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Cover: Blake, *Angel of the Revelation* (also known as *"And the angel which I saw lifted up his hand to Heaven"*) (c. 1805). Watercolor, 39.4 x 26.3 cm. Metropolitan Museum of Art. Rogers Fund, 1914. 14.81.1.

I N T E R V I E W

A Conversation with Helen Bruder

This interview was conducted by Elizabeth Effinger, who has edited and condensed it for publication.

THE year 2022 marked the twenty-fifth anniversary of the publication of Helen P. Bruder's *William Blake and the Daughters of Albion* (Macmillan, 1997) (hereafter *WBDA*), the first book that brought feminist criticism to bear on Blake studies. Bruder's *WBDA* wrestles with Blake's complex representations of gender and sexuality. While earlier essays brought much-needed critical focus to Blake's representations of women (see Susan Fox and Anne Mellor),[1] Bruder's book-length study argued for a radical feminist spirit in his works. This strident call to arms would advance Blake scholarship in exciting new directions, and *WBDA* has been widely cited ever since. Bruder is also the editor of *Women Reading William Blake* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) and prolific co-editor with Tristanne Connolly of four collections: *Queer Blake* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), *Blake, Gender and Culture* (Pickering & Chatto, 2012), *Sexy Blake* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), and *Beastly Blake* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018). Currently, she is an independent scholar living in Oxfordshire. I met with her on 3 October 2022 at St. James's Church, Piccadilly, in London, where we talked in the vestibule near the font where Blake was baptized in 1757. In the interview that follows, Bruder reflects on *WBDA* and what has changed in Blake scholarship since then.

EE: How did you come to Blake? Do you have an earliest memory of Blake?

HB: I had a very religious upbringing. The thing that got me into Blake was I wanted to continue being a Christian but adult life buffeted my basic faith. … My early education was woefully bad but when I read my first Blake poem at Brookes University, I liked it so much. I was just seized immediately. We did all of *Songs*. It was probably the whole experience of studying that collection of poems. I had two fantastic teachers. And then I just knew. First *Songs* and then *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*.

1. Susan Fox, "The Female as Metaphor in William Blake's Poetry," *Critical Inquiry* 3.3 (spring 1977): 507-19; Anne K. Mellor, "Blake's Portrayal of Women," *Blake* 16.3 (winter 1982–83): 148-55.

EE: I think those texts are still the gateway drugs into Blake.

HB: *Marriage of Heaven and Hell* is the text that just gets you. It's because you can understand it, or you think you can understand it. There are some bits where there aren't weird characters immediately. The narrative is so important—that's the incentive of the Proverbs. … I was lucky because the two people that taught me Blake, one of them was a Marxist, so he wasn't interested in religion, and the other one had been a priest. So, I had two good influences, each taking me in completely different directions with Blake.

EE: What was it about Blake that seized you?

HB: Initially, it was the idea that you could have a very vibrant religious faith, but it didn't have to be attached to moralizing, or judgmentalism or salvation in the sense of sorting the sheep from the goats, and an incredibly inflated sense of what it is to be human and divine in yourself at the same time, but for that to mean something completely different from what it might mean in the church.

That's what seized me emotionally, but that isn't what I wrote about ever. Until now. That's the latest project. That's what Tristanne Connolly and I are doing now: a book called *Blake Sees Jesus*. And I see it as a kind of a completion of or being a little bit more honest about what my actual initial attachment was to Blake. It feels like coming full circle.

EE: I'll loop back to your new project later, but first let's talk about the book that started your long career in Blake studies. Your widely cited first book, *William Blake and the Daughters of Albion*, celebrates the twenty-fifth anniversary of its publication this year, and is the occasion for us sitting down and having this conversation. Why do you think that this book was considered such a game changer in Blake scholarship?

HB: I think it's because of the timing. *WBDA* was published in 1997, but, like I say in the book, feminist Blake studies came a bit late. So, I think somebody had to write this book. It wouldn't have to be written particularly in this way, but I was full of this sense that there was something terribly unjust and wrong in Blake scholarship, and I wanted to sort it out. I put that down to my religious upbringing. It's a bit like what Jeanette Winterson says: once you've preached inside the tent, whatever you do, you're still preaching. I wouldn't take such an emphatic tone now. I think the broad stroke of saying that feminists can be really good Blake scholars and we're going to illuminate things that you've ignored is a fair point, and one that is really well proven.

"Europe Supported by Africa and America," from John Gabriel Stedman, *Narrative, of a Five Years' Expedition* (1796). Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens. Library Division, Rare Books, call no. 23654. Image courtesy of the *William Blake Archive*.

EE: Personally, I enjoyed your choice of voice; it felt charged, like Blake's "awake! awake! awake! / Jerusalem thy Sister calls!" (*Jerusalem* 77.1-2, E 233). Your criticism of misogynistic interpretations of *The Book of Thel* was especially eye-opening for me.

