



BIROn - Birkbeck Institutional Research Online

Calè, Luisa (2020) "A Dream of Thiralatha": promiscuous book gatherings and the wanderings of Blake's separate plates. *Studies in Romanticism* 59 (4), pp. 431-445. ISSN 0039-3762.

Downloaded from: <https://eprints.bbk.ac.uk/id/eprint/31273/>

Usage Guidelines:

Please refer to usage guidelines at <https://eprints.bbk.ac.uk/policies.html>
contact lib-eprints@bbk.ac.uk.

or alternatively

**“A Dream of Thiralatha”: Promiscuous Book Gatherings and the Wanderings of
Blake’s Separate Plates**

Luisa Calè

That stony law I stamp to dust: and scatter religion abroad
To the four winds as a torn book, & none shall gather the leaves;
But they shall rot on desert sands, & consume in bottomless deeps;
To make the deserts blossom, & the deeps shrink to their fountains,
And to renew the fiery joy, and burst the stony roof.

(*America a Prophecy*, plate 8: 5-9)¹

In *Europe* and *America* Blake denounces the Urizenic book as a form of oppression brought about by the ten commandments. The revolution involves, among other things, unbinding the book of the law, so that “none shall gather the leaves”. Disbinding the book means subverting the codex, the form that can turn poetic fables into instruments of power. If none gathers the leaves, everyone can be a prophet. In “The Idea of an Indeterminate Text: Blake’s Bible of Hell,” Jerome McGann reconstructs how Blake’s *Book of Urizen* engages with the hybrid material history of the Bible as a collection of fragments “promiscuously collected and heaped together” as the Dutch philosopher Baruch Spinoza argued. Working against such a hybrid idea of the book, Blake editors sought to establish “a textual ‘solid without fluctuation’”, witness G.E.Bentley’s editorial decision to produce an “‘eclectic’ text which corresponds most closely” to one copy, “chiefly based upon narrative consistency, foliation,

¹ David V. Erdman, *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 54, hereafter abbreviated in text as E.

binding, and the relationship of design and text”.² That desire for the ideal copy has been displaced by the freedom to choose and compare specimens from an ever expanding corpus of unique variant copies. Yet the philological principles underlying textual bibliography have had wider repercussions on where the boundaries between books, illustrations, and separate plates might be drawn.

This essay explores the dynamics of illustration in William Blake’s illuminated printing through an example that questions and disorders the boundaries between books. I will focus on a “separate plate,” now known under the title “A Dream of Thiralatha,” and piece together its complex bibliographic history. This plate exists in two copies, one currently at the British Museum Department of Prints and Drawings, the other at the National Gallery of Art in Washington.³ To trace the bibliographic sightings and trajectories of this plate is to rearticulate the dynamic between Blake’s continental prophecies, registering the porous boundaries between book parts and acts of bibliographic purification that separated what counted as books from prints in both the British and American trajectories. The distinction between Blake’s books and “separate plates”, which dates back to Geoffrey Keynes’s 1921 bibliography,⁴ shaped archival categories that formally distributed the plates under different

² Jerome J. McGann, “The Idea of an Indeterminate Text: Blake’s Bible of Hell and Dr. Alexander Geddes,” *Studies in Romanticism* 25 (Fall 1986): 303-324, on 306, 309, 319.

³ “A Dream of Thiralatha”, British Museum Department of Prints and Drawings, 1856,0209.424; National Gallery of Art, Washington, Rosenwald Collection, 1943.3.8994.

⁴ In *A Bibliography of William Blake* (New York: The Grolier Club, 1921), Geoffrey Keynes defined the “separate plates” as “miscellaneous designs without text, line engravings and etchings of various sizes, coloured with opaque pigments” (152). He later dedicated an entire book to “the special category rather awkwardly designated by the term ‘separate plates’, these

divisions of knowledge and institutional repositories when the Lessing Rosenwald bequest to the American nation in 1943 designated books for the Library of Congress and prints for the National Gallery of Art. Following the bookish trajectories and archival afterlives of “A Dream of Thiralatha,” I will explore how it functioned within specific books, when and why it was later disbound or arranged into alternative archival orders, and what this tells us about the limits of the book as an object and the dissemination and metamorphoses of illustration under different divisions of knowledge.

0.

