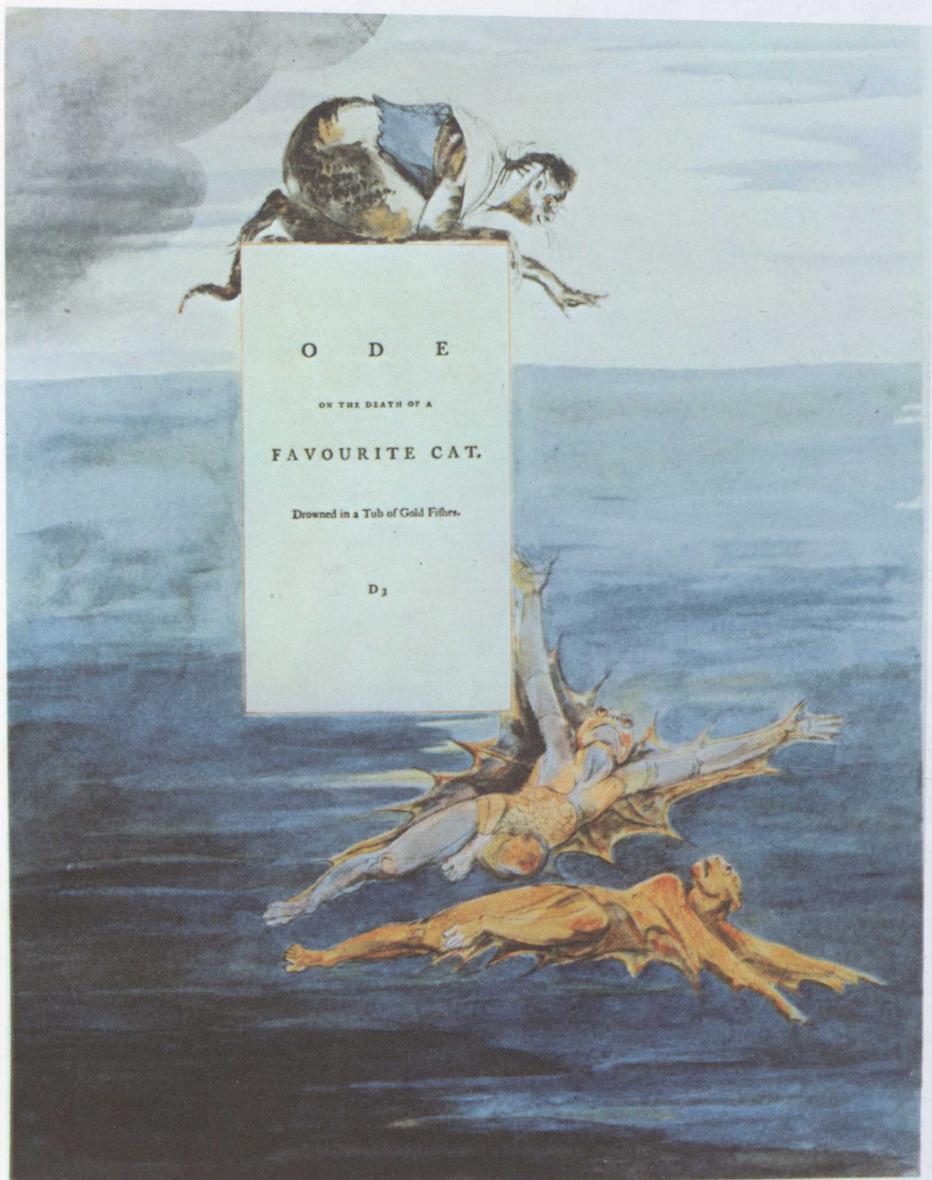
P. Fourdrinier after W. Kent, engraving of "The Shepherd and the Philosopher" for John Gay's *Fables* (Cat. 30)



William Blake, engraving of "The Shepherd and the Philosopher" for John Gay's *Fables* (Cat. 31)



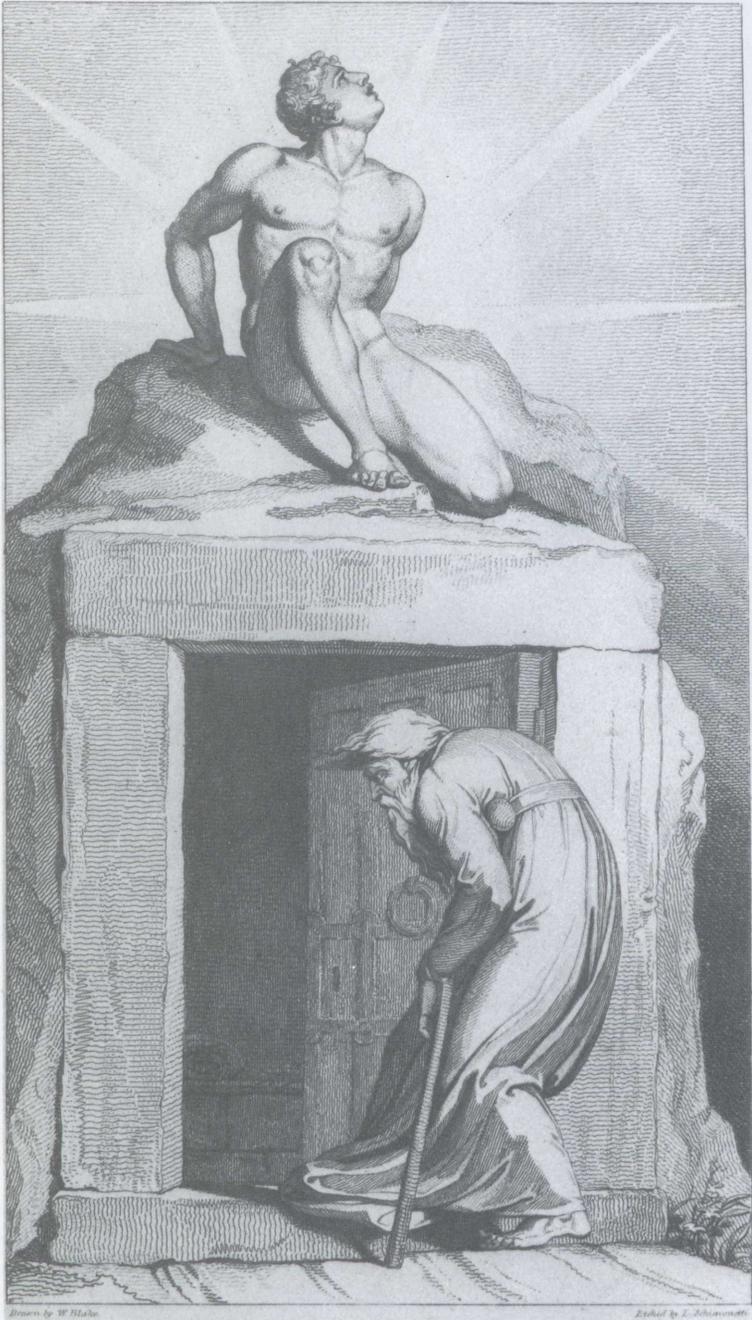
Richard Bentley, design for
Thomas Gray's "Ode on the Death of a Favourite Cat" (Cat. 33)