HB: I really didn't feel like it was a choice. When I wrote the chapter about *The Book of Thel*, I felt that femininity shouldn't be so despised, because that's what motivated so much of that criticism that had grown up around it. It was obvious once you plunged into it; it's not just one person, it's like fifty people. Sometimes you must point out the obvious. I don't know if I'd come down on the same side in my interpretation of the poem now. Maybe I wouldn't. But then, critics seemed to hate this character [Thel] and really, all she's doing is saying "I'm not sure." I took the same sense of indignation because I sort of felt it.

EE: That sense of indignation comes through! I'd say your writing in *WBDA* has teeth. It also strikes me that your rhetoric echoes the way you see Blake's voice as socially engaged with his world, a direct rebuttal to those critics who see Blake as someone speaking only to himself. I think that's what I really enjoyed about your book, that sense of how affected you were by the material. It's one that resonates with my own encounter with Blake's work, that it just gets under your skin.

Something else I appreciated was your methodology of paying attention to the "cultural effluvia" of Blake's day, as you put it. What's the attraction to these sources?

HB: Traditionally, there's a lot of talk about Blake as a genius. The idea that he wasn't affected by the time of his writing is obviously profoundly wrong. You can be both, which is what he is, because he's a genius, giving us a genius sense of history and of his own time. But that seems obvious, doesn't it? There were all these things that are happening around him. Everybody's interested in political history, and I'd just like to say, well, there's other history too.

So, let's go back to the basic things. Take Blake's *Europe*, for example. I mean, you're in the middle of a European war, and a queen [Marie Antoinette] has been guillotined and very close to the production of this poem. Could there be a connection? There were loads of pornographic cartoons of the queen. Do you think it's possible this man [Blake], living in London, looking at pictures, may have seen one of them? It was not hard to find. You might not be interested in it, but it's literally not hard; there's loads of political pamphlets. Do you think you might have read any of them? There are loads of political cartoons, and they're obscene some of them. Do you think that could have anything to do with the bodies as they appear in *Europe*?

In *WBDA* I ran out of energy and space. I would have liked to get on to the Urizen books because they're more complicated. But also, the argument about what's human or not human in Blake, about what embodiment is and how that affects identity, that's everywhere in Blake's work and I didn't get to it.

EE: What do you think has changed most in your own work, or in Blake scholarship, since the publication of *WBDA*?

HB: In thinking about how things progressed after this book, I think the most striking thing is the collaborations. In looking back at the end of *WBDA*, it's a little bit sad when I'm saying I feel like I'm speaking into a void, and there's not a big conversation of it. There genuinely wasn't. That's probably the biggest difference now. I think there's more collaboration now, and different kinds of collaboration.

Back then, I think there was much more of a sense of there being an establishment, a genuine establishment that really wasn't open. It was the prescribed readings, and that some things were appropriate, and some things weren't, and some works more important than others. And we all know what the important ones are and which ones aren't. And the visual must be separated from the poetry. And if you're an expert on this, you can't write about that. It's different now.

I think I always start with the most obvious things and work out from that. I'm never going to have the same kind of insights as somebody who knows a great deal about Christian iconography. I just come at it with my own eyes and am informed by at least my relatively wide knowledge of Blake.

I'm quite pleased with collections that I've done since *WBDA*. With *Women Reading William Blake*, I wanted to get as many of these women that haven't necessarily been seen together as part of a critical landscape. And then it brought me to meet other people. Tristanne Connolly and I have collaborated multiple times, which has been fantastic.

I think collaboration is a very good way of seeing directions open up. Because when you ask people what they want to write about, beyond offering them the broad theme, you're asking "What would you like to say?" And you, you're learning; you're not prescribing. If you invite people under a broad theme to write something, you don't know what you're going to get. With *Beastly Blake*, Tristanne and I thought that might be one kind of book, and it turned out to be another kind of book. But then also, you've got to be careful that you don't become part of the problem, and just keep on asking the same people, or people that you know you're going to agree with.

EE: It's just as Blake says: "Without Contraries is no progression" (*Marriage* 3, E 34). It sounds like your ongoing interest in collaboration, as a concept and as part of your own scholarly practice, folds back into some of the ideas about what you were pushing against in this book, around the gatekeeping and policing in Blake studies at the time.

HB: That's exactly right. I think the sense is that Blake is this genius, and then he's taught to us by these other genius characters, these "great fathers" of Blake studies. But I don't think so. I think we probably learn a lot more if we are all toiling in the field together.

EE: How would you feel if you were called one of the great mothers of Blake studies?

HB: (*laughing*) I don't know. I guess that would be nice, but only in the sense that that's just the beginning. I think there was a good point to be made in *WBDA*, but I could have done it without quite swinging the hammer so much. And I think it needed to be followed by all these things that have proliferated into these multiple voices. That's the way it needs to be.