I will start with a description of the plate. To the right of the composition we see a half-clad reclined muscular figure, whose curve is echoed and emphasized by the bending shape of a tree trunk above it. The tree redirects the eye from right to left, following the branches bending down and almost touching a naked figure standing to the left and embracing a child

excluding all the Illuminated Books, all the series of engravings such as *The Gates of Paradise*, *Illustrations of the Book of Job*, and those illustrating Dante’s *Inferno*, and all book illustrations, whether original or copied”: see Geoffrey Keynes, *Engravings. The Separate Plates; a Catalogue Raisonné* (Dublin: Walker, 1956), xi. Robert Essick further defined the category as “plates executed and originally published as individual works of art or as companion prints. These have customarily been classified as ‘separate plates,’ a category that excludes illustrations published in books and prints issued as a series of more than two. Blake was not, however, an artist who rigidly observed the generic boundaries of his own time, much less those of modern cataloguers.” See Robert N. Essick, *The Separate Plates of William Blake: A Catalogue* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), xvii.

that seems to be descending from the sky. The incongruous proportions of the two figures suggest that the standing figure might be a vision. This impression is supported by iconography. Blake's etching recalls the figure of the dreamer in Henry Fuseli's *The Shepherd's Dream*, a subject from Milton's *Paradise Lost* exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1786; an oil painting of the same subject was completed in 1793 and exhibited in 1799-1800 as part of Fuseli's Milton Gallery. Fuseli's composition presents the visionary effects produced by a disorder of the senses, showing how perception runs wild when the mind loses control of the imagination in the state of sleep and inner vision is taken over by fantastic supernatural beings. In reimagining a subject associated with exhibition paintings, Blake's relief etched designs might function as independent miniature artworks, while their scale might also fit the format of a book.

1. A Tale of Two Copies, A: in the British Museum

The first textual evidence of "A Dream of Thiralatha" occurs in *Nollekens and His Times* (1828) by J.T. Smith, Keeper of Prints and Drawings at the British Museum from 1816 to 1833. After describing Blake's printing techniques, Smith adds bibliographic descriptions contributed by antiquarian Richard Thomson, later librarian of the London Institution. This is how Thomson ends his description of *Europe a Prophecy*:

At the end of this poem, are seven separate engravings on folio pages, without letterpress, which are coloured like the former part of the work, with a degree of splendour and force, as almost to resemble sketches in oil-colours. The finest of these are a figure of an angel standing in the sun, a group of three furies surrounded by clouds and fire, and *a figure of a man sitting beneath a tree in the deepest dejection.*⁵

⁵ J.T. Smith, *Nollekens and his Times*, 2 vols (London: Colburn, 1828), 2: 479-80, my italics.

In presenting the last subject as a scene of “deepest dejection” Thomson may be seeing Blake’s plate through Fuseli’s *Lycidas*, a simplified version of the composition used for *The Shepherd’s Dream*, which was engraved by Moses Haughton in 1803.

One way to read this addition of prints at the back of *Europe* is to think about the book as a temporary repository of prints. This possibility might make us reconsider the status of other full-plate designs as objects that might be taken out and put to other uses. On the other hand, the function of the codex as a support for reading encourages us to read the added plates as part of the book. If we encounter them inserted at the back of *Europe*, we might try to work out how they might fit the text as additional full-plate illustrations. *Europe* is shaped by events taking place during the sleep of Enitharmon, who “slept in middle of her nightly song, / eighteen hundred years” (9: 1, 3-4; E 63). In the prophecy, Blake uses full-plate illustrations to visualise the scenes of disorder spreading over Europe, modern catastrophes in the vein of the Biblical plagues of Egypt, Revelation, or proleptic scenes of history like those presented by Raphael and Michael to Adam and Jesus in *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*. The line “Enitharmon laugh’d in her sleep” (12: 25; E 64) punctuates these visions and prepares the turn from sleep to awakening. We can imagine turning from the impending apocalyptic action marked by the intervention of Los in the last plate of the prophecy to the full-plate illustrations found at the back: a scene of awakening, the “glad day” of revolutionary action; the fear of figures looking on, one of them bearing a crown; and finally the naked female standing by the dejected bent figure, which might articulate a family romance of Revolution, with the young woman representing America emancipating itself from the patriarchal power of Albion.

J.T. Smith lists “Europe and America” in double quotation marks as if they were one and the same title.⁶ This could be a typographical error, but it makes sense from the evidence of binding a number of works together within the same volume, *Europe* often with *America*.⁷ The illuminated books Smith saw were in the possession of William Upcott, the natural son of the Royal Academician miniature painter Ozias Humphry. The sale catalogue of Upcott’s collection lists *America* and *Europe* in the same lot indicating with asterisks that “inserted are some original drawings by this singular artist”, while other Blake works are listed as “plates”, or “unbound”.⁸ When these works were acquired by the British Museum, their identity was stabilized by classification determined by acquisition date and numerical sequence.

In 1863 the plate’s separate life is recorded under “poetic and miscellaneous” in the catalogue compiled by William Michael Rossetti at the back of Alexander Gilchrist’s *Life of William Blake*. It is at this point that Blake’s “unnam’d forms” acquire a title, “Misfortune

⁶ Smith, *Nollekens and his Times*, 2:462.