William Blake, watercolor drawing for Thomas Gray's
"Ode on the Death of a Favourite Cat" (Cat. 34)



William Blake, watercolored relief etching of
 "Death's Door" for *America: A Prophecy*, plate 12 (Cat. 44)



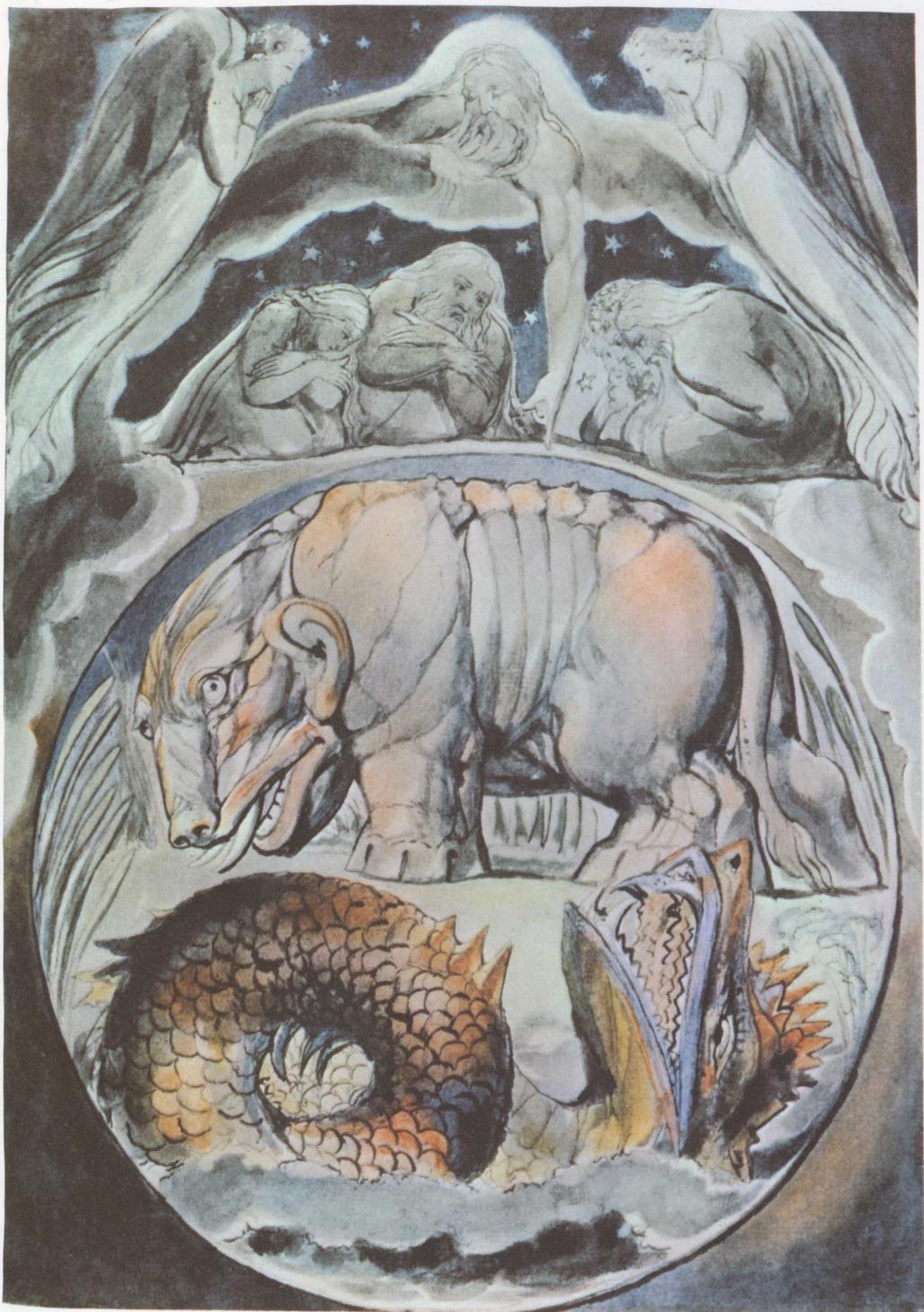
Design by W. Blake

Engraved by L. Schiavonetti

Louis Schiavonetti after William Blake, etching of
"Death's Door" for Robert Blair's *The Grave* (Cat. 46)



