

George Romney and Ozias Humphry as Collectors of William Blake's Illuminated Printing

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1 THE importance of the artists George Romney and Ozias Humphry as collectors of William Blake in the mid-1790s has yet to be fully described and evaluated. Although Romney had told their mutual friend John Flaxman that Blake's historical drawings "rank with those of M^l. Angelo,"¹ his early acquisition of at least five (or four if the *Songs* are counted as one book) illuminated books was unknown until 1989.² Humphry's role as a Blake collector has long been known, but most scholarly attention has been on his later relations with Blake, especially his obtaining for Blake the commission for one of the *Last Judgment* drawings (National Trust, Petworth) and eliciting a detailed written description of it in 1808,³ rather than on his importance to Blake as a client earlier. Humphry commissioned two sets of images, mostly from illuminated books: the eight folio-sized prints known as A Large Book of Designs copy A, and A Small Book of Designs copy A (comprising

I am indebted to Robert N. Essick and to Joseph Viscomi for generously sharing their knowledge with me, and to Sarah Jones for her indispensable assistance. Any errors are of course my own responsibility.

1. Letter from Flaxman to William Hayley, 26 April 1784. See G. E. Bentley, Jr., *Blake Records*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004) 31. This book will be cited as *BR*(2).

2. See Joseph Viscomi, "The Myth of Commissioned Illuminated Books: George Romney, Isaac D'Israeli, and 'ONE HUNDRED AND SIXTY designs ... of Blake's,'" *Blake* 23.2 (fall 1989): 48-74. Viscomi's source is *Collection of Pictures, Reserved after the Death of That Celebrated and Elegant Painter Romney*, auction catalogue of Messrs. Christie, Manson, and Christie, Friday and Saturday, 9-10 May 1834. The sale included *Visions, America, Urizen*, and item 86x, "Blake's two volumes," which refers, as Viscomi shows, to the *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* copy A.

3. See *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, ed. David V. Erdman, newly rev. ed. (New York: Anchor-Random House, 1988) 552-54. This edition will be cited as *E*, followed by page number.

twenty-three prints); he also purchased *America* copy H, *Europe* copy D, and copy H of *Songs*.⁴ Romney acquired *America* copy A, *The [First] Book of Urizen* copy B, *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* copy F, *Songs* copy A, and a copy of *Europe* that has been identified as A.⁵ Taken together, the two artists' purchases compose a substantial portion of Blake's known sales of illuminated books and associated material in the period from his initial prospectus "To the Public" (E 692-93), dated 10 October 1793, to 1796.

2 Romney and Humphry had been associated since the early parts of their respective careers in London. Each exhibited regularly at the Society of Artists/Free Society of Artists⁶ and each sketched in the Duke of Richmond's sculpture gallery in Whitehall. They painted each other's portraits. Romney showed his friend in profile as a pensive-looking man holding a book to his chest, with one finger inserted to mark his place. This was to become the best-known image of Ozias Humphry: it was exhibited at the Society of Artists in 1772, engraved by Valentine Green (illus. 1) that same year, and again engraved by Caroline Watson in 1784.⁷ In 1773 they traveled to Italy together, first stopping at Knole, the estate of Humphry's patron, John Frederick Sackville, third Duke of Dorset. Once in Italy, Humphry and Romney lived and traveled independently. Humphry later characterized Romney during this time as "a man of uncommon Concealment; in no way communicative."⁸ There was some truth in this: whether in London or abroad, Romney tended to keep his distance from other artists,⁹ and he some-

4. See Bentley, *Blake Books* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977) pp. 103, 146, 159, 356-57, 384, and 416. This book will be cited as *BB*. Bentley dates these purchases "about 1796." See his "Ozias Humphry, William Upcott, and William Blake," *Humanities Association Review* 26 (1975): 120. *Songs* copy H (Maurice Sendak Foundation), consisting of *Songs of Experience* only, is characterized by Viscomi as "one of four sets of beautifully color printed *Experience* plates [made] while *Experience* was still in progress" (e-mail communication).

5. In an as yet unpublished paper ("Blake's Printed Paintings") that he has kindly allowed me to read, Viscomi argues in detail that Romney owned seven of the "deluxe set" (eight in all) of Blake's illuminated books. The case is especially strong for *Europe* (A), since, as Viscomi demonstrates from physical evidence, it was produced as one of a pair with Romney's *America* (A).

6. Romney exhibited at the Free Society of Artists from 1763 to 1769 and at the Society of Artists from 1770 to 1772; Humphry exhibited at the Society of Artists from 1765 to 1771. See Algernon Graves, *The Society of Artists of Great Britain 1760-1791. The Free Society of Artists 1761-1783* (London: George Bell, 1907) 217-18, 125.

7. Family collection, Knole. Humphry also took Romney's portrait (Knole, family collection). For this information I am grateful to Valerie Porter, estate office secretary at Knole.

8. Joseph Farington, *The Diary of Joseph Farington*, ed. Kenneth Garlick, Angus Macintyre, and Kathryn Cave, 16 vols., plus index by Evelyn Newby (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978-98) 28 August 1803, 6: 2117.

9. See David A. Cross, *A Striking Likeness: The Life of George Romney* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000) 52.



1. Mezzotint of Ozias Humphry by Valentine Green after George Romney (1772). 45.2 x 32.7 cm. © Trustees of the British Museum. 1886,0617.76.

times resisted showing his works-in-progress, perhaps because his supersensitive nature could make him abandon a painting after a disapproving word from a visitor. Romney left Italy in 1775, and Humphry stayed on until 1777. After Romney's return to London, he wrote to Humphry, recounting his trip to Venice en route home, telling him about the Titians he saw there, and informing him of Henry Fuseli's exhibition at the Society of Artists. This does not suggest a man who considered himself estranged from his correspondent. For Humphry's part, although he received letters calculated to make him envy Romney, he did not rise to the bait. The gossipy watercolorist Joshua (Joe) Green, remarking on Romney's success in London, urged Humphry to surpass him, asking, "Do you think you can spin the Flax off Romney's distaff?"¹⁰ Evidently Humphry expressed his annoyance with such innuendo, because in a later letter Green expostulated that he had not intended "to make jealous Rivals" of "two Friends."¹¹ However, Romney and Humphry do not appear to have resumed close relations in London. One reason may have been the difference in their fortunes. They had been more or less equals when they went to Italy, but once back in London, Romney flourished, while Humphry, whose eyesight was failing as a result of injuries caused by a fall from a horse, was hindered in his career as a miniaturist. Consequently, he attempted portraits in oil, a mode in which he could never hope to rival Romney, and, with greater success, in pastel. In 1779 Humphry exhibited at the Royal Academy, an institution from which Romney had deliberately excluded himself, and was made an associate that year. In hopes of making his fortune as a miniaturist in India, he went there in 1785, only to return disappointed in 1787.¹² He was, however, elected a full academician in 1791, and was appointed portrait painter in crayons to the king in 1792.

- 3 After Sir Joshua Reynolds's death in 1792, Romney succeeded him as the most sought-after portraitist in London. According to the famous wit and talker Richard "Conversation" Sharp, Romney was worth £50,000 in 1795.¹³ In 1793, despite the setbacks caused by the deterioration of his eyesight, Humphry took a house in Old Bond Street at an annual rent of 200 guineas,¹⁴ a considerable sum that may

10. 10 December 1776, Royal Academy, Ozias Humphry papers, HU/2/47.

11. 14 February 1777, Royal Academy, Ozias Humphry papers, HU/2/52. The incorrigible Green then continued, "As to R --, he keeps himself so much to himself that it would be a work of great difficulty to make an enemy of him" As Blake wrote, "The Poison of the Honey Bee / Is the Artists Jealousy" ("Auguries of Innocence" 49-50, E 491).

12. See John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1997) 316-17.

13. Farington, *Diary*, 8 December 1795, 2: 432.

14. Farington, *Diary*, 18 October 1793, 1: 72.

have strained his finances. Farington says that around that year Humphry asked Romney to lend him £200, and that Romney refused.¹⁵ Romney was well known for his liberality; after his death, Flaxman praised Romney's generosity to him when a young sculptor and to others as well, writing, "I have seen him frequently relieve distress with a princely generosity."¹⁶ However, in the mid-1790s Humphry's behavior was at times unsettled and erratic.¹⁷ On 31 July 1796 Farington reported that Humphry had offended his patrons, the Duke and Duchess of Dorset:

Humphry is quite out of favor at Knowle. He went to Knowle when the Duke was not there ... and took possession of a room without previously shewing a proper attention to the Duchess. ... The Duke is equally disgusted on some account. One charge is that He painted copies of Portraits at Knowle, & demanded payment for them as having been ordered by the Duchess, which she denied. (*Diary* 2: 624)

He also enraged his friend (up to then) Sir George Yonge, when, after being introduced by Yonge to the Prince and Princess of Orange, he offered to paint their portraits as gifts, then billed the royal couple for them.¹⁸ Richard Cumberland later characterized Romney as "a man of a most gentle temper, with most irritable nerves."¹⁹ If Humphry asked for a loan in a manner that offended, Romney's most irritable nerves may have overcome his princely generosity.

- 4 If Romney indeed refused to lend Humphry money, it seems unlikely that they were on terms that would have allowed them to visit Blake together. Each, as we will see, had to come at least twice, and each almost certainly did so without the other. How did they learn of Blake's works? It is possible that one or both of them came across Blake's 1793 prospectus or saw illuminated books displayed in the shop of the publisher and bookseller Joseph Johnson in 1794.²⁰ Also, there was a network of communication connecting these artists with their contemporaries. In this instance, the

15. Farington, *Diary*, 4 January 1797, 3: 738. Farington condemned Romney's "peevishness" toward Humphry. He got this story from Nathaniel Marchant, a highly successful gem engraver, who had advised Romney and Humphry on what route to take on their Italian journey.

16. Romney Collection: typescript, Morgan Library and Museum, call no. 917 R76, record ID 288571.

17. See Brewer 309-10.

18. See Neil Jeffares, *Dictionary of Pastellists before 1800* <<http://www.pastellists.com/Articles/Humphry.pdf>>.

19. Richard Cumberland, "Memoirs of Mr. George Romney," *European Magazine* 43 (June 1803): 423 [417-23].

20. For confirmation that Johnson exhibited some of Blake's illuminated books in 1794, see Keri Davies, "Mrs. Bliss: A Blake Collector of 1794," *Blake in the Nineties*, ed. Steve Clark and David Worrall (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999) 216-17.

link is likely to have been Flaxman, who had been close to Blake for a long time. Not long after Flaxman's return from Italy, in October 1794,²¹ he bought a copy of *Songs of Experience* from Blake (later combined with a copy of *Innocence* to form copy O of *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*), and he would have known what Blake had on offer.²² Flaxman and Romney remained close until the end of Romney's life: Romney painted *John Flaxman Modeling the Bust of William Hayley* (Yale Center for British Art) in 1795, and Flaxman wrote the section about Romney's art in Hayley's *Life of George Romney*.²³ After Flaxman's return from Italy, he and Romney were neighbors as well as friends.²⁴ Humphry was said to consider Flaxman "the greatest sculptor that had ever lived," and, when challenged on this by the sculptor Joseph Nollekens, refused to retract his statement.²⁵ Humphry drew a fine, sensitive pastel portrait of Flaxman (Lady Lever Art Gallery) in 1796. Blake's first biographer, Alexander Gilchrist, wrote, with reference to the *Songs*, "Flaxman recommended more than one friend to take copies."²⁶

- 5 Blake evidently did not consider himself in need when he issued his prospectus of 1793, in which he had declared, "No Subscriptions for the numerous great works now in hand are asked, for none are wanted" ("To the Public," E 693). In 1795 he was engaged in the illustrations for Edward Young's *Night Thoughts*, a project for which he had great hopes and on which he expended tremendous energy, producing 537 watercolors and 43 engravings from 1795 through 1797. For the drawings he accepted the very low

21. See David Irwin, *John Flaxman 1755–1826: Sculptor, Illustrator, Designer* (London: Studio Vista, 1979) 53.

22. Flaxman may have purchased much more than that. In their sale catalogue of 25 June 1862, Willis and Sotheran advertised "A VOLUME OF EXTREME RARITY, FROM THE LIBRARY OF JOHN FLAXMAN, THE SCULPTOR, WITH HIS AUTOGRAPH," comprising *America, Europe, Visions of the Daughters of Albion, The Book of Thel, and The First Book of Urizen*, "5 vols. 4to. in one, half calf, £21.10s." None of these has ever been located. They were again advertised by Willis and Sotheran in their catalogue of 25 December 1862. If these identifications are correct, Flaxman's Blake collection rivaled Romney's and Humphry's. See Bentley, "Sale Catalogues of Blake's Works: 1791–2013," <http://library.vicu.utoronto.ca/collections/special_collections/bentley_blake_collection/sale_catalogue/1800.html>.