EE: Collaboration is a form of partnership, and that also makes me think about the connections with the public and forms of public scholarship. Not only do we have these multiple collaborative voices in Blake scholarship, but we also have public engagements with Blake. I'm thinking even beyond the widely recognized scholarly resources that make Blake's work freely available (e.g., the *Blake Archive*)—for example, Jason Whittaker's *Zoamorphosis* blog, the free online journal *VALA* from the Blake Society, and even books on Blake aimed at a wider audience. These all potentially shape the image of Blake in the popular imagination. Is there anything about Blake that you think still needs to be reshaped in the popular imagination?

HB: Going back to first principles and things that are obvious is important. Take the role of Catherine Blake. How can it possibly be that this person who collaborated with Blake, who helped produce his creative work for his entire life, is cut out? For many years, Catherine's role has only been acknowledged in a minor way, as having done the printing and a bit of coloring. But that is clearly not going to be the only way that this partner influenced Blake's genius. It's just another bit of the mythology which still lingers, but it can be changed.

And then there's also the generic hierarchy within Blake's own work. For example, the Thomas Gray watercolours for Ann Flaxman, why are they not taken more seriously when people are trying to have a whole sense of Blake's visual progression? I think that is because they see the watercolours in some broad sense of feminine aesthetic. These are just things that are obvious, but still, we could do something about it.

EE: Let's talk about what's changed in the last twenty-five years—or maybe what hasn't. Do the kinds of critiques you make about Blake studies still hold true today? Are gender and sexuality still neglected in this discourse? Are there other areas that you consider to be neglected in Blake scholarship?

HB: I haven't reached a fixed position about that. In many ways I'm not the right person to ask. I've been an outsider, a passionate and interested amateur, for years now and I genuinely feel others are in a much better position to answer this question. Perhaps also because my thinking about gender and identity refuses to catch up with the virtual world, and future directions now can only be envisaged, I think, by digital natives.

I would have liked to see some more book-length studies on Blake and gender and sexuality. There's lots of articles. Loads of people have written great things, and the issue of gender doesn't tend to stay entirely on the margins now, which is good. I'd also like to see something like this on the longer poems.

I think what *VALA*, the Blake Society journal, is doing is fantastic; its first issue was about women and gender. That was great.

EE: Do you think there's something about Blake's treatment of gender and sexuality that makes it resistant or inhospitable? Why are people not writing these books?

HB: I wonder if academics are not writing these bigger books because maybe academics think it [Blake's treatment of gender and sexuality] is too simple, or it's too obvious or it's too abundant. Because it's absolutely in everything that he writes or draws. I know it's clever to find something that's hidden, that nobody else has found, but this is hiding in plain sight. It's not just in these obvious poems—*The Book of Thel*, *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*—it's in every poem, in every artwork, and in probably every annotation, and in every bit of biography, and I feel like it should be woven into the mix of whatever. … Whatever your interest is, you must have an interest in this too, because that's what Blake puts at the centre of everything he speculated about, whether it's aesthetic, or religion, or politics. It's never on the margins of his thought, even if it is on the margins of his interpreters'.

EE: One of the things that *WBDA* does is boldly call out scholarship for the absence of feminist readings of Blake's work. What was it about the fact that it was the 1990s that struck you as part of the scandal?

HB: The work that was going on in literary criticism was just part of a bigger women's movement. I think we all kind of thought the revolution was about to occur. And once you explained how appalling or dreadful this sexism was, of which these men interpreting Blake were just a tiny example, that everything would change. Also, it wasn't just about feminism; it was about that larger sort of radical politics at the time. And Blake was obviously, as he still is, a bit of a totemic figure for all revolutionaries.

EE: So, you felt like you were part of a revolution?

HB: Yes, and I was both right and wrong. History has been different. There's been a gender revolution, maybe without the sexual revolution, without those kinds of changes more broadly in society. … It was definitely a motor for writing this book.

EE: Looking back at this book, I was wondering how your own cultural political moment might have been shaping the tone and your focus here. Were you involved in any kind of political activism at the time?

HB: Yes. But it was generally kind of depressing. I don't think anybody I ever voted for was ever elected, and then we got Tony Blair! So, we carried on, going on numerous marches, trying to end violence against women, to reclaim the night, to obtain affordable childcare, and so on.

I had this sense that the women's movement wasn't changing society quite as quickly as we wanted, but the academic world was the one place where actual change was happening, and it was very positive. It doesn't sound like much now, maybe, but once women's history started to be taken seriously, and there were whole conferences just about women's history, this was very exciting. There was the feminist academic network, and this was very exciting.

EE: You were building that New Jerusalem.

HB: It was a real stark change, and it took off in the 1990s. Personally, it was very exciting. I felt part of it, that there was a real cultural activity that was gathering steam.