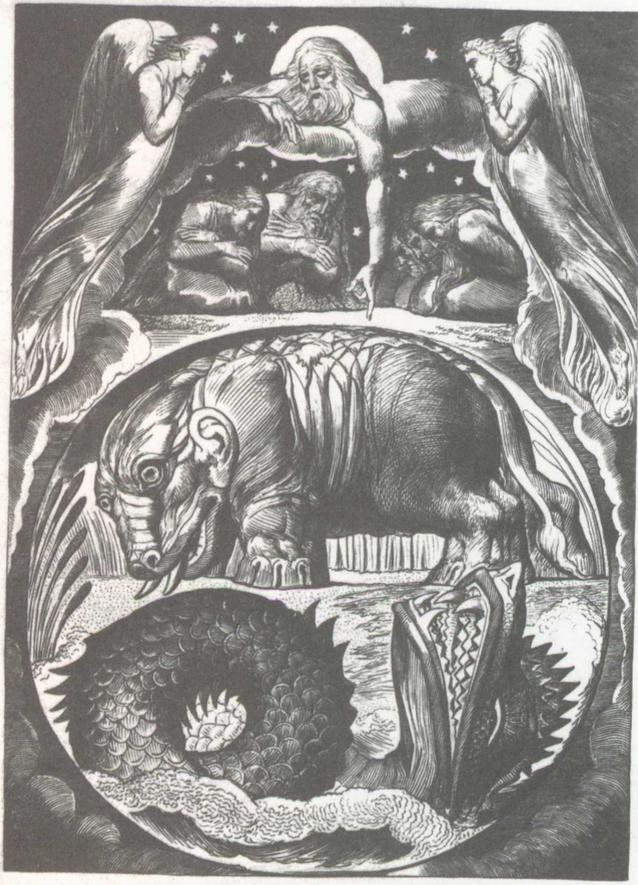
32 William Blake, pencil drawing of
"Behemoth and Leviathan" for *Illustrations of the Book of Job* (Cat. 48)



William, Blake, watercolor drawing of
"Behemoth and Leviathan" for *Illustrations of the Book of Job* (Cat. 49)

Can any understand the spreadings of the Clouds
the noise of his Tabernacle

Also by watering he wearieth the thick cloud
He scattereth the bright cloud also it is turned
by his counsels



Of Behemoth he saith. He is the chief of the ways of God
Of Leviathan he saith. He is King over all the Children of Pride

Behold now Behemoth which I made with thee

W. Blake invenit & sculpt

London. Published as the Act directs March 8. 1825 by Will Blake N^o 3 Fountain Court Strand

William Blake, engraving of
"Behemoth and Leviathan" for *Illustrations of the Book of Job* (Cat. 50)

Thomas Alphonso, who was dying], as a closing vignette" to be engraved after John Flaxman's medallion of the boy. Flaxman approved the idea and arranged for Blake to engrave the plate. Hayley found Blake's first two proofs unacceptable and in a detailed letter defined the changes he desired:

The great & radical defect I conceive to be this — the engraving is a Head 3 years older than the medallion — the Features by being made *longer & more sedate* have lost the *lively sensibility* of 16. . . .

. . . would it not give a little younger appearance to shorten the space between the nose & the upper lip a little more by representing the mouth rather more open, in the act of speaking [and] the making the Dot at the corner of the mouth a little deeper, & adding a darker Touch also at the Bottom of the Eye would add a little gay juvenility to the Features. . . .

Following these instructions, Blake produced this published state of the portrait, his first of seven commercial engraving projects for Hayley.

Lent by John DeMarco

25. WILLIAM HAYLEY. *The Triumphs of Temper*, "Serena Entering the Cave of Spleen." Chichester: for T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1803.

In a letter of January 10, 1802, from his cottage in Felpham to his patron in London, Thomas Butts, Blake mentioned his work on this project:

I am now engaged in Engraving 6 small plates for a New Edition of Mr Hayley's *Triumphs of Temper*, from drawings by Maria Flaxman, sister to my friend the Sculptor, and it seems that other things will follow in course, if I do but Copy these well.

Blake did copy the drawings well. In this plate for a passage Hayley especially admired (having accepted the challenge of a subject that had already been "so happily executed by the masterly pencil of Pope"), the dark heavily-etched "fantastic arch" contrasts in tone and texture with the lightly engraved "nymph," Serena, who steps toward a grey, variously tooled "subterranean bower" infested with "shadowy horrors of. . . secret reign." But for Blake "other things" did not follow in course. In the same letter he complained of Catherine's "Ague & Rheumatism," his own illness, the general "unhealthiness of the place," and the strained working conditions: "I find on all hands great objections to my doing any thing but the meer

drudgery of business, & intimations that if I do not confine myself to this, I shall not live; this has always pursu'd me." Furthermore, this edition was poorly received. "Ladies" for whom the book was intended, Hayley wrote,

find Fault with the Engravings — our poor industrious Blake has received sixty Guineas for them from my Bookseller & I believe both the artist & the paymaster are dissatisfied on the occasion.

Adler Collection, Scribner Library

26. WILLIAM HAYLEY. *The Life, and Posthumous Writings, of William Cowper, Esqr*, "William Cowper From a Portrait in Crayons Drawn from the Life by Romney." Chichester: for J. Johnson, 1803-1804. 3 vols.

In a letter to Thomas Butts of September 11, 1801, Blake described the ambitious project on which he and Hayley were engaged:

...my Principal labour at this time is Engraving Plates for Cowper's Life, a Work of Magnitude, which Mr Hayley is now Labouring with all his matchless industry, & which will be a most valuable acquisition to Literature. . . .