23. William Hayley, *The Life of George Romney, Esq.* (London: T. Payne, 1809) 305–13.

24. See Arthur B. Chamberlain, *George Romney* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910) 195–96. The house Flaxman took after his return was at 6 Buckingham Street, Fitzroy Square. Romney lived at 37 Cavendish Square.

25. John Thomas Smith, *Nollekens and His Times* (London: Henry Colburn, 1828) 2: 365. Nollekens, according to Smith, accused Humphry of "coddling close to him [Flaxman] at the councils" (presumably of the Royal Academy of Arts).

26. Alexander Gilchrist, *Life of William Blake, "Pictor Ignnotus"* (London: Macmillan, 1863) 1: 124.

price of twenty guineas, no doubt on the expectation that his profit would come from the plates that he would engrave. There had then been no suspicion that in the end only the first part of the edition would be published, in 1797, and that it would be a commercial failure. There is no record of Blake's being paid for the plates before Richard Edwards went out of business the following year.²⁷ As Blake's primary source of income was engraving, this meant the loss of a large sum that he expected to receive by 1797, not to mention his expectations for the future volumes, which would have left a considerable vacuum in his finances. By 15 August 1797 one of his customers, Dr. James Curry, could write to Humphry, "As poor Blake will not be out of need of money, I shall beg you to pay him for me, and to take the trouble when you return to town of having a box made for the prints . . ."²⁸ (Although "the prints" are not named here, it is likely that one of them was the second impression of the first state of "Albion rose,"²⁹ of which Humphry owned the first impression.) Romney and Humphry genuinely admired Blake's work, but their purchases may also have been meant to help him financially.

- 6 Of the ten works Blake advertised in 1793, six are designated as "in Illuminated Printing": *America, a Prophecy, Visions of the Daughters of Albion, The Book of Thel, The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, Songs of Innocence, and Songs of Experience*. Of these titles, Romney took copies of *America, Visions*, and the combined *Songs*, all of them later copies than those available in 1793. He also purchased two books that had first been created as recently as 1794: *Europe* and *The [First] Book of Urizen*. Humphry also took a copy of *Europe*, copy D, as well as *America* (H) and *Songs* (H). He probably owned these before he commissioned A Large Book of Designs (A) and A Small Book of Designs (A) no later than 1796, the year inscribed on an impression from *Urizen* in copy B of the Small Book, which, as Viscomi points out, was probably produced in the same printing session as copy A.³⁰ The fact that Romney's and Humphry's choices overlapped in at least three instances (*America, Songs of Experience, and Europe*) suggests that there was no prior agreement as to which works would be bought by

27. Bentley suggests that Blake may have been paid in copies of *Night Thoughts* that he and his wife could color and sell (*William Blake in the Desolate Market* [Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2014] 49–50).

28. See Bentley, "Dr. James Curry as a Patron of Blake," *Notes and Queries* 27.1 (1980): 71–73.

29. See Essick, *The Separate Plates of William Blake: A Catalogue* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983) 25.

30. It is likely that Humphry owned the illuminated books before commissioning the two books of designs, since duplication of plates he already owned was avoided. See Bentley, *BB* p. 356n1 and Viscomi, "The Myth of Commissioned Illuminated Books" 62.

each, and, as will be seen, their tastes were very different as far as Blake's productions were concerned.

7 One further question concerning Humphry must be answered. Why would a man who was going blind buy and even commission works of art? It is true that more than a decade later, after his sight is supposed to have failed entirely, Humphry caused Blake to write a detailed account of the version of the *Last Judgment* commissioned by the Countess of Egremont. This was an act of friendship—the picture, Blake wrote to Humphry, “but for you might have slept till the Last Judgment.”³¹ However, in 1796, when he praised Blake's designs to Farington,³² Humphry was still sufficiently sighted both to enjoy and to make art. He had exhibited nine works at the Royal Academy exhibition the previous year,³³ one of them the striking pastel portrait *Baron Nagell's Running Footman* (Tate Britain), and he may have thought his eye problem was in remission.³⁴ Unfortunately, his crayon portraits of the Prince and Princess of Orange, shown at the Royal Academy in 1797,³⁵ were among the last pictures he exhibited.

8 In order to make their purchases, Blake's clients had to visit him, as the works were, in the words of “To the Public,” “on Sale at Mr. Blake's, No. 13, Hercules Buildings, Lambeth” (E 692). If, as Viscomi argues, Humphry bought his three illuminated books on different occasions,³⁶ he may have visited Blake five times, as he also ordered the plates that he wanted Blake to color print without texts. He would then have returned to pay Blake for them, and to take them away. Romney, in order to commission his watercolored copy of *Urizen*, must first have seen a color-printed one at Blake's, as all the other copies of this period are color printed. All

31. Written in 1808 at the end of Blake's description (E 554). Humphry also owned a copy, annotated by Blake, of the leaflet advertising Blake's exhibition of 1809. See Essick, *The Works of William Blake in the Huntington Collections: A Complete Catalogue* (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library, Art Collections, Botanical Gardens, 1985) 179–80.

32. His admiration was expressed in a conversation noted by Farington on 19 February 1796: “West, Cosway & Humphry spoke warmly in favour of the designs of Blake the Engraver, as works of extraordinary genius & imagination. Smirke differed in opinion, from what He had seen, so do I” (Farington, *Diary* 2: 497).

33. See Graves, *The Royal Academy of Arts: A Complete Dictionary of Contributors and Their Work from Its Foundation in 1769 to 1904*, 8 vols. (London: H. Graves, 1905–06) 4: 194.

34. Professor Kenneth Polse of the School of Optometry, University of California, Berkeley, suggests (e-mail communication) that optical damage from a riding accident was likely to be to the cerebral cortex rather than to the eyes themselves. In Humphry's time, such brain damage would have been far beyond the capacity of surgery to cure or ameliorate.

35. See George C. Williamson, *Life and Works of Ozias Humphry, R.A.* (London: John Lane, 1918) 5.

36. Viscomi, “Blake's Printed Paintings.”

this suggests more customer traffic at Hercules Buildings in the mid-1790s than is sometimes supposed.



9 What were the interests of Romney and of Humphry as collectors? Although they obviously shared considerable common ground in desiring to own Blake's works, in some respects their preferences were very different. The nature of their entire collections is an indication of this. Romney's collection was sold in a series of auctions that took place from a year before his death to 1894.³⁷ Sold first, at Christie's on 18 May 1801, were his casts of antique sculpture.³⁸ Romney had accumulated these, largely with the help of Flaxman, for the benefit of the art students who would come to his house in Hampstead to sketch, just as he himself had sketched in the Duke of Richmond's cast gallery early in his career. Romney's paintings, drawings, and prints were sold at six subsequent sales. The Philippe sale of 22–23 May 1805 (Lugt 6955), comprising 228 prints, 13 books of prints, and 24 portfolios, was entirely devoted to the graphic art. There were drawings ascribed to Giulio Romano, Rembrandt, Rubens, and Parmigianino, and prints by Marcantonio Raimondi (over 100), Rembrandt (116), Dürer (27 “wooden prints” and 16 engravings), Piranesi, Bonasone, Aldegrevier, Mantegna, Earlom, and John Hamilton Mortimer. The Christie's sale of 27 April 1807 (Lugt 7230) included some oil sketches Romney had made after Raphael, Titian, Barocci, and other masters, “A Pietà by Caravaggio, original and fine” (bought by the dealer Michael Bryan for £6.16.6), and some of Romney's own paintings. A number of unsold items were again offered at Christie's on 29 June 1810 (Lugt 7823). Romney's *Mrs. [Perdita] Robinson* (Wallace Collection) was then bought by the Marquess of Hertford for 20 guineas,³⁹ and *Newton and the Prism* by William Chamberlayne, an ancestor of Romney's future biographer, for £31.10.⁴⁰ (It is reportedly still in the possession of the Chamberlayne family.) The Philippe sale of 22–23 May 1825 (Lugt 10898) was, like the 1805 one, principally of prints—240 of them—plus 6 drawings and 24 “various.” The sale of the collection of John

37. For dates and locales of sales and titles of catalogues, see Frits Lugt, *Répertoire des catalogues de ventes publiques* (Leiden: IDC Publishers, 2004–) <<http://lugt.idcpublishers.info>>.

38. *A Catalogue of the Capital Collection of Casts from the Antique: Among Which Are the Apollo of Belvidere; Castor and Pollux, and the Laocoon; a Very Fine Skeleton; Various Basso Relievs, Busts, and Fragments, Being the Entire Collection of That Celebrated Artist, George Romney, Esq. At His Late Residence, Holybush Hill, Hampstead.*

39. See Alex Kidson, *George Romney: A Complete Catalogue of His Paintings*, 3 vols. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015) 2: 495.

40. See Kidson, *George Romney: A Complete Catalogue of His Paintings* 3: 822. For the price, see the *Getty Provenance Index*. The reference is to Arthur B. Chamberlain (see note 24).

Romney, the artist's son, in May 1834 featured important paintings that had been bought in at previous auctions, some of which were again bought in at this one. What is most important to us about this sale, however, is that, as Visconti discovered, it included some of Blake's illuminated books. Last, at the Elizabeth Romney sale (Lugt 52642) at Christie's on 24-25 May 1894, 57 paintings were listed, 26 drawings, 65 prints, 4 miniatures, some autographs, 46 books, and 8 "various"—a total of 207 items.

- 10 As we can see, as a collector Romney was primarily interested in prints. Most of the paintings and drawings he owned were by himself, either sketches made for his own use or paintings that for one reason or another had not been sold, not been paid for, or not delivered. In contrast, his print holdings were both extensive and diverse. Unfortunately, the catalogues are uninformative about individual prints, but it is striking that, in addition to mainstream printmakers like Marcantonio Raimondi and Rembrandt, Romney shared with Blake an interest in less avidly collected engravers like Bonasone, Dürer, Aldegrever, and Mantegna. In the first prospectus for his "Canterbury Pilgrims" engraving, Blake aligned himself with "Albert Durer, Lucas, Hisben [Hans Sebald Beham], Aldegrave and the old original Engravers, who were great Masters in Painting and Designing" (E 567). Blake also showed a friend George Cumberland's book on Bonasone in 1800,⁴¹ and, although he does not mention Mantegna, it has been authoritatively stated that "Blake takes us very close, indeed, to an understanding of the hard, lapidary, intellectually complex and high-minded, demanding world of Mantegna and his insistence on the 'wirey line of rectitude.'"⁴²
- 11 As far as affinity with Blake as an artist is concerned, Romney, at times a linearist himself (as in his great drawings at Liverpool),⁴³ was clearly interested in Blake's "hard and wirey line of rectitude and certainty." The back-and-forth aspect of the two artists' work was noted as early as 1906:

An India-ink drawing ... entitled "Har and Heva bathing: Mnetha looking on" (one of a set of twelve illustrations to his own poem "Tiriell"), is a good example of the Romney influence, which is clearly distinguishable in the curves of the figures, in the breadth of the light effects, and in the character of the forest background; and from the designs

41. Letter to Cumberland, 1 September 1800 (see BR[2] 96). Cumberland's *Some Anecdotes of the Life of Julio Bonasoni, a Bolognese Artist* was published by G. G. J. and J. Robinson in 1793.

42. Keith Christiansen, *The Genius of Andrea Mantegna* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2009) 46. The quotation is from Blake's *Descriptive Catalogue*, E 550.

43. See Kidson, *George Romney 1734-1802* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002) 118-37.

of the latter from "Shakespeare" and "Milton" it is sufficiently clear that the gain was not on Blake's side alone.⁴⁴

Subsequent scholarship has made us all the more aware of affinities between Blake and Romney. Arguing from strong circumstantial evidence, Jean H. Hagstrum asserts that in the late 1780s and early 1790s Blake knew Romney's drawings, and that "a linear and thematic stamp from Romney is visible on Blake's works from the early *Tiriell* to the very late Dante illustrations."⁴⁵ Considering Romney as both a collector and an artist, it is not surprising that he responded so positively to Blake.