⁷ “To the *Songs of Experience* succeeded from Lambeth the same year (1794) volumes of mystic verse and design, in the track of the *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, and the *America*. One of them is a sequel to the *America*, and generally occurs bound up with it, sometimes coloured, sometimes plain. It is entitled *Europe, a Prophecy*”: Alexander Gilchrist, *Life of William Blake, “Pictor Ignotus”*, 2 vols (London: Macmillan, 1863), 1:127.

⁸ *Catalogue of the Collection of Prints, Pictures, and Curiosities of the Late William Upcott, Esq.* (London: Sotheby, 1846), 6, Lot 65 (Octavos), “*Songs of Experience*, plates coloured”; Lot 276: “The Grave, with illustrations by Blake, unbound”; 18, Lot 277 (Folios): “*America, a Prophecy*, 1793 – *Europe, a Prophecy*, 1794, coloured. | *** Inserted are some original drawings by this singular artist”.

and Happiness?” In this transformation the gender identity of the two main characters is switched:

A mourning woman crouches under a drooping, blasted tree-trunk. In front of her stands a beautiful naked young man, tossing and kissing her naked child; a charmingly designed group. A little red bird flying to the right, relieved upon a background of densest cloud, deserves notice for the daringly simple way in which it is executed. Richly coloured in masses, with little or no subsequent re-touching.⁹

2. A Tale of Two Copies, B: Through the Auction Catalogue, in and out of Books

The other known copy of “A Dream of Thiralatha” came up for sale in London in 1904 with *America* copy A, *The Song of Los* copy B, five plates from *Europe* including plates we now know under the title of “The Ancient of Days,” “The Accusers,”¹⁰ and a frontispiece of *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*. The title page of the 1904 sale catalogue gives pride of place to Blake’s works among “A Choice Selection of Finely Bound Sets ... comprising William Blake’s *America & The Song of Los, &c.*, 35 plates, the excessively Rare Original

⁹ Gilchrist, 2:239, no. 233.

¹⁰ *America* Copy A, Pierpont Morgan Library and Museum, PML 16134; *The Song of Los* Copy B, Library of Congress, Rosenwald Collection, HE642.B5 A53 1975; “The Accusers”, National Gallery of Art, Rosenwald Collection, 1943.3.8973. *A Catalogue of Rare & Valuable Books including a Choice Selection of Finely Bound Sets from the Library a Collector and a Library removed from the North of Scotland (the Property of a Lady) comprising William Blake’s America & The Song of Los, &c., 35 Plates, the excessively Rare Original Coloured Issues* (London: Hodgson, 1904), hereafter cited in text as H followed by page number.

Coloured Issues”. Our still unnamed plate is listed after *America* [Lot 222] and before *The Song of Los* [Lot 224]:

223 Blake (William) A remarkably beautiful Coloured Print of a seminude Figure, seated beneath the o’erbending stump of a Tree, with Head bowed down, and a nude Female Figure on the left, with arms outstretched to a Cherub.

This fine plate is of peculiar interest in connection with the foregoing, as being presumably a cancel – possibly for Plate 14, to which it bears certain resemblances both in text and design (H 14).

The visual association with *America* can be justified iconographically by the role of the tree, which functions as a threading device connecting the representation of Death’s Door in plate 12 to the prophetic scene of plate 14, and the dejected pose recalling the kneeling figure at the end of *America*.

The 1904 catalogue entry also suggests verbal analogies with *America*. The prophetic scene of instruction in plate 14 is surrounded by text about the warring factions, where the uncertainty of revolution hangs in the balance:

Then had America been lost, o’erwhelm’d by the Atlantic

And Earth had lost another portion of the infinite

But all rush together in the night in wrath and raging fire

(*America*, plate 14: 17-19, E 56)

Blake’s epic rhythm and his use of suspensions and rapid turns are reflected in the alternation of dejection and joy articulated by the two figures in the plate so far titled “Misfortune and Happiness?” by Rossetti. The evidence of writing is strengthened by text that had been printed on the page, but was covered up by the design. “Faintly discernible under the Uncorrected draft to *Studies in Romanticism*, 49:2 (Summer 2020), special issue ‘Romanticism in a New Key’, in honour of Jerome McGann – PLEASE DO NOT CIRCULATE OR CITE.

colouring on the upper half of the plate,” this text was transcribed in the catalogue by using a mirror to read the embossing produced by the increased pressure used in printing this second pull of the print:

As when a dream of Thiralatha flies the midnight hour
 in vain the dreamer grasps the joyful images, they fly
 seen in obscured traces in the vale of Leutha, so
 the British colonies beneath the woeful Princes fade.
 And so the princes fade from earth, scarce seen by souls of men,
 But tho’ obscur’d, this is the form of the Angelic land (H 14).

This transcription paves the way for giving the plate a bookish location and a name.