Cowper's cousin, Lady Hesketh, protested violently to Hayley when he suggested that Blake make an engraving after George Romney's portrait. But after Hayley reassured her he would "endeavor not to wound [her] affectionate Feelings on this Subject," he set Blake to work on this engraving and three others for the *Life*. The portrait was well received, though when Blake described this success to his brother, James, he betrayed his condescension as well as expressed his satisfaction:

My Heads of Cowper for Mr H's life of Cowper have pleas'd his Relations exceedingly & in Particular Lady Hesketh & Lord Cowper — to please Lady H. was a doubtful chance who almost ador'd her Cousin the poet & thought him all perfection, & she writes that she is quite satisfied with the portraits & charm'd by the great Head in particular, tho' she never could bear the original Picture.

Scribner Library

27. WILLIAM HAYLEY. *Ballads*, "The Eagle." Chichester: for Richard Phillips, 1805.

Blake designed and engraved all five illustrations for this children's book, and when he came to "The Eagle" he delighted in emphasizing the difference in point of view between the author's

version of this climactic moment and his own. The irony is clear when we consider Blake's portrayal of the kidnapped babe's innocent, playful response to the danger in opposition to the melodramatic opening stanza on the facing page. The juxtaposition is even more emphatic later in the ballad when we read the stanza that inspired the illustration:

It is thy mother, gallant boy,
Lo! up her figure springs:
She darts, unheard, with speechless joy
Between the Eagle's wings.

The plate is executed with exceptional care and expertise, Blake varying the effect of shading and texture in the "craggy" rocks, contrasting form and tone in his rendering of the dark, powerful, feathered eagle and the lightly engraved and more sharply outlined mother and child, paying detailed attention to expressive physiognomy, and creating a sense of eternal light and spaciousness in the background.

Scribner Library

V. ENGRAVER TO DESIGNER

28. JOHN GAY. *Fables*, "The Dog and the Fox." Vol. 2. London: for J. and P. Knapton and T. Cox, 1738.

This volume of the fourth edition of Gay's popular *Fables* includes eighteen plates engraved in the conventional commercial method at a time when England lagged far behind France and Italy as a quality book producer, and, with the exception of William Hogarth, had no native illustrator to compete with the best work of the French and Italian. All of the engravings in this volume are executed by G. Scotin, "sculp," sculptor or engraver, after drawings by H. Gravelot, "inv et delin," inventor and delineator or designer and draughtsman.

Adler Collection, Scribner Library

29. JOHN GAY. *Fables*, "The Dog and the Fox." Vol. 2. London: for John Stockdale, 1793.

During most of the eighteenth century in England it was not uncommon for commercial engravers to copy illustrations from

earlier editions of a work. Several of Blake's twelve engravings for this handsome edition of the *Fables*, which is "embellished" with seventy plates, might be considered "copies" and others "imitations." Blake's version of this plate reproduces fairly faithfully, in reverse, Gravelot's composition, characterization of the dog and fox, and a number of secondary details, such as farmer Dobbins' wife on her way to town with her "poultry-ware" on market day, the church tower in the background, and the leafy plant in the foreground. If there is a detail characteristic of Blake's personal style, it is the dog. But in general, technique, not imagery, accounts for the main differences between Blake's "mixed method" engraving here and Scotin's unadorned engraving for the 1738 edition.

Special Collections, Schaffer Library

30. JOHN GAY. *Fables*, "The Shepherd and the Philosopher." Vol. 1. London: for J. Tonson and J. Watts, 1733.

This illustration to Gay's introductory fable, which is a mild disputation on the relative value of natural philosophy and bookish philosophy, reflects little effort on the part of the commercial engraver. Compared with Blake's engraving of the same fable, P. Fourdrinier's etched, ruled, and cross-hatched lines appear to be cut quickly and mechanically. Furthermore, Fourdrinier makes extensive use of conventional images, exaggerates gesture, and cares little about defining details sharply, varying texture and shading, or deepening characterization so that the figures better represent the two distinct philosophic voices in the poem.

Adler Collection, Scribner Library

31. JOHN GAY. *Fables*, "The Shepherd and the Philosopher." Vol. 1. London: for John Stockdale, 1793.

Like Fourdrinier, Blake follows Kent's composition closely, but this engraving reflects the conscientiousness and care with which Blake usually executed commissions for commercial work. A subtle variety of etched blacks defines the different textures and qualities of the ground, tree trunks, leaves, lambs, and billowing smoke behind the small hut, while the heavy blacks of the shaggy sheep dog and the shepherd's clothes con-

trast purposefully with the fine lines of the philosopher's beard and gown. In addition, the major details and figures are distinctively Blake's: the trees, leaves, and flock of sheep resemble those scattered as leitmotifs in *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, and the philosopher recalls Blake's long-bearded patriarch who sometimes represents Jehovah, sometimes a bard, in his early works "There is No Natural Religion," "The Voice of the Ancient Bard," "London," "The Human Abstract," *The Gates of Paradise*, and *America*.

Special Collections, Schaffer Library

32. BLAKE. *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, "The Lamb." London: The Trianon Press for the William Blake Trust, 1955.

"Innocence" may be defined as "freedom from sin, guilt, or moral wrong. . . from cunning or artifice," and most of Blake's *Songs of Innocence* are sung by speakers who perceive the world from this point of view. But Blake was not so artless himself to think pre-lapsarian consciousness could weather the stormy world of Experience, which he defined as "Suffering & Distress," and by which we acquire "Understanding and Thought." For Blake, Experience is inevitable, and the world of Experience *naturally* intrudes into the world of Innocence, whether Innocence perceives the intrusion or not. In this *Song of Innocence*, which is inundated with conventional pastoral imagery reminiscent of Gay's "The Shepherd and the Philosopher," Blake inserts such unsettling images in the design as the heavily entwined saplings that enclose the entire text, and the heavy, shading oak in the background. He also controls the inquiring voice of the poem so that what the speaker says strikes the reader as being too naive, his lack of thought and understanding bordering on silliness. The reader is made even more uneasy because he knows what the speaker apparently does not know: that the "Lamb of God," with its "clothing of delight" and "tender voice," cannot survive Experience emotionally, psychologically, intellectually, or spiritually if it remains "meek" and "mild." The reader also knows that the lamb will be persecuted, and that its sacrificial death might simply be slaughter.