- 12 Humphry was a different kind of collector, if, indeed, he can be called a collector at all. His works of art, some of which were sold at Christie's on 29 June 1810, fall into several groups.⁴⁶ Some are oil copies that he did in Italy of paintings by, among others, Michelangelo, Raphael, Titian, and Rubens. There are also some oil copies after British artists, including Reynolds and Samuel Collins (the Bath miniaturist who taught Humphry). His original paintings by other artists include *View of Dover Castle* by his friend William Hodges; *Diana and Callisto* attributed to Domenichino; a portrait of Anna Sophia Herbert, Countess of Carnarvon, attributed to Anthony van Dyck; a head of Christ attributed to Fra Bartolomeo; what is characterized as "a repetition picture" of Pope Paul III by Titian; and a striking oil portrait of Humphry himself (Wadsworth Atheneum) painted in 1784 by Gilbert Stuart. (He also acquired James Barry's *Chiron and Achilles* by 1808, but here he appears to have acted as a middleman for David Steuart Erskine, Earl of Buchan, who owned it by 1809.)⁴⁷ Among his own paintings appear the ambitious double portrait *The Ladies Waldegrave* (which was to become the object of a lawsuit after its sale as by Romney in the early twentieth century) and *Portrait of Lady Affleck, Wife of Admiral Affleck, Habited as a Greek*. Humphry's "Crayon Portraits, not framed" include Warren Hastings, William Pitt, and two of Benjamin West. Among the subjects of "crayon portraits, framed and glazed" are Samuel Johnson, the Prince of Orange, and the Princess of Orange. *Baron Nagell's Running Footman* was kept by Upcott and auctioned in 1846.

44. Archibald G. B. Russell, ed., *The Letters of William Blake Together with a Life by Frederick Tatham* (London: Methuen, 1906) xxii-xxiii.

45. Jean H. Hagstrum, "Romney and Blake: Gifts of Grace and Terror," *Blake in His Time*, ed. Essick and Donald Pearce (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978) 208-09 [quotation from 208].

46. Lugt 7823. Humphry's son, William Upcott, made a manuscript catalogue of his father's pictures (British Library Add MS 49682). The contents of these sources are not identical, partly because Upcott kept some items, such as the Blakes.

47. See Williamson, *Life and Works of Ozias Humphry* 203-04. This painting, now entitled *The Education of Achilles*, is at the Yale Center for British Art.

Among miniatures are portraits of Charles Stuart, the Pretender (done in Italy), Richard Brinsley Sheridan, and Hastings. The reason for Humphry's owning some portraits that he had painted may be that he wanted to keep versions of images already sold, or that he produced more copies of a portrait than could be sold.⁴⁸ Also, some portraits were never paid for, such as those of the Prince and Princess of Orange, and therefore never delivered. Humphry also owned ninety or so engravings, many of them after his own portraits, and some after others.

- 13 However, it should be mentioned that our two sources of information are not complete. For example, Humphry's engraving by Johann Gottfried Haid after Nathaniel Dance, "The Death of Virginia" (British Museum 1873,0809.235), published by Henry Parker in 1767, is to be found neither in the 1810 sale catalogue nor in Upcott's manuscript list. The same may be said of his Blake holdings, none of which, including the very rare Moore & Co. engraving (British Museum 1868,0711.439), appears in either source, although we know that Upcott retained his father's illuminated books and also owned "Four Drawings, by Blake."⁴⁹ Humphry also owned Hodges's *Select Views in India* (1786–87), comprising forty-eight aquatints, given him by the artist. It is possible that Humphry's print collection was more extensive than previously thought. For the most part, however, the art owned by him was, unlike Romney's, largely connected with his own career and professional interests.



- 14 With this background in mind, we may consider the choices that the two artists made from among Blake's works. Romney's *America* (A) (Morgan Library) is relief etched and hand colored, with white-line etching on some plates, as is its companion, *Europe* (A) (Yale Center for British Art). His *Visions* (F) (Morgan Library) is relief etched and color printed with hand coloring, with white-line etching on one plate, while *Songs* (A) (British Museum) is relief and white-line etched, with hand coloring. His magnificent *Urizen* (B) (Morgan Library) is so intensely watercolored that its medium has been mistaken for color printing. It is not their media that distinguish these works as a group, but their superlative quality. His copies of *America*, *Songs*, *Europe*, and *Urizen* belonged to a deluxe large-paper, recto-only edition of all Blake's illuminated books through 1794.

48. There are, for example, at least two examples of the Stuart portrait in private collections. See <<http://www.npg.org.uk/collections/explore/by-publication/kerslake/early-georgian-portraits-catalogue-charles.php>>.

49. Upcott sale, no. 91, sold for five shillings (Evans, 25 June 1846). The drawings have yet to be identified and located.

Visions (F) was not part of the deluxe set, although printed recto only on relatively large paper. It may be that someone else bought the deluxe *Visions* (G) before Romney had the opportunity to do so.

- 15 Copy A of the *Songs*, partly because of the beauty and subtlety of its coloring and partly because of the quality and size of its paper, is one of the most splendid. It comprises fifty leaves. Compared to the size of the images, which typically measure 11 x 7 cm., the paper size is enormous, 38 x 27.1 cm.⁵⁰ One might think that Blake's relatively small prints would appear lost on the folio-sized leaves, but actually the opposite is true. The surrounding white space acts as a foil to the gemlike designs, seeming to funnel the eye into them. The coloring, applied by hand to the relief-etched print, is remarkably subtle, perhaps most so in its blues and greens. Sometimes this involves an independent effect, like the strikingly blue-clad angel in the right margin of "The Little Boy Found" or the greenery that entirely surrounds the text in the first plate of "A Cradle Song" and extends horizontally into it to divide the stanzas. More often it is a matter of combinations. In the "Introduction" to *Innocence*, for example, all the figures in the panels formed by the bright-green vines are seen against pale-blue backgrounds. Green dominates the top half of the first plate of "The Ecchoing Green," with its luxuriant leafage above and light-blue background, on which float green tendrils, below. Jesus in the second plate of "The Little Black Boy" sits under a blue sky with his feet on the green earth and a tree's green leaves bending over him. Rich greenery fills the right side of the second plate of "Night," almost touching the shrubs that stand in the background against a pale-blue sky; of the five figures walking on the greensward, two are clad in a darker blue. This is not to say that equally beautiful color combinations do not occur in other copies of the *Songs*; rather, in copy A the blues and greens of *Innocence* cumulatively create a mellifluous, cool effect that evidently appealed to Romney's painterly eye.
- 16 We would not expect to encounter such harmony in *Experience*. There is a remarkable range of colors in the designs, from the palely tinted garments of the title page to the sky, part bright yellow, part deep blue, of "The Fly." In the frontispiece deep-blue hills stand against a rich yellow-to-red-dish sky. Similarly colored hills and skies appear in "Holy Thursday" and "A Poison Tree," the dead body in each belying the beauty of these backgrounds. Yellow turns up in unexpected places, such as the clouds on which the text of the "Introduction" is written and the skies of "The Angel." Only

50. For this copy the leaf size is from Bentley, *BB* p. 367, verified by my own measurements. (Although Bentley gives width first, I give height first, as is the norm.) The image size is my own measurement.

“The Chimney Sweeper” image mirrors its text: the black cloud matches the color of the boy’s clothing and bag of equipment, the surrounding snow his white face.

- 17 Romney’s copy (F) of *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* was one of fifteen or sixteen⁵¹ produced by Blake from 1793 to 1796. Unfortunately, very little is known about the dates at which the others were originally sold or who bought them, other than that Blake’s close friend Cumberland obtained copy B (British Museum), presumably early on. H. I. Reveley acquired copy C (Glasgow University Library) at an unknown date but probably early as well,⁵² and the bibliophile Thomas Dibdin owned copy G (Houghton Library, Harvard University) by 1816. *Visions* (F) is the only illuminated book owned by Romney that was not part of the deluxe set. It is nevertheless printed on very large paper, all but one leaf measuring 38.2 x 27 cm., and with generous margins (bottom 12.27 cm., top 7.78 cm., left side 8 cm., right side 7.3 cm.). The leaves are printed on one side only, as in deluxe copy G, but not in copies A-E or H-M.⁵³ The coloring is extraordinarily dramatic—only in copy G does the intensity of coloring even approach that of F. The frontispiece is very dark, so dark that the orb seen in a break in the clouds might be the moon rather than the sun, were it not for a ruddy glow around it. In contrast, some areas of the title page are very bright, with deep-red color printing suggesting a fiery heart behind the fleeing figure of Oothoon, and a wash of rainbow-like colors going diagonally across most of the design. However, the background, exposed to the right and lower left, is inky black. Plate 3,⁵⁴ “The Argument,” has vivid bands of primary color—yellow, red, violet, and blue—streaming from the ground with the reticulated, grainy texture imparted by color printing. Of special interest in this regard are plates in which the beauty of the color printing and watercolor sharply contrasts with the agony of the scenes: the golden ground on which naked victims lie at the bottom of plate 4 and the horizontal band showing a dying slave near the middle of plate 2 [5] (illus. 2). In plate 6 an eagle attacks Oothoon, lying like a female

51. Copy Q is known only from a sales catalogue listing of 1897 (BB p. 477).

52. See BB p. 473. Bentley plausibly conjectures that H. I. Reveley may have been a relative of Willey Reveley, with whom Blake corresponded in October 1791 and who commissioned Blake to engrave plates after drawings by William Pars for volume 3 of *The Antiquities of Athens* (see E 699). If that is so, H. I. Reveley is likely to have been an early purchaser.

53. See BB pp. 466-67, according to which the only copies in addition to F and G that were printed on only one side are N, O, P (all c. 1818, printed on paper watermarked 1815), and Q.

54. For the illuminated books, I use Bentley numbers. Where there are etched or penned Blake numbers, I give Blake numbers with Bentley numbers in brackets (if the Blake and Bentley numerals are the same, only one is given).

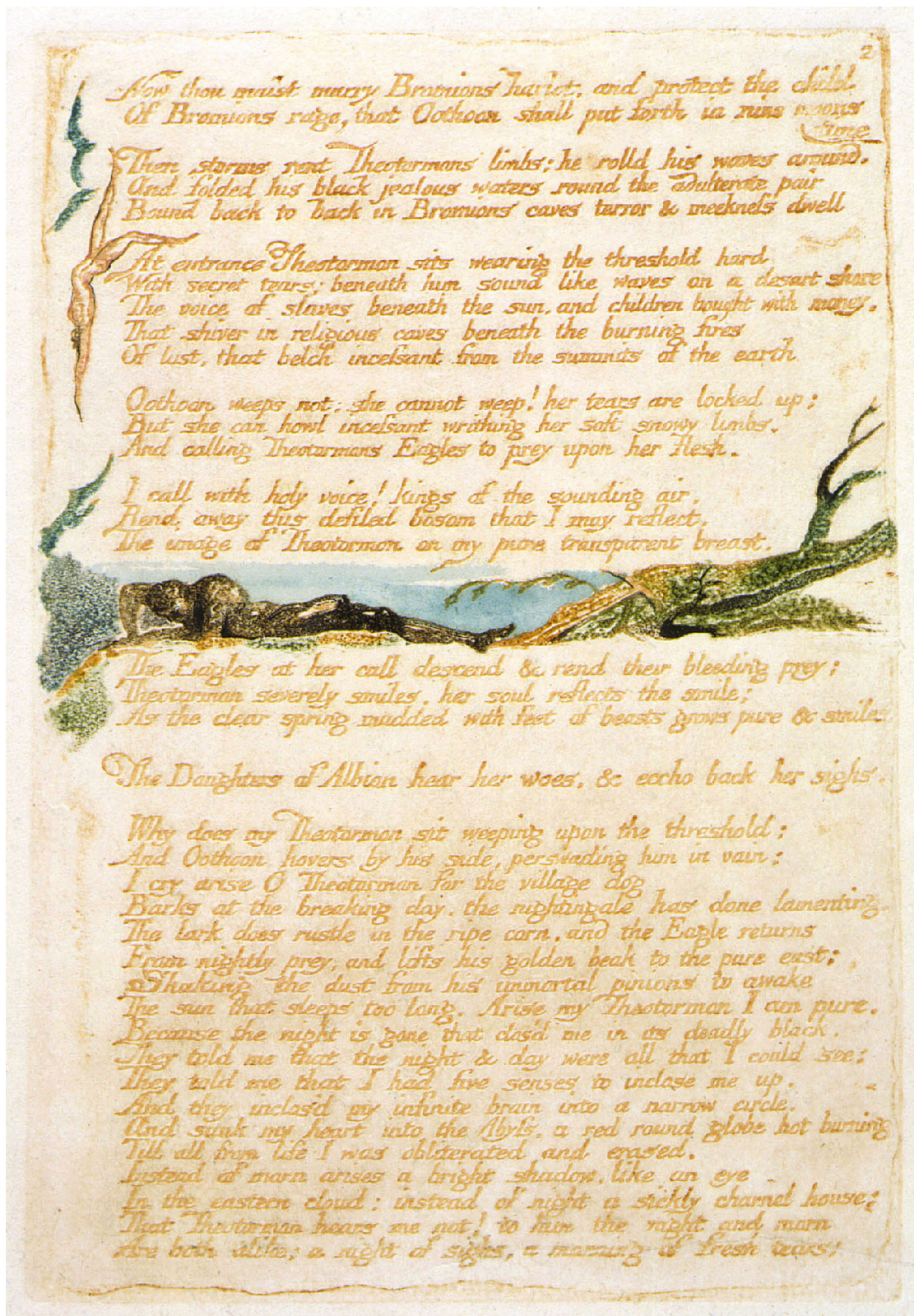
Prometheus on a white cloud in a cerulean sky. In 7 Oothoon, chained by one leg, implores a Theotormon hunched in despair against a golden sunset sky. Heavenly suffering returns in plate 9; this time it is Theotormon on a cloud in a sky of beautiful blue hues, flagellating himself as Oothoon buries her face in her hands. That Romney would not have been put off by such subject matter we know from his numerous drawings featuring the reformer John Howard among prisoners and the insane,⁵⁵ some of which are at least as disturbing. In fact, Romney’s almost obsessive interest in depicting suffering victims in such drawings suggests that, if anything, the anguish of the figures in almost every plate of *Visions* may have attracted him all the more.