In 1912 A.G.B. Russell classifies the plate as “without title”, but on the basis of the text that Blake painted over with the design, he tentatively gives it a new title: “(A Dream of Thiralatha)”. The transcription and new title open up new textual associations that anchor the plate to the order of books within the verbal organisation of the archive. Russell associates the plate with *America* on the basis of “the formation of the writing,” “the character and subject-matter of the verse,” the design’s similarity in size and composition to plate 14, leading to the conclusion that “(A Dream of Thiralatha)” is a “cancel plate” of *America*.¹¹ Foster Damon firms up the textual anchoring, arguing that the transcribed text at the back “was probably to have followed plate 6” (corresponding to plate 4 in Copy A, followed by

¹¹ Archibald G.B. Russell, *The engravings of William Blake* (London: Grant Richards, 1912), 69-70; Laurence Binyon, *The Engraved Designs of William Blake* (London: Ernest Benn, 1926), 106; Geoffrey Keynes and Edwin Wolf, *William Blake’s Illuminated Books: A Census* (New York: Grolier Club, 1953), 42.

Erdman): along the top margin of the plate a dragon pursues Urizen who falls down along the left margin holding his books of the Law, while the bottom margin features men in gestures of despair below the line “The King of England looking westward trembles at the vision” (E 53); next to them, the stump of a tree alluding to “the forests of the night” might function as a visual rejoinder to the tree in “A Dream of Thiralatha.” For Damon, Thiralatha is “evidently a Muse, or ‘daughter of Beulah’; yet not a bearer of true dreams, since she is connected with Leutha, the regent of sex under Satan (error). Blake wished to imply that, as the false dream fades and cannot be remembered, so the British colonies under the mistaken rule of their Princes are vanishing from the Reality of Eternity”.¹² Damon’s reading absorbed Thiralatha into an early twentieth-century Yeatsian Blake myth formation.¹³

While the embossed text corroborates links to *America* because of its mention of “colonies” and the use of epic similes, the comparison with a dream strengthens the connection to Fuseli, whose dream pictures often developed actions out of epic similes, and also offers key evidence for other bookish associations. In the penultimate plate of *Europe* “Sotha & Thiralatha, secret dwellers of dreamful caves” (14.26, E 66) are named among the children that Enitharmon invites to “arise”. The association with *Europe* offers different ways of interpreting the ambiguous “a dream of Thiralatha”. Rossetti’s female gendering might suggest that the dejected figure is a representation of Europe, perhaps dreaming about

¹² Foster Damon, *William Blake: His Philosophy and Symbols* (London: Constable, 1924), 339; see also 347.

¹³ For use of the kabalistic word ‘regent’, nowhere found in Blake, see Edwin John Ellis and William Butler Yeats, “The Symbolic System,” *The Works of William Blake Poetic, Symbolic, and Critical*, 3 vols (London: Quaritch, 1893), 1: 252, 254, 255, 257, 265, 281, 296; Thiralatha’s appearance in *Europe* and *The Song of Los* is discussed on 332-3.

Thiralatha/America; instead, Laurence Binyon takes the opposite route of identifying the dreamer herself as Thiralatha, and the standing figure as the subject of her dream.¹⁴ While this evidence supports the plate's association with "Europe and America," where the British Museum copy was inserted, the trajectory of this second copy of the plate identifies another promiscuous book gathering that redefines the boundaries between Blake books.

The title page of the 1904 sale catalogue details that *America* and *The Song of Los* are among six items "bound up somewhat irregularly in a cloth case," but "they have now been detached for convenience of sale" (H 13), and then describes them as "unbound" in their respective lot entries. Our still untitled separate plate is listed after *America* and before *The Song of Los*, an imperfect set of *Europe*, and additional plates including the frontispiece of *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*. Since all other "separate plates" are placed after the complete sets of *America* and *The Song of Los*, while our untitled plate is the only one listed between the two complete illuminated books, the implication is that it may have had a role in mediating the transition between the two books. Their shared bibliographic codes include the same size of paper. Moreover, while the British Museum copies of *Europe* and *America* were printed on both recto and verso reinforcing the experience of reading page openings, *America* Copy A is printed on the rectos only like *The Song of Los*. The pauses provided by the blank versos encourage shifting the emphasis from the book as a tool for reading to the book as a

¹⁴ Binyon, *The Engraved Designs of William Blake*, 106: "Under a bent and blasted tree, a woman (Thiralatha) sits sleeping with her head bowed on her knees. At the left her Dream, a naked female form, kisses an embodied joy which hovers over her lips ... I take the nude figure to be the Dream of the sleeping Thiralatha".

support for other ways of seeing, “from print-as-page to print-as-painting”, as Joseph Viscomi puts it.¹⁵

Blake’s experiments with the composite art of the book in the continental prophecies involves a progressive disarticulation of the units of the page as a uniform field of writing, subverting parameters associated with the typographical layout of letterpress printing. The boundaries of the page float away as writing is arranged in cloud-shaped clusters of lines, while gaping blanks and apocalyptic scenes irrupting in the space ordinarily occupied by writing disrupt the perception of the page as a flat medium. Blake’s introduction of full-plate illustrations in *Europe* and *The Book of Urizen* participates in this changing syntax of reading and viewing. Placed in different positions in each copy, full-plate illustrations enhanced the dynamic possibilities of the illuminated book as a medium by interrupting the reading text, adding pauses and visualisations within and between illuminated books. The “separate plates” that we now classify under the Small and Large Books of Designs were produced at this time of experimentation with full-page illustrations as elements that differentiated the illuminated books as unique objects.