Special Collections, Schaffer Library

33. THOMAS GRAY. *Designs by Mr. R. Bentley for Six Poems by Mr. T. Gray, "Ode on the Death of A Favourite Cat."* London: for R. Dodsley, 1753.

This volume of six select poems was the chief illustrated edition of Gray's poems in the eighteenth century. The author was an acknowledged "modern" poet who regarded himself working in the tradition of Pindar. But the marketability of the book rested on the appeal of the illustrations, which are large, ornate, dense with detail, and intellectually engaging in their witty, stylish use of classical, contemporary, and textual allusion. Should the reader not be versed in these matters, "Explanations of the Prints" were included at the back of the book. The description of this frontispiece and headpiece reads:

The cat standing on the brim of the tub, and endeavouring to catch a gold fish. Two cariatides of a river god stopping his ears to her cries, and Destiny cutting the nine threads of life, are on each side. Above, is a cat's head between two expiring lamps, and over that, two mouse-traps, between a mandarin-cat sitting before a Chinese pagoda, and angling for gold fish into a china jar; and another cat drawing up a net. At the bottom are mice enjoying themselves on the prospect of the cat's death; a lyre and pallet.

[Headpiece.] The cat almost drowned in the tub. A standish on a table to write her elegy. Two cats as mourners with hatbands and staves. Dead birds, mice and fish hung up on each side.

Scribner Library

34. BLAKE. *William Blake's Water-Colour Designs for the Poems of Gray, "Ode on the Death of a Favourite Cat."* London: The Trianon Press for the William Blake Trust, 1972. 3 vols.

It was probably following the failure in 1797 of what promised to be the largest commission of Blake's life — the designing and engraving of 243 illustrations for a special edition of Edward Young's *Night Thoughts* — that he was asked by his good and generous friends, John and Ann Flaxman, to make a set of watercolor illustrations to Gray's poems. When compared to Richard Bentley's introductory illustration of Gray's "Favourite Cat," Blake's is striking in its original design, witty interpretation, imaginative characterization, and brilliant coloring. Blake transforms Gray's "pensive Selima," "Demurest of the tabby kind" with "emerald eyes," into a humanized calcula-

ting, greedy, red-eyed predator, and Gray's gliding gold fish of "angel" form into two demons that are part human, part satanic with military armor and spiked batwings. In most of his 116 designs to Gray, Blake criticizes and interprets more than illustrates the poetry; in this poem, especially, he expands — often comically — the meaning of Gray's light, ironic, cautionary, moralistic piece, which was intended for the instruction and improvement of "ladies."

Special Collections, Schaffer Library

VI. THE ILLUMINATED BOOKS

35. JOSEPH RITSON. *A Select Collection of English Songs*, headpiece to "Drinking Songs." Vol. 2. London: for J. Johnson, 1783.

The illustrations for Ritson's *Songs* are fairly typical of eighteenth century English book engravings. Unlike woodcuts, which could be printed on the same press as type, metal plate engravings of this sort required rolling presses, but they also offered an expanding buying public deluxe illustrations with more variation of shading and finer detail. Blake's headpiece illustration to Ritson's section on "Anacreontics, *i.e.* Bacchanalian, or, with the readers permission. . . DRINKING SONGS; *chansons à boire*," is distinguished from the work of other engravings in this edition by its definition of detail, subtle grades of shading, and attention to individual character as expressed by attitude and physiognomy.

Special Collections, Schaffer Library

36. BLAKE. *Songs of Innocence*, "Laughing Song." London: The Trianon Press for the William Blake Trust, 1954.

Blake probably remembered his tavern engraving for Ritson's "Drinking Songs" when he designed "Laughing Song," for there are obvious similarities in general composition and gesture. But the two plates are very different technically. The illustration for Ritson is printed from an "intaglio" plate, while the plate for *Songs of Innocence* is an early example of Blake's own method of relief etching. In intaglio the design is incised or cut into the

plate, usually with acid (etching), or with a tool like a burin (engraving). In relief etching the design is drawn on the plate with acid resistant liquid, and the acid eats away the surface that is not to be printed. In both etching methods a surface is bitten away with acid, but the area bitten in intaglio is the thin line that holds the ink. This process is the opposite from Blake's relief method where the varnished, unetched surface left *in rilievo* after the plate has been bathed in acid is inked and provides the printing surface. In a passage from the illuminated book, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Blake's speaker alludes to the relief method in philosophical terms that suggest Blake's moral commitment to it:

. . .first the notion that man has a body distinct from his soul, is to be expunged; this I shall do, by printing in the infernal method, by corrosives, which in Hell are salutary and medicinal, melting apparent surfaces away, and displaying the infinite which was hid.

If the doors of perception were cleansed, every thing would appear to man as it is, infinite.

Lent by Dr. Hans Rozendaal

37. BLAKE. *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, "Laughing Song." London: The Trianon Press for the William Blake Trust, 1955.

Blake stated that his method of relief etching (coupled with the fact that he made his own inks and printed his own pages) enabled him to offer for a comparatively low price books of high quality materials and design printed "on the most beautiful wove paper that could be produced." In a prospectus "To the Public" of October 10, 1793, he claimed that the difficulty that hindered "Even Milton and Shakespeare" had been

obviated by the Author of the following productions now presented to the Public; who has invented a method of Printing both Letterpress and Engraving in a style more ornamental, uniform, and grand, than any before discovered, while it produces works at less than one fourth of the expense.