- 18 The *William Blake Archive* describes Romney’s *America* (A) as “relief etching, with hand coloring and extensive white-line etching on plates 1, 8, 10, 11, and 15,” adding that “most other plates bear at least touches of white-line etching/engraving.” Its colored state puts it in the minority of the copies of *America* (the other known colored copies are K, M, and O).⁵⁶ The colors are at times very striking indeed. In the frontispiece, the wings, hair, and legs of the chained giant figure are yellow, as are the woman’s hair and left thigh and parts of the damaged structure to our right. This may be meant as an effect of the setting sun (imagined as behind the viewer), which also touches the black clouds, giving them rosy outlines against the black sky. Yellow appears again in the reading female and child of the next plate, but the dominant color here is blue—the color of the reading male, of the lower part of the cloud on which both he and the female sit, and of the dress of the woman who is vainly trying to revive a supine man with the kiss of life. In the first page of text, intense blues and greens are the predominant colors. A naked man and woman stand against the sky on a green hummock, displaying gestures of grief and horror at the sight of a boy chained on the ground (these are or will become Los, Enitharmon, and Orc, whose narrative is not given here but in *Night the Fifth of The Four Zoas*). Next, against a sky washed blue the unchained boy pushes himself out of the ground, his flesh color contrasting with the gray earth around him. Facing a yellow sun, he

55. See, for example, *John Howard Visiting a Prison* (Morgan Library) and *John Howard Visiting a Lazaretto* (Abbot Hall, Kendal).

56. See D. W. Dörrebecker, ed., *William Blake: The Continental Prophecies* (Princeton: Princeton University Press/William Blake Trust/Tate Gallery, 1995) 77. The tally here does not include copy R. Robert N. Essick informs me (e-mail communication) that copy R, sold at Christie’s New York on 13 Nov. 1987, lot 46, is uncolored.

Blake liked copy A enough to use it as a model (or to have Catherine Blake so use it) for the hand coloring of copy K (Beinecke Library, Yale University). It may be that Romney first saw copy A uncolored and asked Blake to color it as a companion for his *Europe*, or simply because he preferred color to monochrome, or both.



2. Blake, *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* copy F (printed c. 1794), pl. 2 [5]. 17.1 x 11.7 cm. Reproduced by permission of the Morgan Library and Museum. PML 63138. Image courtesy of the William Blake Archive.

risers next to a grape vine with two enormous green leaves. The pink and blue sky remains in plate 3 [5], with a male figure, trailing chains, floating upward. Enormous reddish flames emerge at the center from a huge trumpet blown by another male figure, while at the lower left a man, a woman, and a child run on the green earth, against a bright-yellow background, from the red flames behind them. The three refugees reappear at the lower right of plate 4 [6] beneath blue clouds tinged with green and rose. In the foreground is a bright-green hummock that in some other colored copies, O, for example, is gray, differentiated in color from the ground and appearing to be a sea creature (an orca?) with two pairs of flippers and no visible head. White is used both for the child and for the bearded old man (Urizen?)⁵⁷ diving down the left margin, pursued by a green, winged dragon-serpent with human hands.

19 Two blues color the sky of plate 5 [7], one a bright azure, the other tinged with gray shading downward to almost black. The figures are defined especially sharply in black ink. In plate 6 [8] the newly resurrected man sits on a bright-green hummock and the green earth again appears, with a green-leaved knapweed, at the bottom of the plate. (Erdman suggests that the knapweed is “harmless,”⁵⁸ but in fact it is an aggressive invader of environments, and some species are poisonous. As ever, Blake is conscious of the two faces of the natural world.) A striking example of how design can relate to text is plate 7 [9], where the Herod-like fulminations of Albions Angel are contrasted with an Edenic scene in which birds of paradise sit on a birch tree and two naked children sleep on the green earth beside a sleeping ram. The sky is awash with colors—from left to right violet, blue, yellow (becoming very intense above the sleepers), pale blue, and a darker blue.

20 Greenish-yellow blue, forming the cloud mass against which the text appears, is almost the only coloring in plate 8 [10], except for the heightening of Urizen’s paleness with white on his right knee, arms, and the lower edge of his garment, associating him with the white crests of the waves below. The white-line etching that forms the basis of the cloud masses in most copies becomes secondary here. Yellowish wheat bends over a child whose rigidity suggests death in plate 9 [11]. Green-leaved flowers among the wheat have been variously identified, but the fact that they are there at all, symbols of hope, is what is important. They are much more noticeable in color.

57. Erdman identifies the falling figure as George III and suggests that the design relates to the text of cancelled plate b. See *The Illuminated Blake* (1974; New York: Dover, 1992) 142.

58. See Erdman, *The Illuminated Blake* 144.

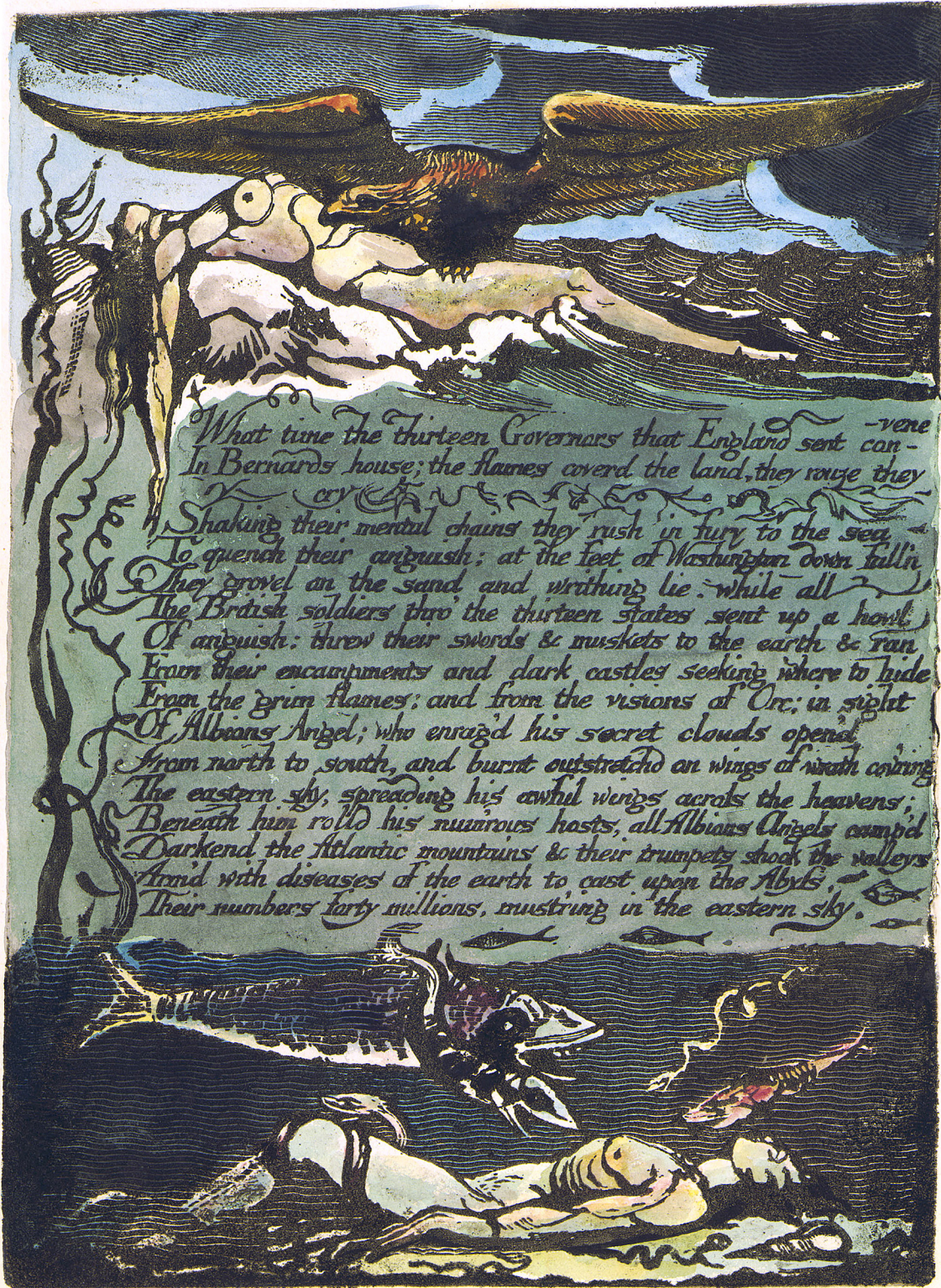
21 The naked figure of Orc in plate 10 [12] is entirely surrounded by flames, which he seems to be orchestrating with his outstretched arms. A reddish flame that crosses his upper body has been, as the *Blake Archive* editors point out, added in watercolor. It connects with a flame, barely noticeable in the monochrome copies, licking up over the figure’s left shoulder. The fire that fills much of the plate is red, black, and yellow, the text appears in a violet-to-rose background, and the youth’s curly hair is touched with yellow. Whether intentionally or not, the coloring gives the conflagration a massive solidity. The main difference that color makes in plate 11 [13] is the beautifully variegated deep blue and yellow of the serpent at the bottom. The child riders are flesh colored. As Richard Thomson recognized, the bent-over, bearded patriarch with a stick, seen entering an archaic-looking, mausoleum-like structure in plate 12 [14], is “another instance of Mr. Blake’s favourite figure of the old man entering at Death’s door.”⁵⁹ The nude figures at the top and bottom of plate 13 [15] (illus. 3) are colored greenish gray, and the whole text washed blue green. The eagle perched on the upper, female body is tinged with bright yellow. Blake’s use of white line for both the surface and the depths of the ocean is very striking. Thomson singled this plate out as “a very fine specimen” of Blake’s success in depicting water.⁶⁰

22 In plate 14 [16] the background of the text is blue, as are the clouds that form the background of the central image. The worshipful youth’s garment is green, and a patch of greensward lies beneath him. His expression is not as fearful as it is in copy H and other uncolored copies. Flames colored similarly to those in plate 10 [12] fill the lower margin of plate 15 [17], with flesh color, and in one instance green, added to the naked women who “feel the nerves of youth renew, and desires of ancient times” (line 25). The grape leaf at our left is bright green, but the dark bunch of grapes below it is partially obscured by black flame. In 16 [18], the final plate, some blue is added to the white beard of the kneeling giant to make clear that it turns into a waterfall.

23 On the whole, the coloring of *America* (A) is not entirely successful. *America* was conceived as a monochromatic work, the form in which Humphry purchased it. Dörrbecker remarks that “the extensive use of white-line modelling for added structuring of the relief-etched plateaus of the

59. Smith, *Nollekens and His Times* 2: 477. Thomson previously commented on the image of the old man in “London” as “a favourite one with him [Blake],” and his use of the expression “Death’s door” suggests he had seen Luigi Schiavonetti’s engraving “Death’s Door” after Blake in either the 1808 or the 1813 edition of *The Grave* by Robert Blair. On Thomson, see par. 33.