As Don Mackenzie pointed out, “every document carries the history of its own making.”¹⁶ Paying attention to minute particulars reveals a more intimate connection between “A Dream of Thiralatha” and *The Song of Los*. Irregular foliation tells a story about the

¹⁵ Joseph Viscomi, *Blake and the Idea of the Book* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 160.

¹⁶ D. McKenzie, “‘What’s Past is Prologue’: the Bibliographical Society and the History of the Book,” in *Making Meaning: ‘Printers of the Mind’ and other Essays*, ed. Peter McDonald and Michael Suarez (Amherst, Mass., 2002), 267-8; quoted in Jerome McGann, “Philology in a New Key,” *Critical Inquiry* 39.2 (Winter 2013): 327-346, on 336.

bookish identity of the plate and the porous boundaries of the book. The 1904 catalogue fails to register the page numbers inscribed in the top right corner of “A Dream of Thiralatha” and two of the other plates on sale. When we pay attention to the foliation, these odd numbers suddenly make sense, because they complete the seemingly irregular page sequence inscribed in *The Song of Los*:

1. Frontispiece
2. Titlepage
3. [LOT 227] “The Three Accusers: Murder, Theft and Adultery”
4. Africa
5. [LOT 228] “... presumably John the Baptist preaching Repentance, with right arm outstretched over the heads of a Group of male and female Figures” (now known under the title “Joseph of Arimathea Preaching to the Inhabitants of Britain”)
6. Africa, second plate
7. The Queen of Fairies (full-plate illustration)
8. Asia
9. [LOT 223] (“A Dream of Thiralatha”)
10. Asia, second plate
11. Los resting on his hammer on the red sphere (full-plate illustration)

Known under the title “The Three Accusers: Murder, Theft and Adultery” because of the inscription under the final state of the plate, the first inserted plate represents three standing figures from different walks of life enveloped in a fiery background; the middle one wears a crown and looks on with his hands to his face in an attitude of terror, heightening the expectation of an apocalyptic drama about to unfold. Integrated within *The Song of Los* as page 3, this plate opens up a pause between the title page and the beginning of the writing.

The second inserted plate, numbered page 5, also untitled and now known under the title “Joseph of Arimathea preaching to the Inhabitants of England,” is interleaved between the two plates of the “Africa” section, which connect Britain to the scenes of religious power sketched in the previous page, where Adam and Noah “saw Urizen give his Laws to the Nations / By the hands of the children of Los” (E 67). A variant version of the name Thiralatha makes a textual appearance at the end of the first page of the “Africa” section, which charts the negative effects caused by “forms of dark delusion” associated with Urizen’s religion of the book. As “the human race began to wither”, since the healthy had secluded themselves due to “the fear of the joys of love”, and “the diseased only propagated”:

So Antamon call’d up Leutha from her valleys of delight:

and to Mahomet a loose Bible gave.

But in the North, to Odin, Sotha gave a Code of War,

Because of Diralada thinking to reclaim his joy.

(*The Song of Los*, plate 4, E 67)

This verbal surfacing of Diralada/Thiralatha supports a reading of “A Dream of Thiralatha” as a full-plate design expressing oppression, dejection, and unattainable desire under the regime of the books of the law. If the Africa section is marked by the imposition of the codex, in the Asia section Urizen’s demise is associated with book destruction: his “Books of brass iron & gold / Melted over the land as he flew” (E 69). In contrast to the dejected reading of Diralada “under the law,” the position in which the associated full-plate illustration is inserted between the two plates of the Asia section activates its visual polysemy. The distance between the name and the illustration placed several plates later shows the contrapuntal dynamic activated by the separation of word and image. When Diralada returns visually, the design articulates the release and restoration of fiery joy as part of the revolutionary crescendo at the end of the poem.