Blake also watercolored his illuminated books individually, which accounts for the uniqueness of each copy of each book. Variation and experimentation characterize Blake's watercoloring techniques, and the quality of coloring often varies from plate to plate as well as from copy to copy. Most early copies

are delicately colored in light washes, while plates colored between 1795 and 1815 are brighter and more finished, with Blake often outlining key details in pen. Most late copies, such as this one which was printed in 1826, are carefully finished in deep, rich colors, sometimes without regard for printed outlines. A comparison of this version of "Laughing Song" with exhibition item 36 indicates the degree to which Blake varied and manipulated his watercolor over the years, his shifts in coloring method resulting in shifts of tone and meaning between early and late copies.

Lent by Dr. Hans Rozendaal

38. *Book of Hours*, "The Annunciation." France (possibly Rouen), fifteenth century.

In his prospectus "To the Public" Blake referred to the six poems he had written, illustrated, etched on copper, and printed himself as "Illuminated Books." Most colored copies of these works recall medieval illuminated manuscripts in their strong outline, extensive use of foreground plane, symbolic decoration and border detail, and luminous coloring. But Blake also selected the word "illuminated" to describe the visionary reading experience, his intention being to illuminate the mind of every reader of his works so that they would change radically their conventional perceptions of the world and *see* that there is nothing more sacred than human life, that "Every thing that lives is holy."

Scribner Library

39. BLAKE. *The Book of Thel*, title page. London: The Trianon Press for the William Blake Trust, 1965.

Blake here demonstrates his aesthetic belief that "Art & Science cannot exist but in minutely organized Particulars." The innocent heroine of this poem, Thel, stands passively to the left like a sculpted classical figure. She is emotionally detached from the central rape scene, the blossoms and leafy stems mirroring the psycho-sexual states of the three characters, which range from passiveness to terror. Thel's crook rhymes visually with the lightly entwined trunk that arches over and encloses the entire scene, including the title where significant figures and vegetative details inhabit the letters that make up "BOOK" and

"THEL." By controlling the calligraphy and the details associated with each word, Blake is able to communicate the emotional and intellectual values he wishes his reader to attach to these words.

Special Collections, Schaffer Library

40. BLAKE. *Europe: A Prophecy*, frontispiece and title page. London: The Trianon Press for the William Blake Trust, 1969.

In ten of his fourteen illuminated books, Blake makes dramatic use of the convention that places frontispiece and title page on facing pages. These introductory plates to his study of the mythic origins of power, war, and cruelty, and the motives and policies of kings and priests, are striking in their design and imagery. The frontispiece scene probably took place shortly after what Blake defined as that "dread night" when the raw material universe was formed. The sun behind the Ancient of Days is our physical sun which emits "the Darkness of natural light." Almost entirely encircled by the disc and clouds, the primeval architect measures more than circumscribes objects in the "fathomless abyss." A fallen human form unaware of his fallen state, he unknowingly imitates the patterns of sun and rays behind him. The position of the compasses matches generally his position, his head located at the point of the fixed foot of the instrument that circumscribed the disc behind him. As a geometrical form composed of circle and line, he is the most balanced and complete mathematical structure in the design. Because of his obsessive pursuit of materialistic (as opposed to humanistic) knowledge, he represents to Blake the archetype of the god of Deism. It is his tyrannical and serpentine nature that links him with the coiled serpent of natural religion on the title page whose forked tongue and sinister smile signify that a final assault on "Europe" is imminent.

Special Collections, Schaffer Library

41. BLAKE. *The Book of Urizen*, title page. London: The Trianon Press for the William Blake Trust, 1958.

Book production is a major theme in this richly suggestive plate where "the primeval Priest," Urizen, who creates God in his own image and then enslaves himself to that image, is por-

trayed comically as a scribe and illustrator. The objects in his hands are usually identified as a quill pen and etching needle; with one hand Urizen incises, with the other he translates the muddled multicolor text on which he squats. If the primary text is a composite work, like Blake's illuminated books, Urizen is separating text from design, word from illustration, to produce "The Book of [his] Remembrance." This book is a book of judgment that, in contrast to "The Book of Life," records human transgressions for the sake of punishing rather than saving souls. The etching needle suggests Urizen prefers to engrave in the intaglio method, an ancient technique thought to have developed from the decoration of armor and weaponry, and one fundamentally different from the relief method used by Blake for all but two of his works in "Illuminated Printing."

Special Collections, Schaffer Library

42. BLAKE. *Jerusalem*, title page. London: The Trianon Press for the William Blake Trust, 1951.

Jerusalem, Blake's last, longest, and most ambitious illuminated book, was composed over a period of at least fifteen years. It describes the fall of "The Giant Albion" into the "Sleep of Ulro" and his ensuing "passage through Eternal Death!" and "awakening to Eternal Life" to be reunited with Jerusalem, his emanation or female counterpart. This magnificent title page pictures Jerusalem as a sleeping butterfly with human lineaments surrounded by her daughters who mourn as if she were dead. Only five complete copies of the poem survive, and it is unlikely that Blake printed many more during his lifetime, for he had great difficulty selling *Jerusalem*. He writes about this unique colored copy four months before his death:

The Last Work I produced is a Poem Entitled Jerusalem the Emanation of the Giant Albion, but find that to Print it will Cost my Time the amount of Twenty Guineas. One I have Finish'd. It contains 100 Plates but it is not likely that I shall get a Customer for it.

In fact, neither William nor Catherine found a customer for this copy. When Catherine died in 1831 it passed to her executor, Frederick Tatham, with many of Blake's other works, which Tatham characterized as "Drawings Sketches & Copper Plates of a very extraordinary description."