60. Smith, *Nollekens and His Times* 2: 477.



3. Blake, *America* copy A (printed 1795), pl. 13 [15]. 23.6 x 17.4 cm. Reproduced by permission of the Morgan Library and Museum. PML 16134. Image courtesy of the *William Blake Archive*.

plates [is] a technique which creates marked graphic contrasts that are strongest when left uncoloured.”⁶¹ This white-line work is sometimes partly, though not entirely, obscured by coloring. (*Europe* [A] also suffers from this problem: in both, hand coloring tends to obscure the tonal hatching.)

- 24 Romney may have owned copy A of *Europe*. The darkness and heavy coloring of a number of its plates have suggested to some that the coloring of this copy may have been done, at least in part, by a hand other than William Blake’s.⁶² The opaque red and black paint of plate 1 produces a murky effect, some plates have thicker outlines than those of other copies of the mid-1790s, and some are colored more darkly and more heavily. The editors of the *Blake Archive*, however, attribute these effects to Blake’s own attempt to imitate color printing.⁶³ Romney may have chosen copy A because it was part of the deluxe set of 1794–95, of which he owned at least three other examples, the *Songs*, *America*, and *Urizen*.
- 25 In addition to the frontispiece, full-page designs 6 [9] and 11 [10] are powerful visual statements of themes that occupied Blake in works both before and after *Europe*, like *A Breach in a City, the Morning after the Battle* (c. 1795–1800, Ackland Art Museum, UNC Chapel Hill)⁶⁴ and *Pestilence* (c. 1790–95, ex-Gregory Bateson, Butlin #190). Plate 6 [9] shows two women (perhaps a servant and her employer), one of whom is hunched over in despair and the other, who wears a pearl choker, is looking anxiously upward. Before them is a naked, supine child, stiff in death like the ones in *America* plate 9 [11] and in “Holy Thursday” of *Experience*. Behind is a huge, arched fireplace, heated by red flames and issuing black smoke, with an enormous cauldron in it. (Massive structures seldom portend good in Blake’s art.) Near the top center of this page in Humphry’s copy D, someone wrote, “preparing to dress the Child.”⁶⁵ Jonathan Swift had made the devouring of children the vehicle of his satire in *A Modest Proposal* (1729); here Blake renders the subject visually as a metaphor of his own contemporary England. Plate 11 [10] alludes to the Great Plague of 1665 but also to the sickly state of Britain in the mid-1790s. A grim-faced bellman walks along a brick wall in front of

which one woman is gesticulating in despair, while another lies dying in a man’s arms. Unlike most copies of *Europe*, copy A does not have a shadow slanting through the design and darkening its entire upper-right area. This shadow was added to the print in watercolor, and so could have been left out in coloring.

- 26 *Europe* is rich in large designs in addition to the full-page ones. Romney might have found one of these of particular interest. Plate 13 [16] (illus. 4) is a powerful image, part of a tradition of “prisoner” images. John Hamilton Mortimer exhibited his drawing *The Captive* at the Society of Artists in 1774, and it was published as an etching by Robert Blyth in 1781.⁶⁶ Joseph Wright of Derby painted two versions of the subject: 1774 (Vancouver Art Gallery) and 1775–77 (Derby Museum and Art Gallery). The former was engraved by Thomas Ryder in 1786, the latter, in mezzotint, by John Raphael Smith in 1779. These images display the concurrence of late eighteenth-century sentimentalism and the urge for prison reform. So does Francis Wheatley’s group picture *John Howard Esq. Visiting and Relieving the Miseries of a Prison* (Earl of Harrowby), also depicting walls and an archway, exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1788 and engraved by James Hogg in 1790. Blake’s plate is very much part of this tradition. He shows a fettered victim against a wall of bulky stones, throwing his hands out in terror; in place of an archway is a stairway opening, through which we see the back of his key-bearing jailer. As noted, Romney’s enormous number of drawings of Howard visiting the miserable inhabitants of prisons and lazarettos⁶⁷ testifies to his intense concern with this subject.
- 27 The greatest glory of Romney’s Blake collection is *The [First] Book of Urizen*. At first sight, it appears to be color printed (as are six of the eight extant copies of *Urizen*), and it was once taken as such. However, as Viscomi was the first to show, the medium is actually watercolor and pen and ink, displaying some of the intensity and apparent texture of color printing.⁶⁸ It is possible that this copy was custom made for Romney. Perhaps he saw other copies⁶⁹ at Hercules Buildings and commissioned a copy to his own specifications. While it is true that Blake’s attitude toward his illuminated books of this period was “print it, and they will

61. Dörrbecker 77.

62. See David Bindman, *William Blake: His Art and Times* (New York: Thames & Hudson, 1982) 106.

63. See <<http://www.blakearchive.org/new-window/note/europe.a?descId=europe.a.illbk.01>>.

64. Martin Butlin, *The Paintings and Drawings of William Blake*, 2 vols. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981) #191. This book will be cited as Butlin, followed by catalogue number.

65. The pen-and-ink annotations in *Europe* (D) are attributed to George Cumberland, but according to Dörrbecker (209), this note, in pencil, is in another hand.

66. See Benedict Nicolson, *John Hamilton Mortimer A R A 1740–1779* (London: Paul Mellon Foundation for British Art, 1968) 43 and fig. 82.

67. See Victor Chan, “Pictorial Image and Social Reality: George Romney’s Late Drawings of John Howard Visiting Prisoners,” 2 vols., PhD diss., Stanford University, 1983.

68. Viscomi, “The Myth of Commissioned Illuminated Books” 50.

69. Copies D (British Museum) and J (Albertina) have 1794 watermarks. See Bentley, *BB* p. 168 and *Blake Books Supplement* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995) p. 72.

The red limbid Angel siezd in horror and torment:
The Trump of the last doom; but he could not blow the iron tube!
Thrice he assaid presumptuous to avak the dead to Judgment.

A mighty Spirit leaped from the land of Albion,
Samd Newton; he siezd the Trump, & blowd the enormous blast!
Yellow as leaves of Autumn the myriads of Angelic hosts,
Fell thro' the wintry skies seeking their graves;
Rattling their hollow bones in howling and lamentation.

Then Eartharmon woke nor knew that she had slept
And sixteen hundred years were fled
As if they had not been
She calld her sons & daughters
To the sports of night,
Within her crystal house;
And thus her song proceeds.

Arise Ethind is, tho' the earth-worm call;
Let him call n yain;
Till the night of holy shadows
And human solitude is past!



4. Blake, *Europe* copy A (printed 1795), pl. 13 [16]. 23.2 x 16.8 cm. Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection. B1992.8.4(15).

come,” *Urizen* (B), part of the large-paper set produced in 1794–95, may be the rule-proving exception.

- 28 The ordering of leaves in *Urizen* varies, and scholars have made efforts to interpret the significance of these variations.⁷⁰ Blake himself numbered the pages of copy B.⁷¹ I will give a brief, literal description of those designs that are especially striking and/or those that display interesting differences between copy B and five copies that Blake produced in 1794: A (Yale Center for British Art), C (Yale Center for British Art), D (British Museum), F (Houghton Library, Harvard University), and J (Albertina Museum, Vienna).⁷²

Plate 1: The title is *The First Book of Urizen* (by 1818, during which he produced copy G, Blake knew there would be no *Second*). The image below shows a white-bearded, white-haired old man, seated against rocks that suggest the Tables of the Law. His eyes are closed, and he is writing with both hands. His tools, indistinct in some copies, are in this impression clearly a quill pen in his left hand and a graver in his right. He uses the big toe of his right foot as a pointer for the illegible text he is transcribing, perhaps an allusion to the Jewish *yad*, or Torah pointer. Dark tones prevail, except for the whitish appearance of the old man and his book.

Plate 2: The words “PRELUDIUM / TO” and “THE / FIRST BOOK OF / URIZEN” are separated by the graceful image of a woman in a form-revealing gown flying in midair, curving her body and reaching her left arm out to clasp the right hand of a flying infant with prominent dark eyes. The background is gray speckled with white, as if it were color printed, but the effect has been produced by brush and pen. The image and text convey alternative realities, with the latter promising to unfold “dark visions of torment” (line 7).

Plate 3: The top of the first column reads “Chap: I”. An athletic nude man, flesh colored except for his white head, leaps with his back to us through enormous red flames. This page begins the double columns of text, imitating the format of the printed Bible and satirizing it as well.⁷³

Plate 4: A man sits on the seaside with thick black rain falling on him and his hands gripping his head in an atti-

tude of despair. This plate, headed “I Urizen: C II”, is found only in copies A, B, and C.⁷⁴

Plate 5 [14]: In this full-page design a naked man, white hair streaming, balances his body on two rocks against a black background. This is the first of ten full-page images in *Urizen*, a feature that must have appealed to Romney, who was principally a print collector, not a book collector.

Plate 8 [7]: The fire is red only at its top and black in the rest of the design, while in the other four copies of this period that include this plate it is red almost throughout. A naked male figure is on his knees among flames, his face a grotesque mask of terror (illus. 5). His right foot, only slightly suggested in other copies, has been drawn in, in keeping with Blake’s extensive use of pen and ink in this copy.

Plate 11 [8]: A skeleton, its bones colored greenish brown and black, is hunched in a fetal position against a dark-blue background becoming black toward the bottom. A stroke of light blue, darker in the other copies, goes along part of the toothlike serrations on his back.

Plate 13 [22]: A full-page design shows a naked, white-bearded man sitting with his knees drawn up almost to his shoulders, chained hand and foot, his eyes shut. Yellow to gold rays emanate from his head, but his lips are severely downturned. The heavy chain, curving downward from his right wrist, is visible only in this copy and copy G. The background is mottled, greenish above, dark red below, showing how easily this watercolor could be mistaken for color printing.

Plate 15 [9]: Another full-page design shows a white-bearded and white-haired nude man, eyes closed, with one knee and both hands on the ground. His hair and beard are marked by dark, wavy lines only in this copy. He seems to be supporting a huge, greenish rock of the sort that the young man of 9 [10] is removing. Both this image and the plate “Earth” in *For Children: The Gates of Paradise* (1793) bear a striking resemblance to a book illustration engraved after Raphael by Blake’s master, James Basire, and published in 1778.⁷⁵

Plate 16 [15]: At the top it reads “1 Urizen C.V.”. A young man leans down from the blue/bluish sky between the

70. See, for example, Robert E. Simmons, “*Urizen*: The Symmetry of Fear,” *Blake’s Visionary Forms Dramatic*, ed. David V. Erdman and John E. Grant (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970) 146–73.

71. See *BB* p. 168, column headed “Blake numbers.” Two other copies, D (British Museum) and G (Rosenwald Collection, Library of Congress) have Blake numbers; neither of these has all twenty-eight plates. 72. I have not seen copy E (private collection).

73. Blake was not alone in producing a double-columned book imitating a book of the Bible. See my “William Blake, Jacob Ilive, and the Book of Jasher,” *Blake* 30.2 (fall 1996): 51–54.

74. For an explanation of why this plate may have been omitted in other copies, see Essick, “Variation, Accident, and Intention in William Blake’s *The Book of Urizen*,” *Studies in Bibliography* 39 (1986): 230–35.

75. Charles Rogers, *A Collection of Prints in Imitation of Drawings*. See Essick, “Blake in the Marketplace, 2004,” *Blake* 38.4 (spring 2005), cover and pp. 134–35.

12: Las howld in a dismal stupor, lifted with direful changes
 Groaning! gnashing! groaning! He lay in a dreamless night
 Till the wrenching apart was healed

13: But the wrenching of Urizen heald not
 Cold, featureless, flesh or clay

14: Till Las roused his his senses
 At the faronlets' unmeasurable death.



5. Blake, *The [First] Book of Urizen* copy B (printed 1795), pl. 8 [7]. 14.9 x 10.5 cm. Reproduced by permission of the Morgan Library and Museum. PML 63139. Image courtesy of the *William Blake Archive*.

heads of two white-bearded men and extends his left arm and hand into the earth. The eyes of the two old men are closed (open in copies A and D). From behind the one at the right a yellow cloak, absent in copies A, C, D, and F, swirls over to the back of the central figure. Yellow flames, reddish toward the center (the rising sun?) run along most of the curve of the globe, and onto it from the youth's extended hand.