3. A Tale of Two Copies, B: in American Collections

Removing the three plates from their sequence in *The Song of Los* led to further kinds of separation. At the 1904 sale, *The Song of Los*, “The Three Accusers”, and “Joseph of Arimathea” were acquired through Bernard Quaritch by the American collector W.A. White, “who did not include the extraneous plates when he enclosed the eight leaves, unbound, in a folder.”¹⁷ In 1929 these items entered the collection of Lessing J. Rosenwald. “A Dream of Thiralatha” had also been acquired by Quaritch in the 1904 sale. Although it was not resold to White at that point, it eventually also found its way into the Rosenwald collection in 1942.¹⁸

The plates’ subsequent institutional history signals a further division of knowledge. In 1943 Lessing Rosenwald discussed his donation of prints and rare books to the American nation with the Librarian of Congress and the first director of the National Gallery of Art, whose roles signal the disciplinary criteria that apportioned his collection between the two institutions.¹⁹ While *The Song of Los* and *America* were acquired by the Library of Congress, the “separate plates” once interleaved in *The Song of Los* copy B were kept separate from the

¹⁷ Geoffrey Keynes in William Blake, *The Song of Los* (London: The Trianon Press for the William Blake Trust, 1975): these other plates are now at the National Gallery of Art, Rosenwald Collection 1943.3.8973, 1943.3.8988. For White’s and Rosenwald’s collecting activities, see Robert Essick, “Collecting Blake,” in *Blake in Our Time: Essays in Honour of G.E. Bentley Jr*, ed. Karen Mulhallen (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 23, 25-27.

¹⁸ National Gallery of Art, Rosenwald Collection 1943.3.8994, see Essick, *Separate Plates*, 38.

¹⁹ Ruth E. Fine, *Lessing J. Rosenwald: Tribute to a Collector* (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 1982), 30-32, 76.

illuminated book. Foliation was not taken into consideration. “A Dream of Thiralatha” was also donated to the National Gallery of Art in 1945, and moved there in 1980. Its status as a cancel plate did not help recognize its physical identity within the order of books, given that it failed to join the other three cancelled plates of *America* in the Library of Congress. As a work on paper registering a text overlaid by a colour print, the plate can be considered a palimpsest. Should its identity as a text be erased by the design? How might its identity as a book part play out? On the other hand, as a work on paper reclaimed by the colour print, why should the plate be determined by the text it has overwritten? In the 1940s its status as a design prevailed. Separated from the order of both books, it was classified among the “engravings series and single sheet prints” destined for the National Gallery of Arts.

In a “Memorable Fancy” in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* “Unnam’d forms” of the fifth chamber were “receiv’d by Men who occupied the sixth chamber, and took the forms of books & were arranged in libraries” (plate 15, E 40). Jerome McGann uses Blake’s allegory of printing and transmission as an epigraph to a chapter entitled “Garden of Forking Paths” in *The Textual Condition*.²⁰ The trajectory of “A Dream of Thiralatha” shows how sales, collecting practices, and institutional redistribution determined by emerging divisions of knowledge produced an “ideal book” within an “archive of occluded memory”.²¹

Following the trajectories of “A Dream of Thiralatha” means piecing together the traces of earlier, more open orders of the book, and revealing the logic that intervened to stabilize its boundaries around 1900. Variation is admissible insofar as the moving parts are permutations of elements recurring as full-plate illustrations in all copies. By contrast, plates that only appeared in individual copies were considered as anomalies that did not belong to the book.

²⁰ Jerome McGann, *The Textual Condition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).

²¹ McGann, “Philology in a new Key,” 338.

“Heterodox lines of textual transmission” had to be emended; the “authoritative text” was “produce[d] ... by subtraction”.²² Such a normalising intervention is particularly problematic in the case of *The Song of Los*, a work printed in six copies of which three once included such “extra-illustrations”.

A similar rearrangement normalised the Huntington Library copy of *The Song of Los* (Copy E). When it was acquired by Henry Huntington in 1915, the illuminated book ended with “Albion Rose,” but in 1953 this plate was taken out and transferred to the Huntington Art Gallery.²³ In November 1900 a third copy of *The Song of Los* (Copy C), now at the Pierpont Morgan, was bound with *Visions* (Copy H), *Europe* (Copy G), and three watercolours; one of them was related to *The Song of Los*. Yet the watercolours had been taken out when it was resold by Quaritch the following month; the three illuminated books

²² Jerome McGann, *A Critique of Modern Textual Criticism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 74, 15.

²³ Essick, *Separate Plates*, 32, 38, 44-45, nos. VIII.2C, IX.1B, XI.1B; *The Works of William Blake in the Huntington Collections: A Complete Catalogue* (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library, 1985), 165-8, 195-7. Essick argues that “Albion Rose” was positioned as the final plate sometime between the Sotheby sale of 30 March 1903, when it was sold unbound from the Crewe Collection, and 1915, when Huntington acquired it. However, on the basis of the strong offset that “Albion Rose” left on the last plate of *The Song of Los*, Martin Butlin believes that “Albion Rose” may have been placed last much earlier, indeed possibly by Blake himself, in order to provide an upbeat ending to the poem, see Martin Butlin, “Footnotes on the Huntington Blakes,” *Blake/An Illustrated Quarterly* 22.1 (Summer 1998): 17-18.

were in turn disbound by the dealer John Fleming after the sale of the collection of Frances White Emerson in 1958.²⁴