Lent by Dr. Hans Rozendaal

VII. A BLAKE IMAGE IN CONTEXT

43. BLAKE. *The Gates of Paradise*, "Death's Door." London: The Trianon Press for the William Blake Trust, 1968.

Blake often repeats figures, gestures, images in his illuminated books, but their repetition does not imply that their symbolic value or meaning is constant. Certain images turn up again and again, as if Blake enjoyed experimenting with those of which he was especially fond, trying them out in a variety of contexts to see where they might coincide perfectly with a particular text to produce a truly illuminated plate. In this "small book of engravings" designed by Blake after popular emblem books, the significance of "Death's Door" as a transitional state depends upon its position in the dramatic and symbolic narrative. The plate that precedes "Death's Door" carries the legend, "The Traveller hasteth in the Evening," and pictures a pilgrim striding hastily "away/To close the Labours of [his] Day." The plate which follows it, and the last in the series, is inscribed, "I have said to the Worm. Thou art my mother & my sister," and is probably meant to remind the reader that the material body belongs to the world of the worm, which is opposed to the world of vision.

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44. BLAKE. *America: A Prophecy*, plate 12. London: The Trianon Press for the William Blake Trust, 1963.

In the context of *America*, this old man is best identified as "Albion's Guardian" being driven to his well-deserved death, for in the poem he is directly responsible for transforming young English warriors into battlefield corpses, and fertile valleys into vales of death. As Blake wrote in one of his earliest poems, "Prologue to King John," the "trembling sinews of old age must work the work of death against their progeny; for Tyranny hath stretch'd his purple arm, and 'blood,' he cries." Chiefly because of Blake's omission of explicit Christian symbolism in this plate, there is an ambiguity concerning life after death, and we do not know what, if anything, lies beyond "Death's Door" for this aged English patriarch.

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45. BLAKE. *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*, "London." London: The Trianon Press for the William Blake Trust, 1955.

Blake's use of the old man in this *Song of Experience* is problematical because while the reader can assume he is the speaker of the poem, the reader cannot assume that the brick wall is meant to represent a grave, or that the wooden door the old man is passing is meant to represent "Death's Door." Blake's reader is also forced to interpret the presence of the child who is not mentioned in the text. This youth may be leading the woeful speaker beyond the bleak view of London he voices in the poem by showing him the way to break the "mind-forg'd manacles" that distort and exaggerate his perception of human life in London.

Scribner Library

46. ROBERT BLAIR. *The Grave*, "Death's Door." London: for R. Ackermann, 1813.

In Robert Blair's "moral series" the arrangement of the designs follows "the regular progression of Man, from his descent into the Vale of Death, to his last admission into Life eternal." The positive meaning of Blake's design is unequivocal, as Henry Fuseli's description of this illustration suggests:

The Door opening, that seems to make utter darkness visible; age, on crutches, hurried by a tempest into it. Above is the renovated man seated in light and glory.

The meaning of the allegory here is similar to the meaning of "Death's Door" in *The Gates of Paradise*, but Blake's omission of "the renovated man," or a strong corresponding image, in *America* and "London" qualifies considerably Blair's proposition that "the dawn of day" will follow the "long and moonless night" in those works.

Scribner Library

47. BLAKE. *Jerusalem*, plate 84. London: The Trianon Press for the William Blake Trust, 1951.

This version of "Death's Door" locates in specific metropolitan space (the references to London are autobiographical) the terror and suffering described in "London," and mythologizes

the human predicament in Europe by setting it in a biblical frame of reference:

. . . here we build Babylon on Euphrates, compell'd to build
And to inhabit, our Little-ones to clothe in armour of the gold
Of Jerusalems Cherubims & to forge them swords of her Altars
I see London blind & age-bent begging thro the Streets
Of Babylon, led by a child. his tears run down his beard
The voice of Wandering Reuben echoes from street to street
In all the Cities of the Nations Paris Madrid Amsterdam
The Corner of Broad Street weeps; Poland Street languishes
To Great Queen Street & Lincolns Inn, all is distress & woe.

The motif in this design also includes more salient particulars than "London." In their wanderings the old man and boy pass the brick wall that provided a backdrop in "London," the street opening on a square to offer us a view of a Gothic church (probably Westminster Abbey) and a Roman church (probably St. Paul's). Blake defines the general meaning of these architectural structures in one of his last relief etched plates, "On Homers Poetry/On Virgil": "Rome and Greece swept Art into their Maw & destroyed it. . . Grecian is Mathematic Form Gothic is Living Form." The values Blake attaches to Gothic structure seem similar to the values represented by "the renovated man" in his illustration for Blair's *Grave*. Our understanding of this design in *Jerusalem* does not depend upon our knowledge of "London" or *The Grave*, but its meaning becomes richer and more complex when we consider the earlier plates as analogues.

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VIII. JOB

48. BLAKE. *Illustrations of the Book of Job by William Blake*, "Behemoth and Leviathan." Pencil drawing, c. 1823. New York: The Pierpont Morgan Library, 1935.

Blake had been interested in the story of Job since at least his late twenties, but it was John Linnell who commissioned his magnificent *Job* engravings, paid for the copperplates, and drew up the generous contract agreement that provided Blake with £ 150 from 1823-1825. In 1796 and 1797 for his illustrations to Edward Young's *Night Thoughts*, Blake worked from pencil sketch to watercolor drawing to engraving, the common procedure for one commissioned to design and engrave a series of

illustrations. Blake also followed this practice from 1824 to 1827 when he worked on his illustrations to Dante. But the *Job* engravings required a different method of composition; his first series of designs were watercolors made for Thomas Butts possibly as early as 1805, and a second set of watercolors for Linnell was probably completed before the engravings were planned. Although this pencil sketch is not a preliminary drawing for the engraving, but a reduced drawing after the watercolor version Blake used as a study for his engraving, it offers a good example of Blake's style for preliminary drawings. The composition is blocked out and the main details are sketched in; most of the pencil work is free, broad, and light, with Blake paying some attention to sharpening the outline of specific details, and no attention to shading.

Scribner Library

49. BLAKE. *Illustrations of the Book of Job* by William Blake, "Behemoth and Leviathan." Watercolor drawing, 1821. New York: The Pierpont Morgan Library, 1935.