Plate 17 [16]: This full-page design shows a beardless, nude male, hair streaming outward, arms bent behind his head. He is surrounded by flames going from yellow to red to very dark red (almost black). This plate is present only in copies A and B among the copies of this period. Only in this copy do we see tears on the figure's cheeks.

Plate 18: The heading is "1 Urizen. C.V." Most of the plate is occupied by a design showing a naked man, with abundant ringlets of hair, in flames. The flames go from yellow and yellow green to dark red to black. His genitals are obscured by a tongue of flame, a curious detail for an artist who had declared "the genitals Beauty."⁷⁶ (In copy J the covering flame is omitted, and we see no genitals at all.)

Plate 20 [19]: A male figure kneels in a despairing attitude, hands to lowered head, before a curving female whose face indicates anguish. The background is a very dark red, mottled in imitation of color printing. Only in this copy is the male's bodysuit red (see *BB* p. 178).

Plate 25: This brightly colored design shows two nude humans, probably female, caught in the toils of a gigantic worm or worms (illus. 6). Only the upper parts of their bodies are shown. A bat-winged creature with a human face is partially visible behind them. Faces and wings vary from copy to copy.⁷⁷ Copy B's is the most brightly colored of the versions.

Plate 26: A full-page design shows a boy wearing a white smock, his hands clasped in front of him and an expression of anxiety on his face as he looks upward. Behind him a large dog raises its head as if howling. The background is a door, the panels of which are less visible in some other copies, divided diagonally into areas of light below and areas of darkness above. The diagonal goes the other way in copies A and F and is not visible in the dark background of copy D or in the almost-as-dark one of copy J. Is the darkness to be thought of as encroaching? Perhaps a solar

eclipse is in progress, causing the boy's fear and the dog's howling.

- 29 The greatness of copy B of *Urizen*, the only copy Blake is known to have produced by a method other than color printing before c. 1818,⁷⁸ lies not in individual details, important as these may be, but in its overall effect. Its extraordinary richness and variety of color, combined with its firm, detailed outlines, make it one of Blake's masterworks.
- 30 Did Romney read the texts of the illuminated books he bought? He did have an interest in mythological subjects, as evidenced, for example, by his collaboration with Hayley on illustrations for the Cupid and Psyche of Apuleius, and most of the large cartoons now at the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool. However, these myths were classical. It is likely that Romney, like most of Blake's clients, admired Blake's designs but did not appreciate his texts.⁷⁹ Henry Crabb Robinson, who first introduced German readers to Blake in his article in the *Vaterländisches Museum* (1811), found only "obscurity" in *America* and wrote that "*Europe* is a similar mysterious and incomprehensible rhapsody."⁸⁰ Thomson, so appreciative of Blake as an artist, could say even of some of Blake's most accessible poems, "The poetry of these songs is wild, irregular, and highly mystical, but of no great degree of elegance or excellence, and their prevailing feature is a tone of complaint of the misery of mankind."⁸¹ It is unlikely that Romney read his illuminated books, other than perhaps the *Songs*. The same is probably true of Humphry, especially as thirty-one plates of his purchase from Blake were prints, mostly from illuminated books, without their texts.



- 31 Humphry's *America* (H) (British Museum), the only uncolored work that either artist acquired, has the special beauties of Blake's monochrome printing at its best. It has the full eighteen plates, printed recto/verso except for the frontispiece and the title page. As in the majority of copies (but

78. In 1818 he printed and hand colored copy G (Rosenwald Collection, Library of Congress).

79. An exception was Blake's friend Benjamin Heath Malkin, who wrote appreciatively of Blake's poetry, but only of poems in *Poetical Sketches* and *Songs of Innocence and of Experience (A Father's Memoirs of His Child)* [London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme, 1806] xxvi-xi). Of Blake's longer poems Malkin wrote, "The unrestrained measure, however, which should warn the poet to restrain himself, has not unfrequently betrayed him into so wild a pursuit of fancy, as to leave harmony unregarded, and to pass the line prescribed by criticism to the career of imagination" (xi-xli).

80. Quoted from the translation in *BR*(2) 602.

81. Smith, *Nollekens and His Times* 2: 477. Thomson is speaking of the *Songs of Experience*.

76. *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* 10.1, E 37.

77. For attempts to disentangle the details, see Erdman, *Illuminated Blake* 207, and David Worrall, ed., *William Blake: The Urizen Books* (Princeton: Princeton University Press/William Blake Trust/Tate Gallery, 1995) 51-53.



The Ox in the slaughter house moans
The Dog at the wintry door
And he wags, & he called it Pity
And his tears flowed down on the winds

6. Cold he wander'd on high, over
their cities
In weeping & pain & woe!
And where ever he wander'd in sorrows
Upon the aged heavens

A cold shadow follow'd behind him,
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 Peli-

Chap: IX

1. Then the Inhabitants of these Cities;
Felt their Nerves change into Marrow;
And hardening Bones began
In swift diseases and torments,
In throbbings & shootings & grindings
Thro all the coasts; till weaken'd,
The Senses inward rush'd, shrinking,
Beneath the dark net of infection.

2. Till the shrunken eyes clouded over
Discern'd not the woven hypoerisy
But the streaky shine in their heavens
Brought together by narrowing perceptions
Appear'd transparent air; for their eyes
Grew small like the eyes of a man
And in reptile forms shrinking together
Of seven feet stature they remain'd

3. Six days they shrunk up from existence
And on the seventh day they rested
And they blest'd the seventh day, in sick
hope;
And forgot their eternal life

4. And their thirty cities divided
In form of a human heart
No more could they rise at will
In the infinite void, but bound down
To earth by their narrowing perceptions

6. Blake, *The [First] Book of Urizen* copy B (printed 1795), pl. 25. 16.3 x 10.3 cm. Reproduced by permission of the Morgan Library and Museum. PML 63139. Image courtesy of the William Blake Archive.

not Romney's copy A), four lines of plate 4, which may be taken to express Blake's loss of faith in the American Revolution, were masked. Its leaves (which may have been cut down) measure 37.4 x 24.6 cm., with comparatively little margin.⁸² One of its most striking features is, as in the other uncolored copies, the prominence of white-line etching, as in the wings of the giant figure of the frontispiece and the sky behind him (illus. 7).

32 Because of Humphry's eye problem, he preferred brightly colored images to texts that he would have had difficulty in reading. He probably chose *Europe* because of the relative quantity as well as the quality of its visual content. Of its seventeen plates,⁸³ four (counting the title page) are full-page designs. Some other designs, among Blake's most memorable, occupy half or more of the space of ten more pages. There were probably several copies to choose among. Of the eight that Blake printed in 1794 and 1795, the original buyer of only one, George Cumberland's copy C (Houghton Library, Harvard University) is certain. (A) was in the collection of Isaac D'Israeli by 1835, but is thought to have previously belonged to Romney (see above). The owner of copy B (Glasgow University Library), perhaps by 1821, was Thomas Griffiths Wainewright, but he may not have been the original buyer. The first owners of (E) (Rosenwald Collection, Library of Congress), (F) (Berg Collection, New York Public Library), (G) (Morgan Library), and uncolored (H) (Houghton Library) are unknown. Thus Blake may have had several copies of *Europe* on hand when Humphry visited him. (D) (British Museum) is brightly colored by a combination of color printing and watercolor on ten large (36.3 x 25.5 cm.) leaves printed recto/verso.

33 Humphry's *Europe* was studied by more than one of Blake's contemporaries. As mentioned, on some of its pages there are pen-and-ink inscriptions, attributed to Cumberland, taken from Edward Bysshe's *Art of English Poetry*.⁸⁴ (Although Blake owned a copy of Bysshe and copied two texts from it into his Notebook in 1807,⁸⁵ there is no way of knowing whether he had anything to do with choosing the quotations.) In 1810, shortly after his father's death, Upcott probably showed this copy, with other Blake material from his father's collection, to Robinson, who wrote down some

82. The margins of paper around the printed plate are: bottom 7.30 cm., top 6.67 cm., left side 4.13 cm., right side 3.49 cm. For the title page the right- and left-side margin measurements are 1.90 cm. and 4.13 cm.

83. A complete copy has eighteen plates, but plate 3 is missing from all but two.

84. There are also some inscriptions in pencil by another hand (see note 65).

85. See E 696. On this subject, see S. Foster Damon, *William Blake: His Philosophy and Symbols* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1924) 347-51.

passages for reference.⁸⁶ Upcott also showed his Blakes to John Thomas Smith, and Smith in turn showed them to Thomson, who wrote comments about them.⁸⁷ Thomson, who was to be joint author, with Upcott and E. W. Brayley, of the London Institution's library catalogue,⁸⁸ may have become involved in Smith's project through Upcott. Thomson was an expert on medieval illuminated manuscripts, and it is likely for that reason that Smith chose him to write about Blake. (Although Thomson did not publish his books on illumination until much later,⁸⁹ he shows his interest in and knowledge of the subject in earlier works.)⁹⁰ We do not know to whom else Upcott may have shown his Blakes, but these instances should remind us that the reception history of Blake's illuminated books should not be limited to their owners.

34 Of plate 1 of Humphry's copy of *Europe* Thomson wrote a comment that Blake himself would have relished:

The frontispiece is an uncommonly fine specimen of art, and approaches almost to the sublimity of Raffaele or Michel Angelo. It represents "The Ancient of Days," in an orb of light surrounded by dark clouds, as referred to in Proverbs viii. 27, stooping down with an enormous pair of compasses to describe the destined orb of the world,* "when he set a compass upon the face of the earth."⁹¹

Smith added to this a note on the origin of the image:

He [Blake] was inspired with the splendid grandeur of this figure, by the vision which he declared hovered over his head at the top of his staircase; and he has been frequently heard to say, that it made a more powerful impres-

86. See BR(2) 297.

87. See Smith, *Nollekens and His Times* 2: 454-88. Thomson's remarks are on 475-80. Curiously, Thomson (writing of *Experience*) says that "the whole of these plates are coloured in imitation of fresco" (2: 477) although, as one of our sources of what Blake meant by "fresco," Smith himself should have known that they were not. See my "William Blake's 'Portable Fresco,'" *European Romantic Review* 24.3 (2013): 271-77.

88. *A Catalogue of the Library of the London Institution: Systematically Classed. Preceded by an Historical and Bibliographical Account of the Establishment*, 4 vols. (London: C. Skipper and East for the London Institution, 1835-52).

89. For example, *A Lecture on Some of the Most Characteristic Features of Illuminated Manuscripts, from the VIII. to the XVIII. Century ... to Which Is Added a Second Lecture on the Materials and Practice of Illuminators: with Biographical and Literary Notices Illustrative of the Art of Illumination* (London, 1857).

90. See *An Historical Essay on the Magna Charta of King John* (London: John Major and Robert Jennings, 1829) xiii, xiv, and 537.

91. Smith, *Nollekens and His Times* 2: 478. Following this Thomson quotes a passage from Milton's *Paradise Lost*, book 7, corresponding to lines 224-31 in modern editions and beginning "in His hand / He took the golden compasses"



7. Blake, *America* copy H (printed 1793), pl. 1. 23.2 x 16.9 cm. © Trustees of the British Museum. 1856,0209.399.

sion upon his mind than all he had ever been visited by. This subject was such a favourite with him, that he always bestowed more time and enjoyed greater pleasure when colouring the print, than any thing he ever produced. (2: 478n)

Smith's account, later repeated in Gilchrist's biography, was presumably given to him by Blake himself. This frontispiece has become what is probably Blake's best-known image.