EE: It seems like your work has run parallel to other movements of change. Do you see a through line with what you're doing here in your first book running into those subsequent projects?

HB: If you had walked up to the person that wrote this book [*WBDA*], I would never have believed we'd be where we are now. This is really great, you know? I wouldn't have believed that there'd be so many women writing about Blake that you could pitch to a publisher, "I want to do this book, *Women Reading William Blake*," and they would say, "That's good." Or that then you go back and say, "I want to do one called *Queer Blake*," and they would say, "That's great!" This person wouldn't have believed that.

EE: I'm glad you bring up *Queer Blake* (2010), your edited collection with Tristanne Connolly, which I think stands as another landmark in Blake studies. Building on the important work begun a decade earlier by Christopher Hobson in *Blake and Homosexuality* (Palgrave, 2000), your book brings the insights of queer theory, rooted in gay and lesbian studies scholarship, to bear on Blake. Like Hobson's book, we can see *Queer Blake* as a key event that helps fold Blake into a larger queer intellectual history. But perhaps even more importantly, this collection created a space that fostered new lines of thought and queer ways of engaging with Blake's work that continue to energize queer approaches to Blake today. What struck you as "queer" about Blake? What kind of new intellectual work was afforded by queering Blake?

HB: Oh, come on, what isn't queer about Blake!? I've always specialized in revealing the screamingly obvious and Blake's queerness is surely more apparent than even his, what shall we call it, proto-feminism. His visual art is a Pride parade of gaping garments, sly gestures, naked audacity. If you can name it, I feel Blake gives us a glimpse of it—often from some very alarming angles. And more seriously, I think Blake's obsessional belief that he "must Create a System, or be enslav'd by another Mans" (*Jerusalem* 10.20, E 153) is especially true and urgent when he confronts and creates gender systems. Perhaps surprisingly, I've never been very bothered by the seemingly tedious heterosexist inequality of his zoas and emanations. Because, yes, they are gendered asymmetrical pairings, but they erupt and fragment and dissolve and re-form in queer ways, almost as soon as the concept emerges. I've also not really been troubled by the "Four Mighty Ones" which there "are in every Man" (*Four Zoas* 3.4, E 300) because there's a good chance this refers to a universal human condition, which creates infinite possibilities for interpersonal connections between infinite identities.

Of course, Albion in Blake's lifetime was not a gender-fluid utopia any more than it was a feminist one—and sexual power always matters—which I guess is why much of the early scholarship rightly focused on the political and criminal aspects of same-sex relationships, in a historical context, and so on. Yet again, Blake studies was a bit late to this

party, the queer party, and I still remember how surprised and delighted I was seeing Chris Hobson's book on the shelf in Blackwell's in Oxford around the year 2000. There probably should have been other people working to forward this direction in Blake studies but after *Women Reading William Blake* (2007) I thought, why not? So, I pitched *Queer Blake* to Tristanne Connolly, she embraced it wholeheartedly and our wonderful co-editing relationship began. I love what that collection represents: an eclectic, open-minded, thoughtful, and imaginative first flourish. Now, I'm very content to sit back and see where newer, younger writers and artists go with queer Blake!

EE: Pandemic aside, I was really struck this particular year, 2022, with how we are living in a very scary time. Politically, in America, we've just witnessed the shock of the historic Supreme Court overturning of Roe v. Wade, which declares that the constitutional right to abortion no longer exists. Throughout your work, and especially foregrounded in your first book [*WBDA*], you're showing us that Blake is somebody who is thoroughly interested in those relations between sexual politics and political power. Is there something about Blake that can help us in this moment where it does seem like gender and sexuality are coming into all sorts of trouble with power? If so, what kind of lessons?

HB: That's very profound, isn't it? Because in some senses, there is infinitely more freedom—for some people clearly more than others. And that's great, but that's often at an individual level. And if political structures can change a law of that kind, identity politics are hitting up against the end of a boot. It's frightening. I think Blake could help us navigate every contemporary issue. If everyone who was making the laws had read Blake's comments about laws, our current systems might be better.

EE: Tell me about which of Blake's texts are most on your mind these days. Is there something that you keep coming back to?

HB: The Urizen books, because I don't understand them. I'm not sure I understand any of the epic epics; I've read them many times, and I'm not sure I do. But for some reason, the Urizen books I understand the least. I do find that there's some of the most disturbing visual images in those three poems. Maybe that is partly because of the times we're in.

Also, for the *Blake and Jesus* project, I'm just enjoying looking at endless pictures of Jesus. Because they are absolutely fantastic and really surprising. I'm really interested in where there'll be a gospel story and then Blake will step just outside of the text, just beyond the narrative margin and imagine, and then picture, things about Jesus which aren't quite stated but which he uniquely sees. These are very embryonic ideas now, but I guess I'm trying to get a glimpse of what it means to have divine visions in times of trouble.