Other copies of the plates inserted and then subtracted from *The Song of Los* copy B were used to customize other Blake works. Earlier states of “The Three Accusers” were used as full-plate illustrations. The first known state of the plate, an intaglio etching captioned *Our End is Come*, was inserted as a frontispiece in Francis Douce’s copy of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*.²⁵ An entry in an exhibition catalogue from 1891 registers a second state of the plate with the inscription: “When the senses are shaken / and the soul is driven to madness Page 56”. These lines appear in the “Prologue, Intended for a Dramatic Piece of King Edward the Fourth” on p. 56 of Blake’s earliest publication, *Poetical Sketches* (1783).²⁶ Whether the inscription is no more than a reference directing readers to the whole text, or an indication for the binder retrofitting the book with this print as an illustration facing the text, the page number invites the viewer to consider it as a book part.

²⁴ *The Song of Los*, Copy C, “Copy Information,” The William Blake Archive,

<http://blakearchive.org/copy/s-los.c?descId=s-los.c.illbk.01>. Accessed 27 February 2020.

²⁵ *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Copy B, Bodleian Library, Arch. G d.53, reproduced in William Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, ed. Michael Phillips (Oxford: Bodleian Library, 2011), 25-28, 87-88. On the states of *Our End is Come/The Accusers*, see Essick, *Separate Plates*, 30.

²⁶ “When the senses / are shaken, and the soul is driven to madness,” *Poetical Sketches* by W.B. (London, 1783), 56; S.R. Koehler, *Exhibition of books, Water Colors, Engravings, etc. by William Blake: February 7 to March 15, 1891* (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1891), 33; E 672; Essick, *Separate Plates*, 31.

Taken out of books, “A Dream of Thiralatha” and other plates came to be understood as “separate plates,” and then redefined as part of the “Large Book of Designs.” The first mention of such a volume may be found in the 1904 Catalogue, which records the first impression of the plate “in a Volume in the British Museum lettered ‘Designs by William Blake’” (H 14).²⁷ It is possible that the record confuses the plates inserted at the back of *Europe* with the “small quarto volume of twenty-three engravings of various shapes and sizes” mentioned just after them in 1828,²⁸ and again in Upcott’s sale catalogue, or that the museum bound these miscellaneous plates in a volume, though this is unlikely given that Morton Paley observes that the plates show no evidence of stitching.²⁹ The term “A Large Book of Designs” has become hegemonic since appearing in Geoffrey Keynes’s cataloguing of Blake’s work. In 1956 Keynes argued that “Albion Rose” “was formerly in a volume of miscellaneous coloured prints made up by Blake himself about 1794. The volume, known as the *Large Book of Designs*, was acquired by the British Museum in 1856, and was recently broken up so that the prints in it might be exhibited separately”.³⁰ Even though both David

²⁷ This claim is repeated in Russell, 55, 56, 70.

²⁸ Smith, *Nollekens and his Times*, 2:480; Gilchrist, 2: 132, and “especially the smaller of the two collections of odd plates from his different works, which is labelled Designs by W.Blake”, 373-4.

²⁹ Paley, “George Romney and Ozias Humphry,” *Blake/An Illustrated Quarterly* 50.3 (Winter 2016-17): para. 37.

³⁰ Keynes, *Engravings. The Separate Plates*, 7; see also 20, and Keynes and Wolf, *Census*, 88.

Bindman and Martin Butlin called into question the history of this organizational form,³¹ this retrospective book category paradoxically separates these plates from their actual bookish histories. The “Separate Plates” and “Large Book of Designs” are twentieth-century categories shaped by divisions of knowledge that separated the order of books from works on papers destined to art galleries or departments of prints and drawings. This distinction distorts Blake’s ideas of the book, forgetting the bibliographical codes that he identified when he detailed his productions in 1793 by title, genre, mode of production, size, and number of designs, which coincided with the number of pages, thus subordinating the texts to the designs within an engraver’s idea of the book. Of what we now call “separate plates”, in a famous letter of 1818, Blake said: “those I printed for Mr Humphry are a selection from the different books of such as could be printed without the writing though to the loss of some of the things. For they when printed perfect accompany poetical personifications and acts,

³¹ David Bindman points out that “it is probable, therefore, that ‘A Large Book of Designs’ was not conceived originally as a volume, but consisted of additional sample of colour-printed designs to be added to books or given away or sold as single pictures”: see David Bindman, *The Complete Graphic Works of William Blake* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1978), 475. Martin Butlin concedes that “given that even the first copy of the *Large Book of Designs* is first mentioned, as early as 1828, as being bound into the end of a copy of *Europe*, it may be that, as Bindman suggests, the book never existed as a separate entity”: see Martin Butlin, *The Paintings and Drawings of William Blake* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 142.

without which poems they never could have been executed.”³² This letter refers to intext designs selected from the illuminated books and reprinted without the accompanying text. However, the point is just as powerful if it is made to refer to the plates now classified under the names “A Dream of Thiralatha,” “The Accusers,” “Joseph of Arimathea,” and “Albion Rose” in the context of the emergence of full-plate illustrations in Blake’s book production around 1793-4. The distinction between full-plate illustrations and separate plates limits the possibilities of a more expansive and interactive idea of the book. To follow the trajectories of these plates inside and outside Blake’s books is to restore them to earlier modes of address as exemplary case studies for an alternative heterodox and hybrid material history of the book.