- 35 Another image in copy D is of special interest. With the exception of his monochrome *America*, everything Humphry bought from Blake in 1794–96 was color printed. He evidently enjoyed the textured quality of prints such as the title page, with its varicolored coiling serpent, and 9 [12], with its beautiful rococo curves, those of the bending wheat reflected in those of the two flying figures, and in turn by their curling trumpets. Humphry may not have realized the irony of such beauty's being the agency of disease and death; Cumberland's inscription, "Mildews blighting ears of Corn,"⁹² could have enlightened him. Thomson also appreciated the meaning of this image (though not its contemporary relevance), as well as its beauty, describing it as "two angels pouring out the black spotted plague upon England ...; in which the fore-shortening of the legs, the grandeur of their positions, and the harmony with which they are adapted to each other and to their curved trumpets, are perfectly admirable."⁹³
- 36 Humphry's *Songs* (H) (Maurice Sendak Foundation) is a very early copy of *Experience* only,⁹⁴ numbering only seventeen plates. Printed in 1794 when *Experience* was still in the process of formation, it lacks eight plates (as did copies F, G, and T1 at the time of printing).⁹⁵ Four of these, containing "The Little Girl Lost," "The Little Girl Found," and "The School Boy," had been included in *Songs of Innocence*. The others—"The Sick Rose," "The Garden of Love," "The Little Vagabond," and "Infant Sorrow"—already existed in manuscript drafts but may not yet have been ready for etching and printing. Like the other three early copies of *Experience*, (H) is color printed. Essick suggests a correlation between the medium and meaning. "The patterns of opaque colors," he writes of the color-printed copies in general,

"match in miniature the 'fallen light' and 'slumberous mass' of the 'Introduction' to *Experience*, 'the forests of the night' in 'The Tyger,' the 'Tangled roots' in 'The Voice of the Ancient Bard,' and the threatening bare roots and branches illustrating 'Earth's Answer,' 'Holy Thursday,' 'The Fly,' and 'A Poison Tree.'"⁹⁶ Schiff remarks on "The Tyger," "The yellow of the animal's skin is overlaid by streaks of brown, blue, crimson, and black, as if the tiger had to adapt, by way of mimicry, to the strident colors of a tropical forest."⁹⁷ Even when viewed in reproduction, Blake's color printing produces some extraordinary effects.

- 37 Humphry's interest was principally in Blake's images and not his texts, and for that reason he commissioned the prints now called A Small Book of Designs (A) and A Large Book of Designs (A). The leaves for the former measure approximately 26.0 x 18.8 cm. and for the latter 34.5 x 24.5 cm.,⁹⁸ no matter what the size of the designs; hence small and large book. The leaves of the Small Book have stitch marks showing that they were once bound together; those of the Large Book do not. Later, Blake seems to have regretted separating the two components of his composite art, writing to the collector Dawson Turner on 9 June 1818: "Those [works] I Printed for M^r Humphry are a selection from the different Books of such as could be Printed without the Writing tho to the Loss of some of the best things For they when Printed perfect accompany Poetical Personifications & Acts without which Poems they never could have been Executed" (E 771). However, the question of whether we regret the existence of these magnificent prints is similar to that of whether Max Brod should have destroyed Franz Kafka's manuscripts, as Kafka had directed.
- 38 In the mid-1790s Humphry was much taken with strong coloring, as in his *Baron Nagell's Running Footman*, in which the black skin of the subject contrasts with his sharply red-and-white feathered headpiece, white jabot, and red sleeves.⁹⁹ Smith was struck by "great depth of knowledge in colouring"¹⁰⁰ in the Large and Small Books and other ex-Humphry Blakes. A British Museum curator

92. This and Cumberland's other inscriptions are to be found at <<http://www.blakearchive.org/copy/europe.d?descId=europe.d.illbk.01>>, under Supplemental Views.

93. Smith, *Nollekens and His Times* 2: 479.

94. At the time of writing, copy H was not available for inspection, and so could be examined in reproduction only, in Gert Schiff, *William Blake 22 September–25 November 1990* (Tokyo: National Museum of Western Art, 1990) 80–84 (sixteen of the seventeen plates).

95. See Viscomi, *Blake and the Idea of the Book* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993) 269.

96. Essick, *William Blake Printmaker* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980) 149.

97. For enabling me to consult an English typescript of Schiff's remarks on copy H (pp. 32–35), I am grateful to Robert N. Essick.

98. Figures from the British Museum website: see <https://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=1351975&id=1&page=1&>, under curator's comments.

99. Ruth Kenny of Tate Britain points out that these are the colors of the Dutch flag and that Baron Nagell was the Dutch ambassador to London. See her note at <<http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/humphry-baron-nagells-running-footman-t13796>>.

100. Smith, *Nollekens and His Times* 2: 475.

remarks that Blake's "luminous, jewel-like impressions ... may have seemed particularly fitting given Humphry's own artistic productions."¹⁰¹ It may also be, as an expert on miniatures suggests, that during Humphry's time in India "he was carried away by the glowing colour of the robes worn by the various native officials whose portraits he delighted to paint"¹⁰²

- 39 As noted, in commissioning these prints, Humphry took care not to duplicate plates from the illuminated books he already owned. Four of the prints in the Large Book exist principally as separate plates,¹⁰³ while the rest of the Large Book and the Small Book are from *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, *The Book of Thel*, *The [First] Book of Urizen*, and *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*. (Blake took second impressions of these for copy B,¹⁰⁴ which is not part of our subject here.)
- 40 To what extent would the textless designs of the two books interest viewers unfamiliar with Blake's myth (a category that would include almost anyone likely to see them)? In the Large Book most, though not all, of the prints establish meaning visually without need of a textual interface. The first, untitled like all the other prints in both series, was called by Gilchrist "a personification of Morning, or Glad Day,"¹⁰⁵ probably referring to Shakespeare's "Night's candles are burnt out, and jocund day / Stands tiptoe on the misty mountain tops" in *Romeo and Juliet* (3.5.9-10). "Glad Day" was used in A. G. B. Russell's pioneering catalogue of Blake's engravings, and then by Laurence Binyon (then Keeper of Prints and Drawings at the British Museum).¹⁰⁶ That title is not to be found in Blake, however. Around 1804 Blake produced an uncolored second state,¹⁰⁷ signed "WB inv 1780,"¹⁰⁸ and gave it the two-line caption "Albion rose

101. See the link in note 98, above.

102. Williamson, *The Miniature Collector: A Guide for the Amateur Collector of Portrait Miniatures* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1921) 147.

103. The first-state impression of "The Accusers of Theft Adultery Murder" was bound into *Marriage* copy B at some point (see par. 43), and the second impression of the first state of "Albion rose" (see par. 5) was added to *The Song of Los* copy E, but neither of these prints is to be seen in any other copy of an illuminated book.

104. See Martin Butlin and Robin Hamlyn, "Tate Britain Reveals Nine New Blakes and Thirteen New Lines of Verse," *Blake* 42.2 (fall 2008): 52-72.

105. Gilchrist 1: 32. The original order of the prints is unknown. "Albion rose" happens to come first in the British Museum's arrangement, but in this discussion the prints are arranged for heuristic purposes.

106. Archibald G. B. Russell, *The Engravings of William Blake* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1912) 54; Laurence Binyon, *The Drawings and Engravings of William Blake* (London: Studio, 1922), pl. 34.

107. See Essick, *Separate Plates* 25.

108. This date, as frequently in Blake, probably indicates the original conception, in this instance pencil drawings of a similar nude male figure made on the recto and verso of a single leaf (Victoria and Albert Museum). Anthony Blunt suggests visual sources in Vincenzo

from where he laboured at the Mill with Slaves / Giving himself for the Nations he danc'd the dance of Eternal Death." These lines appear without a title in Erdman's 1965 edition of *The Poetry and Prose of William Blake*,¹⁰⁹ but in a textual note are given the title "Albion rose." Both states are now known by this title.¹¹⁰ However, Blake's distich connects with images of a caterpillar and a bat-winged moth that were added in the second state, and we should not apply the symbolism of that state—or perhaps even the title—to the first. The theme of self-sacrificial redemption does not figure in the earlier version. Instead, we have a celebration of "the human form divine," with "The head Sublime, the heart Pathos, the genitals Beauty."¹¹¹

- 41 Another separate plate appears to be related to *America* (though not published in that work) because of six lines, beginning "As when a dream of Thiralatha flies the midnight hour," etched on it in relief but covered by pigment (E 59). (The lines are still partially visible in impression B [National Gallery of Art, Rosenwald Collection], reproduced by Essick in *Separate Plates*, pl. 5.) These lines would, however, not contribute much to a viewer's experience of the image, nor would the connection of the plate to *America*. Thiralatha appears in *Europe* as one of two "secret dwellers of dreamful caves" (14.26, E 66) and is identified by Damon as "the erotic dream. ... Thiralatha is the final stage in Enitharmon's repression of sex, its reduction to the last, futile effort of the imagination."¹¹² In Blake's color-printed relief etching the dreamer sits with her head between her knees, a barren tree arching over her as almost a second self. Her dream, to the left, is of a naked woman holding aloft a child, the fruit of satisfied desire, and kissing him. This image, separate from what was once the accompanying text, is sufficient unto itself.

- 42 "Joseph of Arimathea Preaching to the Inhabitants of Britain"¹¹³ is also a separate plate. Its subject is connected to Blake's early series of small watercolors on British historical subjects,¹¹⁴ to a list of such subjects in his Notebook (E 672),

Scamozzi's *L'idea della architettura universale* (1615) and in *De' Bronzi di Ercolano*; see Essick, *Separate Plates* 27-28.

109. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1965.

110. See Essick, *Separate Plates* 24.

111. See "The Divine Image," E 13, and *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* 10.1, E 37.

112. Damon, *A Blake Dictionary: The Ideas and Symbols of William Blake*, rev. ed. (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1988) 402-03. As Damon points out, she also appears as Diralada in *The Song of Los*, again representing sexual denial: "But in the North, to Odin, Sotha gave a Code of War, / Because of Diralada thinking to reclaim his joy" (3.30-31, E 67).

113. See Essick, *Separate Plates* 44-46.

114. See Bindman, "Blake's 'Gothicised Imagination' and the History of England," *William Blake: Essays in Honour of Sir Geoffrey Keynes*,

and to “The History of England, a small book of Engravings,” advertised in his 1793 prospectus (E 693) but not known to exist. It is one of many examples of Blake’s linking Britain with the world of the Bible. Joseph of Arimathea in all three synoptic gospels asks Pilate for the body of Jesus, as in Matthew 27.59-60: “When Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his new tomb which he had hewn out of the rock, and he rolled a large stone against the door of the tomb, and departed.” According to legend, Joseph took the Holy Grail to England with him.¹¹⁵ He planted his staff in Glastonbury, and it blossomed into a thorn tree. In a drawing of this subject of c. 1780 (Rosenbach Museum and Library),¹¹⁶ the basic composition is the reverse of that of the print, in which all the figures are on the same plane and Joseph, on the far right, extends his right arm to point above and beyond them. The white of Joseph’s garment brings his image forward, accentuating the drama of his preaching the Word. The spectators react with varied expressions—concern, deep reflection, faith, and shared wonder. The viewer would need to know the subject of the print, but little more, to appreciate it fully. This is a small print—the image measures 7.8 x 10.7 cm. on a leaf 34.7 x 24.7 cm. in size. This contrast, far from diminishing the effect of this extraordinary print, increases it.

- 43 A fourth separate plate is, unlike the ones mentioned so far, a second state. “The Accusers of Theft Adultery Murder” had first been produced as an intaglio monochrome print entitled “Our End is come” in 1793. The only known copy of this state (Bodleian Library) was bound as the frontispiece of copy B of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, but whether by Blake or by a subsequent owner is unknown.¹¹⁷ In the second-state impression from the Large Book heavy coloring makes the clouds to the figures’ left black and those above fiery red. Something terrible (all the more so for being unseen) up ahead is producing these signs of destruction. Blake typically thought of accusers as threefold, as in *Jerusalem* plate 93, where the image of three pointing men is inscribed “Anytus Melitus & Lycon thought Socrates a Very Pernicious Man ...” (E 253). In the print from the Large Book the leftmost figure wears a Roman soldier’s tunic and holds a spear. Next to him is a crowned king, unarmed, wearing a suit of armor and a red cape and holding

his hands to the sides of his head in horror. The third man, his face contorted in fear, is bare to the waist, holds a sword, and wears blue breeches. All three wear sandals. We are looking at a king flanked by his guards, all three impotent before whatever is approaching. At some time this print bore the title inscription “When the senses are shaken / And the soul is driven to madness”, with “Page 56” to the right of it.¹¹⁸ This page number refers to Blake’s own “Prologue, Intended for a Dramatic Piece of King Edward the Fourth” (E 439) in *Poetical Sketches*, where the lines are preceded by “O For a voice like thunder, and a tongue / To drown the throat of war!” The warlike men in Blake’s print are already close to madness, as their faces show, and they will not stand.