That's the other thing that's obvious: just how much Blake did. Now that I'm fifty-five years old, that feels quite old, I like to see how much somebody [Blake] managed to produce out of their human years and days. You know, it's kind of a wellspring. I think I have a more free and ecstatic enjoyment of Blake now than I did when I was writing *WBDA*. Now, I think there's a lot to be had just from the experience of the encounter with Blake. Especially with the visual art; it's transformative as an object, as an encounter, and not just for the ideas.

EE: Tell me more about this new project on Blake and Jesus, and any other projects on the horizon.

HB: It started as an idea ages ago, but it's now resurrected as a proper project, and I think it is very timely. I think Jason Whittaker's book *Divine Images* (Reaktion, 2021) is really good and needed to be published. I think that when people who are not experts pick up a book on Blake, they should be able to understand at least some of it, and that's a great introduction, and very richly illustrated.

For many years I've wished Tristanne [Connolly] and I could produce a coffee-table format book of Blake's gospel pictures along with gospel texts. I spend lots of time in church bookshops and dream of something like that, Blake's gospel, or even Blake's everlasting gospel. So far, though, that's not been practical, so until it is, we're editing another diverse collection called *Blake Sees Jesus*. Each contributor focuses on a single image, which is reproduced, so it's the beginning of a larger "Seeing Jesus" project. In the future, I'd like to continue the dialogue with people outside academia who're interested in that mission, vocation, faith—not least because I've been spending a lot more time inside churches lately—but for now it's a scholarly foray and seeking to see in that way is wonderful too.

EE: It sounds like your new project promises to reach out across the aisle, as it were, and break down some of the disciplined ways of thinking about Blake. And what a fitting place we are in [St. James's Church, Piccadilly] to be hearing about this direction in your work.

HB: Once you start something with Blake, something else always emerges from this, and not just in terms of a new idea. It always leads to new experiences, just like this encounter we're having here. I don't think that Blake is a supernatural force that is changing the universe—(*laughing*) I'm not one of those people. But Blake is still very abun-

dant and protean once you start to engage, so that's kind of hopeful. And I do think it is interesting that the person that wrote this book [*WBDA*] would never have ever thought that this would be where we are now. I find that quite hopeful.

Thanks to Rev. Lucy Winkett and Rev. Dr. Ayla Lepine of St. James's Church for granting us access to the space. All references to Blake's text are taken from David Erdman, ed., *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake.*

A R T I C L E

William Blake's Annotations to Milton's *Paradise Lost*: New Evidence for Attribution

By Lisa Sherlock

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1 In 2000–01, three books believed to have been owned or annotated by William Blake were displayed in an exhibition at Tate Britain that focused on the state of Blake scholarship at the time. Two of the works, collections of engravings, are thought to have belonged to the young Blake: *Historia del Testamento Vecchio dipinta in Roma nel Vaticano da Raffaelle di Urbino … al sig. Annibale Carracci* (Rome: Giovanni Orlandi, 1603 [Amsterdam: Excudit C. J. Visscher, 1638]) and *A Political and Satirical History of the Years 1756 and 1757. In a Series of Seventy-Five Humorous and Entertaining Prints* (London: Printed for E. Morris, n.d. [1757?]). The third book on display was a copy of John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, edited by Richard Bentley and published in 1732.[1] All three belonged to Michael Phillips, guest curator of the exhibition, and are now held by Victoria University Library (Toronto). Following the critical reaction to these books, and particularly to the attribution to Blake of annotations signed "WB" in the Bentley Milton,[2] Mark Crosby thoroughly examined the Milton volume and published an article in the *Book Collector* in 2008 in support of the book's having passed through Blake's hands. Crosby compared the annotations in question, on pages 355 and 398, with the handwriting employed by Blake in his *Vala* manuscript. He also identified unique features in George Vertue's portrait engraving of Milton on the frontispiece of Bentley's edition that are mirrored in Blake's tempera portrait of the poet, one of eighteen heads commissioned by William Hayley to decorate his Turret House library. These paintings were commissioned and completed during the period in which Blake would have had access to the edition in Hayley's library.

Provenance

2 The matter of this copy's early provenance remained in question. In concluding his article, Crosby pointed to a fragment of a bookplate that required further examination (illus. 1). The bookplate has since been identified by Anthony Pincott of the Bookplate Society as belonging to William Backwell, a descendant of a banking family and himself a founder of the banking house Dawes, Noble, & Company in Pall Mall in London's West End (Phillips, unpublished) (illus. 2).[3] Backwell—and later his heir, William Harwood, who changed his name to Backwell in 1770—resided and owned property in Buckinghamshire, where his home, Caldecot Manor, was approximately five miles from the village of Weston Underwood (Sheahan 457). Weston Underwood was where the poet William Cowper lived at Weston Hall from 1786 until 1795 (Sheahan 584). In 1791 Joseph Johnson commissioned Cowper to edit an edition of Milton for a proposed Milton Gallery.[4] Cowper and Hayley subsequently collaborated with each other, and after Cowper's death in April 1800 his papers passed to Hayley, who prepared a biography of Cowper and editions of Cowper's writings and editorial work on Milton.[5]

1. Bentley's edition was never reprinted. In later years, Pope would include Bentley in *The Dunciad in Four Books* (1743). The Bentley edition is a large quarto, finely printed with superb engravings; an expensive book at the time, printed in limited numbers, that even in the eighteenth century became uncommon.