Blake demonstrated his technical genius as a watercolorist in different ways in his illuminated books, biblical drawings, and illustrations of works such as "Comus," *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained*, *Pilgrim's Progress*, and the *Divine Comedy*. In this reproduction of the Linnell watercolor of "Behemoth and Leviathan," Blake's skill at dramatizing details, attaining a range of emotional effects through coloring, controlling tones, and modulating surfaces and textures is clear and impressive. The illustration depicts Job's version of the creation of the natural world, God the Father lounging on a cloud and pointing out to a humbled Job, his wife, and friends Behemoth and Leviathan, His monstrous creations that represent the powers of earth and sea.

Scribner Library

50. BLAKE. *Illustrations of the Book of Job*, "Behemoth and Leviathan." London: for William Blake, 1825 [1826; 1874?]

The original 315 sets of Blake's *Job* engravings were poorly marketed and distributed, and Blake's masterful handling of both medium and text went, for the most part, unnoticed or unappreciated. George Cumberland's friends in Bristol, for ex-

ample, considered them "too much Finish'd, or over Labour'd." But the engravings are as beautiful in their "over Labour'd" way as engravings by the great craftsmen Blake admired most: Albrecht Dürer, Gerard Edelinck, Hendrick Goltzius, Marcantonio Raimondi, and Raphael Sadeler. And so Blake would have been gratified had he lived to read the 1830 tribute paid to his work, his character, and his mind by one of the early appreciators of *Job*, Bernard Barton, an acquaintance of John Linnell's:

There is a dryness and hardness in Blake's manner of engraving. . . [and] . . . his style is little calculated to take with the admirers of modern engraving. It puts me in mind of some old prints I have seen, and seems to combine somewhat of old Albert Durer with Bolswert. I cannot but wish he could have clothed his imaginative creations in a garb more attractive to ordinary mortals, or else given simple outlines of them. The supreme beauty, elegance, and grace of several of his marginal accompaniments induce me to think that they would have pleased more generally in that state. But his was not a mind to dictate to; and what he has done is quite enough to stamp him as a genius of the highest order.

Lent by Dr. Hans Rozendaal

51. BLAKE. *Illustrations of The Book of Job*, "Thus did Job continually." London: for William Blake, 1825 [1826].

Blake's illustrations of *Job* are "illuminations" in the sense that they flood the reader's mind with intellectual and spiritual enlightenment by elucidating a biblical text he has learned to misread. The "greatest of all the men of the East," Job was wealthy, prosperous, powerful, and, above all, proud of his piety and charity. "Thus did Job continually" fear God, eschew Evil, judge his fellowmen, consider himself perfect and upright, and collect his dutiful family around him like sheep to recite the prayer of a Lord who is actually created by Job in his own distorted image. In this opening illustration, solemn prayer replaces the harmonious sounds of poetry and music because Job does not realize that "The Letter" of the law of the Old Testament "Killeth," and that the "Spirit" of the New Testament "giveth Life." With the help of Blake's twenty-one illustrations, the "unspiritual" reader, along with Job, comes to understand how "the gifts of the Spirit of God" can be "Spiritually Discerned."

Scribner Library

52. BLAKE. *Illustrations of the Book of Job by William Blake*, "So the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than the beginning." New York: The Pierpont Morgan Library, 1935.

In this final plate of the series "the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than the beginning" because Job came to see that the image of God he first beheld was a reflection of his error; the true god is the human form divine whose image is perceived by each man in his own likeness. On his pilgrimage, Job learned true forgiveness, sympathy, charity, and self-sacrifice. In the illustration Job's lost sons and daughters reappear with him and his wife, and as a family they stand with instruments in hand playing and singing the song of understanding, having come to know the true reasons why "Great & Marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; Just & True are thy Ways."

Scribner Library

53. THOMAS PERCY. *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*, frontispiece. Vol. 1. London: for J. Dodsley, 1765.

Job is portrayed in Blake's final plate as an ancient Bard who, according to Thomas Percy, was held in the highest reverence by England's Saxon ancestors: "[The Bard's] skill was considered as something divine, their persons were deemed sacred, their attendance was solicited by kings, and they were everywhere loaded with honours and rewards." But, continues Percy, a shift in attitude occurred when the Saxons were converted to Christianity:

...this rude admiration began to abate, and poetry was no longer a peculiar profession. The Poet and the Minstrel became two persons. Poetry was cultivated by men of letters indiscriminately, and many of the most popular rhimes were composed amidst the leisure and retirement of monasteries. But the Minstrels continued a distinct order of men, and got their livelihood by singing verses to the harp, at the houses of the great.

Job, then, is comparable to one of Percy's pre-Christian "ancient Bards, who united the arts of Poetry and Music," which explains how he is able to sing prophetically a song of testamental compatibility: "they sang the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb."

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54. BLAKE. *Songs of Innocence*, "The Voice of the Ancient Bard." London: The Trianon Press for the William Blake Trust, 1954.

This is one of four *Songs of Experience* that appeared occasionally in *Songs of Innocence*, a suggestion of its appropriateness in either series. Surrounded by a variety of attentive and inattentive listeners and observers, this Bard, after the example of John of Patmos, begins singing in smooth, regular meters about our ability to "see" the coming of a new earth. But after this short, harmonious opening, harsh notes, rugged metrics, and images of confusion, darkness, and death intrude to suggest that the seers and singers of our civilization must possess truly heroic minds in order to keep "the Divine Vision in time of trouble."

Special Collections, Schaffer Library

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All things being identified even the Metal Earth to Stone, all
Human Forms identified, leaving none left & returning dearer
into the Planetary lives of Yogi's Months, Days & Hours, repeating
And then washing into his Presence in the Life of Immortality.
And I heard the Name of their Emanations they are named Jerusalem

The End of The Song
of Jerusalem