Birkbeck College, University of London

Bibliography

A Catalogue of Rare & Valuable Books including a Choice Selection of Finely Bound Sets from the Library a Collector and a Library removed from the North of Scotland (the Property of a Lady) comprising William Blake’s America & The Song of Los, &c., 35 Plates, the excessively Rare Original Coloured Issues. London: Hodgson, 1904.

Bindman, David. *The Complete Graphic Works of William Blake.* London: Thames and Hudson, 1978.

Binyon, Laurence. *The Engraved Designs of William Blake.* London: Ernest Benn, 1926.

³² William Blake To Dawson Turner, 9 June 1818, E 771; Paley notes that Humphry’s collection of plates does not include any duplicates of designs he already owned in his collection of illuminated books: see Paley, “George Romney and Ozias Humphry,” para. 39.

- Blake, William. *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*. Ed. David V. Erdman. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982.
- . *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. Ed. Michael Phillips. Oxford: Bodleian Library, 2011.
- . *Poetical Sketches by W.B.* London, 1783.
- . *The Song of Los*, Copy C, “Copy Information,” The William Blake Archive, <http://blakearchive.org/copy/s-los.c?descId=s-los.c.illbk.01>. Accessed 27 February 2020.
- Butlin, Martin. *The Paintings and Drawings of William Blake*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981.
- . “Footnotes on the Huntington Blakes,” *Blake/An Illustrated Quarterly* 22.1 (Summer 1998), 17-18.
- Catalogue of the Collection of Prints, Pictures, and Curiosities of the Late William Upcott, Esq.* London: Sotheby, 1846.
- Damon, Foster. *William Blake: His Philosophy and Symbols*. London: Constable, 1924.
- Essick, Robert N. *The Separate Plates of William Blake: A Catalogue*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983.
- . “Collecting Blake,” in *Blake in Our Time: Essays in Honour of G.E. Bentley Jr.* Ed. Karen Mulhallen. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010.
- . *The Works of William Blake in the Huntington Collections: A Complete Catalogue*. San Marino, CA: Huntington Library, 1985.
- Fine, Ruth E. *Lessing J. Rosenwald: Tribute to a Collector*. Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 1982.
- Gilchrist, Alexander. *Life of William Blake, “Pictor Ignotus”*, 2 vols. London: Macmillan, 1863.
- Keynes, Geoffrey. *A Bibliography of William Blake*. New York: The Grolier Club, 1921
- Uncorrected draft to *Studies in Romanticism*, 49:2 (Summer 2020), special issue ‘Romanticism in a New Key’, in honour of Jerome McGann – PLEASE DO NOT CIRCULATE OR CITE.

- . *Engravings. The Separate Plates; a Catalogue Raisonné*. Dublin: Walker, 1956.
- Keynes, Geoffrey, in William Blake, *The Song of Los*. London: The Trianon Press for the William Blake Trust, 1975.
- Keynes, Geoffrey and Wolf, Edwin. *William Blake's Illuminated Books: A Census* (New York: Grolier Club, 1953).
- Koehler, S.R. *Exhibition of books, Water Colors, Engravings, etc. by William Blake: February 7 to March 15, 1891* (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1891).
- McGann, Jerome. "Philology in a New Key," *Critical Inquiry* 39.2 (Winter 2013): 327-346.
- . "The Idea of an Indeterminate Text: Blake's Bible of Hell and Dr. Alexander Geddes," *Studies in Romanticism* 25 (Fall 1986): 303-324.
- . *A Critique of Modern Textual Criticism*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983.
- . *The Textual Condition*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991.
- McKenzie, D. "'What's Past is Prologue': the Bibliographical Society and the History of the Book," in *Making Meaning: 'Printers of the Mind' and other Essays*. Ed. Peter McDonald and Michael Suarez. Amherst, Mass., 2002.
- Paley, Morton. "George Romney and Ozias Humphry," *Blake/An Illustrated Quarterly* 50.3 (Winter 2016-17).
- Russell, Archibald G.B. *The Engravings of William Blake*. London: Grant Richards, 1912.
- Smith, J.T. *Nollekens and his Times*, 2 vols. London: Colburn, 1828.
- Viscomi, Joseph. *Blake and the Idea of the Book* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).
- Yeats, William Butler. "The Symbolic System," *The Works of William Blake Poetic, Symbolic, and Critical*. Ed. Edwin John Ellis and William Butler Yeats, 3 vols. London: Quaritch, 1893.