- 44 The remaining full-page designs in the Large Book were not originally produced as independent works. One is an impression of plate 14 of *The [First] Book of Urizen*, showing a naked male figure supporting himself by his arms, hands on the ground. It is necessarily different from the corresponding pages of the other copies of *Urizen* color printed around this time, because color printing produces variations in each copy pulled. As scholars have been unable to agree on who this is or what he is doing,¹¹⁹ plate 14 can stand on its own. This cannot be said of *Urizen* plate 21. The basic situation here is described in chapter VII of the text: the three figures are the bearded Los, Spirit of Prophecy, identified by his blacksmith’s hammer, his wife, Enitharmon, and their son, Orc. In this Oedipal situation, the Chain of Jealousy grows out of Los’s chest, and with it he binds his son to a rock on a mountain. (In *Night the Fifth of The Four Zoas*, where this story is retold, the Oedipal element is reinforced when “Los beheld the ruddy boy / Embracing his bright mother & beheld malignant fires / In his young eyes discerning plain that Orc plotted his death” [60.7-9, E 340]. Blake’s ideal reader/viewer would of course be familiar with all the works he had produced.) An astute observer would recognize the family situation, and, if so oriented, might further interpret in a Freudian manner Los’s doleful look at his adolescent son embracing his mother, and perhaps even the significance of the chain. However, the full meaning of the figures and the situation can only be established by reading the text.
- 45 No. 5 in the British Museum ordering is the full-page frontispiece design from *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*. Here the decontextualization of the frontispiece from the rest of the work makes an important difference. The reader of *Visions* will learn that the central figure is Oothoon, “the soft soul of America” (1.3, E 45) and embodiment of female

ed. Morton D. Paley and Michael Phillips (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973) 29-49.

115. See Damon, *A Blake Dictionary* 224-25. Damon does not think Joseph of Arimathea is the subject of this print, but in this he is alone among Blake scholars.

116. Butlin #76 recto.

117. Copy B was bought by Francis Douce from a dealer named Dyer in 1821 and bequeathed by Douce to the Bodleian Library (Bentley, *BB* p. 298). 1821 is an unusually early date for the third-party sale of a Blake, especially considering this one’s rarity.

118. See Essick, *Separate Plates* 31, 36.

119. See Erdman, *Illuminated Blake* 196; Worrall 40-41.

libidinal freedom. She is “Bound back to back” (2.5, E 46) to the tyrannical Bromion, and the chains are “spells of law” (5.22, E 49), symbolizing marriage. The hunched-up male figure above them is Oothoon’s lover, Theotormon, “weeping upon the threshold” (2.21, E 47), powerless and despairing. The design is of course striking on its own, but it is clear that something is going on in it, and the viewer has no way of knowing what that something is. This involves not just the names of the characters but also the symbolism and themes of the entire work. This is what Blake meant when he wrote to Turner of “the Loss of some of the best things.” The small design from plate 7 of *Visions* shows the affinity of some of these plates to miniature painting. Only 7 x 11.8 cm. and very richly colored, it displays the “luminous, jewel-like” quality of which the British Museum curator (see above) speaks. Furthermore, the leaf size—about 34.7 x 24.7 cm.—is around the same as the others in the Large Book; consequently, this aspect of the image is intensified by its being a small object placed in a large space. As for the scene itself, even the viewer who has not read the text can recognize two of the figures from the frontispiece here: a woman with a manacle on her left foot pleading with a man hunched over in despair. Although, as frequently in Blake’s illuminated books, the design does not illustrate the text on the plate, this situation is close to that described by Oothoon: “Why does my Theotormon sit weeping upon the threshold; / And Oothoon hovers by his side, persuading him in vain” (2.21-22, E 47). The basic situation is clear without the words, but not its relation to the theme of the work—that sexuality is pure and that rejection, fear, and condemnation of it are “a sick mans dream” (6.19, E 50).

46 Of A Small Book of Designs, Thomson wrote:

Another publication by Mr. Blake, consisted only of a small quarto volume of twenty-three engravings of various shapes and sizes, coloured as before, some of which are of extraordinary effect and beauty. The best plates in this series are,—the first of an aged man, with a white beard sweeping the ground, and writing in a book with each hand, naked; a human figure pressing out his brain through his ears; and the great sea-serpent; but perhaps the best is a figure sinking in a stormy sea at sun-set, the splendid light of which, and the foam upon the black waves, are almost magical effects of colouring.¹²⁰

More than half of the Small Book—thirteen plates—is from *The [First] Book of Urizen*. The reason for this may be self-evident. A full copy of *Urizen* contains twenty-eight plates, the largest number that Blake had produced in an illuminated book to date. Two of the other three illuminated books from which Humphry chose images for the Small

Book, *The Book of Thel* and *Visions*, comprise only eight and eleven plates respectively. The third, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, has twenty-seven plates, but *Marriage* as a whole was less suited to Humphry’s purpose, as fifteen of its plates are primarily text, and it has no full-page designs. Humphry chose only four images from it for the Small Book. The top part of *Marriage* plate 16 shows an old man flanked by two youths on either side, in what can be supposed a thick-walled dungeon in some copies but not in others. The Small Book version has a black background, and so belongs to the latter class. Some viewers might have associated this image with Dante’s Ugolino group, which had been the subject of Reynolds’s *Count Hugolino and His Children in the Dungeon* (1773), widely known through John Dixon’s mezzotint of 1774.¹²¹ This association would have been stronger in those copies where the heavy stones are visible. Small Book 2¹²² shows a naked mother and baby in a lush botanical background, which includes a human face in the bark of a tree, with a sun-crowned figure rising behind them. In some of the illuminated-book examples the woman is clothed, but, more importantly, the text describes a genealogy of the gods that resulted in “Choosing forms of worship from poetic tales” (line 12), and this meaning cannot be inferred from the image alone. Taken from the top of plate 14 of *Marriage*, Small Book 5 shows a male corpse among flames, with a woman, arms outstretched, hovering above him. Although the text of *Marriage* plate 14 features apocalyptic imagery of fire, this is not closely connected with the image. The sea monster Leviathan from *Marriage* plate 20, also an apocalyptic image, occupies Small Book 6. Although nothing on *Marriage* plate 20 refers to him, Leviathan is the subject of the text of its preceding two plates, which is as melodramatic as this image; together, they make the reader/viewer aware that Blake is satirizing the fears of the Angel who views the monster with the narrator.

- 47 Two small designs are from *Visions of the Daughters of Albion* plates 10 and 3 (Small Book 17 and 20 respectively). The former shows four robed women, three of them hunched over so their faces cannot be seen, one looking upward with an expression of anxiety. Their misery is evident, but not the reason for it. In the context of *Visions*, we know that these are Daughters of Albion, the women of Britain, whom the first line of plate 4 describes as “Enslav’d.” However, the other image, from *Visions* plate 3, conveys considerable meaning without any text. A naked young woman in a *Venus pudica* attitude, but kneeling on a green mound, kisses a naked child who seems about to fly

121. See my *The Traveller in the Evening* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003) 101-02.

122. Plate numbers for A Small Book refer to copy A (British Museum).

120. Smith, *Nollekens and His Times* 2: 480.

into the air. In the foreground is a plant with two large golden flowers. It requires no knowledge of Blake's symbolism to tell that this conveys a message of joyful physical freedom. The lines headed "The Argument" are arcane, but on the next page "the bright Marygold of Leutha's vale" (line 5) conveys the erotic content implicit in "The Argument," deepening the impact of the image that accompanies it.

48 In contrast to *Marriage*, no page of *Urizen* is without an image, and ten are full-page designs without any text. Counting the two plates in the Large Book, Humphry commissioned more than half of *Urizen's* pages as textless separate plates. To what extent is a full appreciation of these dependent on knowledge of the text? For some of the full-page designs the lack of a verbal context hardly matters. Small Book 11 (*Urizen* plate 27), showing a rear view of a white-haired man in a long whitish garment flying into a cloud, is an example of this. Why are his hands raised to head height with fingers splayed out? Does he see something frightening ahead, like the accusers in the Large Book? He might be Urizen, but assigning him this name doesn't tell us much.

12 (*Urizen* plate 2) is a rare relief from the generally dark subject matter of *Urizen*, showing a woman in a floating gown flying through a beautifully streaked blue, red, and pink sky, with her left arm extended to a flying baby. Indeed, it seems not to be at home here. There is no passage of *Urizen* corresponding to it. In copy B of the Small Book, Blake inscribed this design "Teach these Souls to Fly" (Tate Britain).

9, from *Urizen* plate 3, could also stand on its own; scholars have not been able to agree whom it represents. A naked male figure running through flames could be Orc, Los, or a young Urizen. The same is true of 15 (*Urizen* plate 10), where a powerfully muscled figure, seen from behind (like the athletic runner), appears to be holding a large rock on his shoulders. Those who believe that Urizen is forever old cannot accept this image as representing him, while others do. The text does not help us here.

7 (*Urizen* plate 23) shows a white-bearded man carrying a red disk from which spiky rays protrude, like a bowling ball. His left arm is outstretched with the hand turned palm out, like a football running back. Black hills and dark-blue sky form the background. At the right, a lion, no more frightening looking than the tyger, looks on. This image illustrates, more literally than most, Urizen's exploring his dens with a globe of fire at the beginning of chapter VIII. It would have little significance on its own.

8 (*Urizen* plate 24) depends entirely on the text, without which it would seem to be a man drowning. Actually, it is part of a full-page design showing four figures (sometimes only two) representing the elements with Blakean names. This one is Utha.

Without the text we would not know that the skeletal human of 13 (*Urizen* plate 8), curled in a fetal position, is the Urizen of chapter IV in one stage of his development. The same skeleton, fettered, appears sitting in yellow and red flames in 19 (*Urizen* plate 11). A naked man holding a hammer occupies the other side of the composition. The hammer identifies Los, but little further significance can be derived without the text.

14 (*Urizen* plate 19) shows the Los and Enitharmon of chapter V, after the female has separated from the male in a pessimistic parody of the creation of Eve in Genesis and in *Paradise Lost*. (The humped-up Los recalls Theotormon.) Blake has used the mottled colors created by color printing to great advantage here.

That the male figure howling in flames in 18 is Los, we know from lines 1-2 of the corresponding plate in *Urizen* (plate 7), in which "Los howld in a dismal stupor, / Groaning! gnashing! groaning!" Most of Blake's representation of Los is positive, and the viewer would have difficulty recognizing him without the text.

The other plates of the Small Book show similar gradations of independence from and dependence on verbal contexts. 10, the lower part of the *Thel* title page, is darker and richer in color than the illuminated-book versions but otherwise identical in detail. The viewer who had read Erasmus Darwin's *The Loves of the Plants* could have recognized in any of these a display of plant sexuality, but no meaning is further conveyed by the text than by the image alone. However, this is not true of 16 (*Thel* plate 6), where the reader alone would recognize the infant among the plants as the Worm and the flying figure as the Cloud, each of whom has an important message to convey to the standing woman, Thel. Again, in 22 (*Thel* plate 7) Thel examines the infant/Worm with the matron Clay, who has begun her speech on the preceding plate, as has the bowing Lilly of the Valley of 23 (*Thel* plate 4).



49 The importance of Romney and Humphry as collectors of Blake's illuminated printing can hardly be exaggerated, especially considering how little we know of Blake's original clients in the 1790s. Taken together, their purchases made up a large part of the work in illuminated printing that Blake had sold to date. Humphry owned a total of 83 prints,

Romney 124—altogether 207 plates. Blake's known income for 1796 was £43.1s. (*BR*[2] 758). Most¹²³ of Romney's items were part of a deluxe set, and Humphry's two books of designs were color printed to order. Blake was an artist very conscious of the value of his time, and he charged accordingly. He later wrote to Cumberland, "I am now Printing a Set of the Songs of Innocence & Experience for a Friend at Ten Guineas 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" (12 April 1827, E 784).¹²⁴ Over the thirty-one years from 1796 to 1827, both the value of the pound and the cost of living went up only slightly,¹²⁵ but Blake's prices rose steeply. In 1793 the price of each set of *Songs* had been five shillings. Blake's increased prices were due partly, as he says, to his cramped quarters at Fountain Court, but also to the elaborate coloring of some of his late works. For example, according to Gilchrist, the sculptor Francis Chantrey paid £20 for "a highly finished copy of the *Songs of Innocence and Experience*" in 1827.¹²⁶ What Romney and Humphry paid for these works we do not know, but the prices must have been in a considerably different range from those in the prospectus of 1793, and as both men were friends of Blake's and far better off than he, it is unlikely that they drove a hard bargain. These purchases must have made a considerable practical difference to William and Catherine Blake in 1794–96, just as, because of their high quality and graphic interest, they contribute greatly to our knowledge and appreciation of Blake's illuminated printing today.

123. Viscomi, "Blake's Printed Paintings."

124. This was copy X, purchased by Wainewright (*BR*[2] 371n).

125. See House of Commons Library Research Paper 99/20, 23 February 1999, charts 1-4 <<http://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/RP99-20>>.

126. Gilchrist 1: 357.