2. David Bindman, in the *Burlington Magazine*, objected to the exhibition's presentation of the three books as having belonged to Blake, stating that he was "completely certain that … the annotations to Milton were *not* written by Blake." In reviewing Phillips's book *William Blake: The Creation of the "Songs" from Manuscript to Illuminated Printing* (2000), Alexander Gourlay agreed that while the "WB" monogram used to sign the annotation on display in the exhibition is similar to the one with which Blake signed his art, he had not seen any examples in Blake's text. Gourlay disagreed that the rest of the annotation is in Blake's hand and found the sentiments expressed "at odds with [Blake's] usual opinions." In "William Blake and His Circle, 2002," G. E. Bentley, Jr., withdrew his initial support for considering the Milton edition as having been owned or annotated by Blake; he further critiqued the attribution in "William Blake and His Circle, 2008." Jason Snart's article in the *European Romantic Review* in 2005 was also critical of the attribution; it was followed up in his publication *The Torn Book* by the inclusion of the Bentley Milton volume as one requiring further research.

3. I'm grateful to Michael Phillips for giving me permission to make use of his unpublished research.

Robert Harding, director of the Early British Department at Maggs Bros. Ltd., has corroborated this information (personal correspondence, 22 Oct. 2019). His appraisal indicates that there is enough of the bookplate left to identify it as an armorial plate belonging to a member of the Backwell family, "most likely William Backwell (c. 1715–70), a banker of Caldecot Manor, Buckinghamshire."

4. G. E. Bentley, Jr.'s *Blake Records* (60) gives 1 September 1791 as the date of the announcement by Johnson and James Edwards of "Thirty Capital Plates, from Subjects in Milton" for the edition that Cowper was commissioned to edit. The announcement includes Blake among the engravers.

5. Hayley notes that Cowper's cousin, Lady Hesketh, gave him "all the writings of that poet relating to Milton" (*Memoirs* 2: 61).

1. (left) Fragment of a bookplate in *Milton's "Paradise Lost,"* ed. Richard Bentley (London, 1732). Victoria University Library (Toronto). Blake Suppl. no. 1079. Reproduced with the permission of Victoria University Library.

2. (right) Bookplate of William Backwell. John Rylands Research Institute and Library, University of Manchester. Luis Marino Pérez Collection: "Festoon, Wreath & Ribbon," Box A-B E33. Image © University of Manchester.

3 In the preface to his edition of the *Latin and Italian Poems of Milton Translated into English Verse, and a Fragment of a Commentary on "Paradise Lost," by the Late William Cowper, Esqr.* (1808), Hayley notes that when Cowper was contemplating a Milton commentary, "he had several friends, who took a pleasure in the hope of supplying him with every thing he could require" (xviii-xix). In particular, he remarks upon a copy of Bentley's Milton that was among the books loaned to Cowper. The proximity of Caldecot Manor to Weston Hall makes it possible, even plausible, that the Backwell family was the lender.[6] The Backwell copy also fits with Hayley's description of the book as "containing many very severe censures, in manuscript, against the presumptuous editor," since it contains nearly eighty anonymous annotations, many of a censuring nature, in a contemporary hand, labeled by Crosby as "Hand C." The two signed "WB" are designated as "Hand D."

