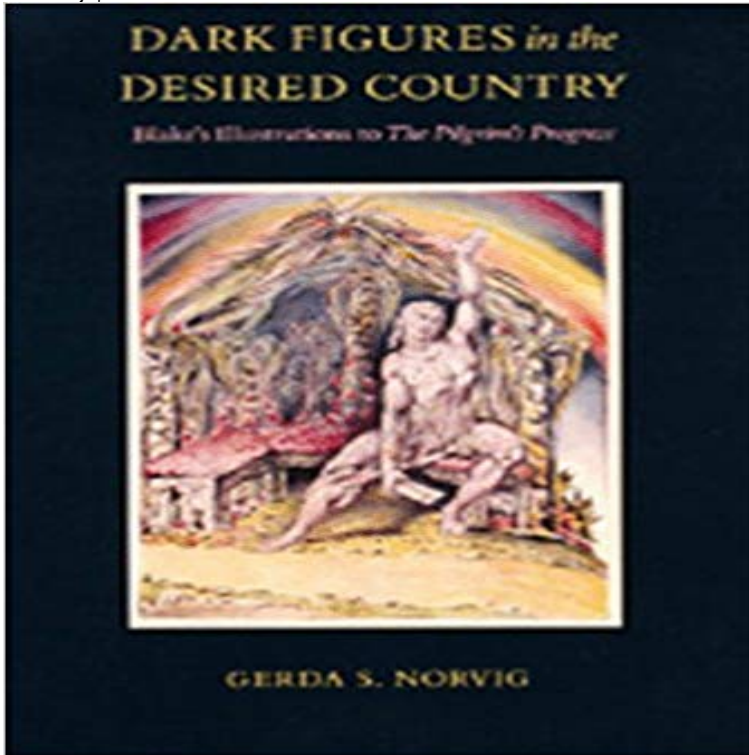


# Dark Figures in the Desired Country: Blakes Illustrations to The Pilgrims Progress



Toward the end of his life, William Blake produced a beautiful sequence of 28 watercolor drawings to illustrate Bunyan's Pilgrims Progress. These rarely seen drawings show him at the peak of his powers, radically reinterpreting one of the central texts of English literature. Gerda Norvig's book, with its stunning color reproductions, offers the first detailed study of these important works of art. Norvig sets the watercolors in the context of Blake's lifelong engagement with Bunyan's myth and in relation to the Puritan writers' own artistic and critical methods. She shows how deeply Blake's love-hate relationship with Bunyan influenced not only these particular drawings but also Blake's revolutionary theories of art and poetics. With judicious use of psychoanalytical and post-structuralist critical theory, she demonstrates that Blake's pictorial interpretation of The Pilgrims Progress tells a contemporary, self-reflexive tale about interpretation. Blake implicates author, narrator, and reader in a dream-protagonist's never-ending search for a proper stance on the relations of self and other.

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