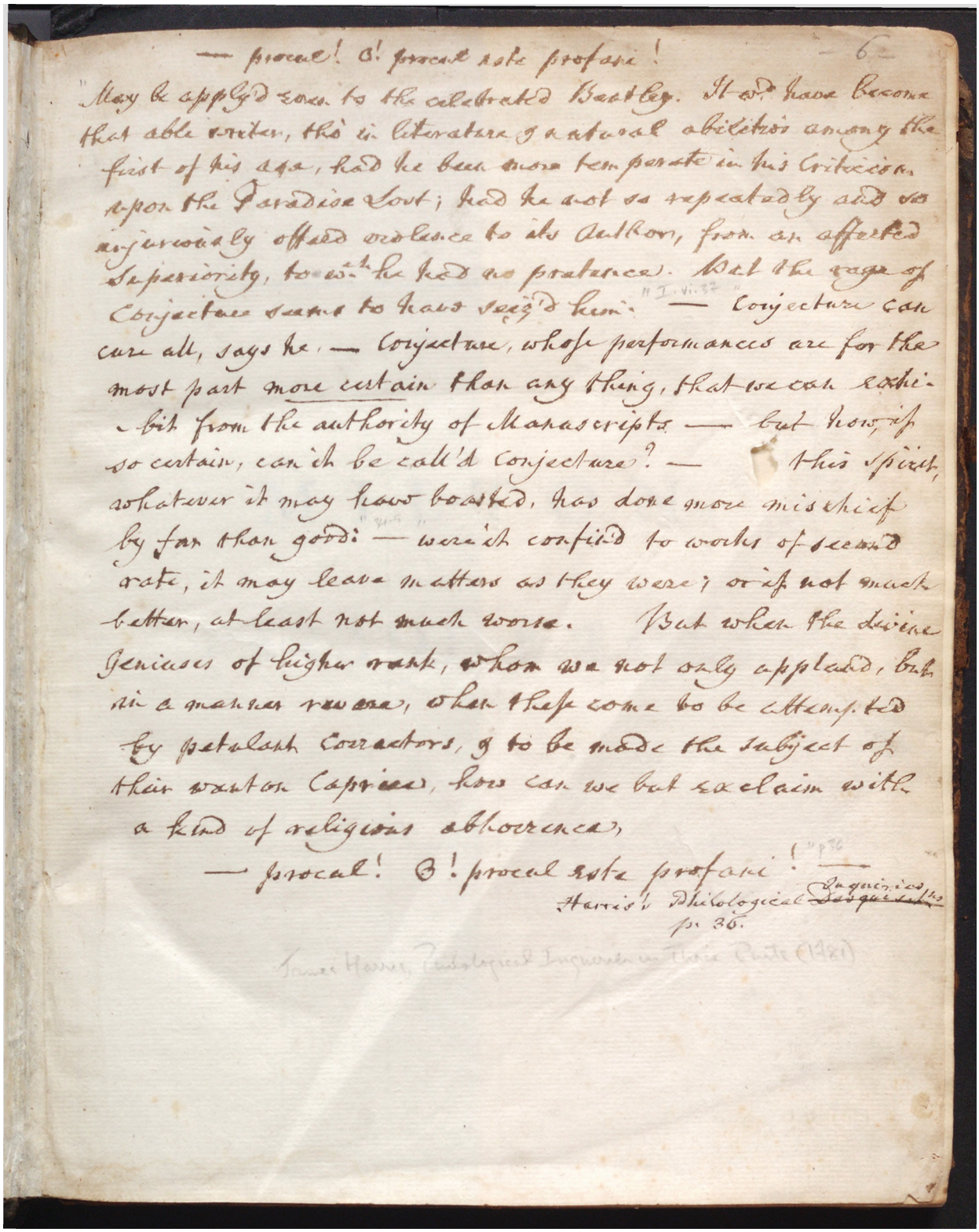
6. Cowper knew Caldecot, as the village had invited him to compose an epitaph for the tomb of Thomas Abbott Hamilton, a local lace merchant, who died on 7 July 1788 at the age of thirty-two (Phillips, unpublished).

Copies of Bentley's Edition of *Paradise Lost* in Hayley's Library

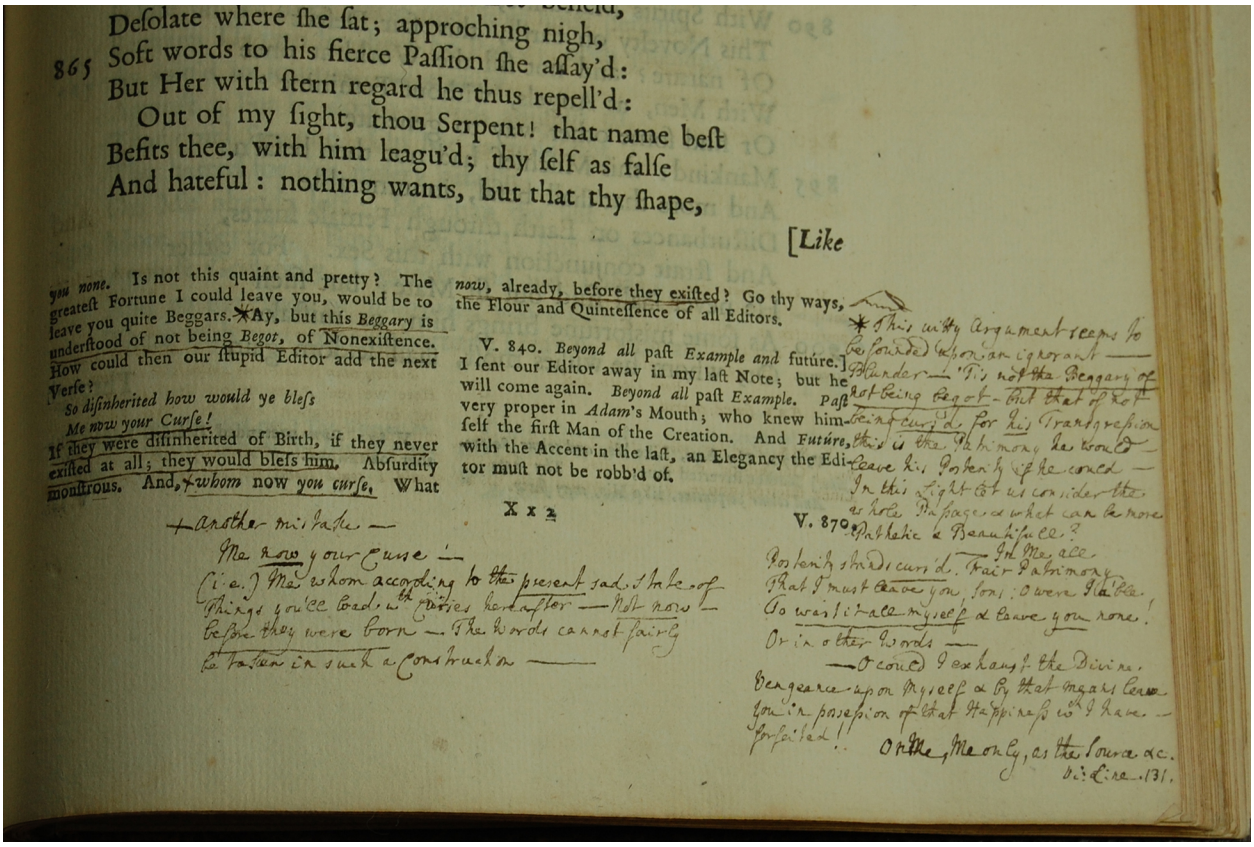
4 The copy that Hayley refers to should be distinguished from a copy of the same edition that at one time Cowper owned and annotated. The latter appears in a list of books owned by Cowper compiled by William Barker (see Keynes), and it is now in the collection of Christ's College Library, Cambridge. A comparison between the annotations made by "Hand C" in the Backwell copy (illus. 3) and Cowper's many annotations, critical in tenor toward the work of Bentley, in his own copy (illus. 4) illustrates that they are not in the same hand.

5 A reference to another copy of Bentley's edition, uncovered in research by Crosby subsequent to his 2008 article, surfaces in Hayley's unpublished correspondence.[7] In his preparations to write his biography of Cowper, Hayley borrowed

7. I'm indebted to Mark Crosby, associate professor at Kansas State University, for giving me permission to make use of his unpublished research on Hayley's correspondence.



3. Annotation by the anonymous "Hand C," whose writing predominates in the copy of Bentley's edition of *Paradise Lost* under consideration. Victoria University Library (Toronto). Blake Suppl. no. 1079. Image used with the permission of Victoria University Library.



4. Annotations by William Cowper to his copy of Bentley's edition of *Paradise Lost*. Christ's College Library, Old Library, EE.2.8. Reproduced with the kind permission of the Master and Fellows of Christ's College, Cambridge.

a copy from the family of Ashley Cowper, the uncle of William Cowper. In a letter to Lady Hesketh, Ashley Cowper's daughter, Hayley apologizes for borrowing the volume without letting her know; the letter is dated 10 January 1802, when Blake would have been resident in Felpham, working in Hayley's library (Crosby, unpublished).[8] Hayley needed to see this copy because it contained two inserted manuscripts: a verse by Ashley Cowper on "the absurd & pedantic Editor of that Milton" and an epigram by William Cowper memorializing his uncle.[9] In his letter to Lady Hesketh, Hayley promises to return the volume promptly. Presumably it was returned, for it does not appear in the list of books owned by Hayley that was compiled after his death.

6 Through Cowper or Cowper's family, Hayley had access to more than one copy of Bentley's *Paradise Lost*. One seems to have arrived with Cowper's papers and may be distinguished by Hayley's description of it as "containing many very severe censures, in manuscript, against the presumptuous editor." This copy was to assist Hayley in finishing Cowper's work on Milton and was conceivably loaned to Cowper from the library of William Backwell. Another was borrowed by Hayley from Lady Hesketh in preparation for his *Life of Cowper*. This copy is distinguished as containing the two manuscripts described above. Apparently, a third copy may also have been present. The sale catalogue of Joseph Mayer (July 1887), which includes items from Hayley's collection, lists a copy described as "formerly belonging to Cowper."[10] When this one became part of Hayley's library is not known.

8. Mark Crosby, "William Blake's Annotations to Milton's *Paradise Lost*: The Copy of *Paradise Lost* in Hayley's Library during Blake's Residence in Felpham Identified." Crosby's transcription is taken from Hayley's autograph copy of the letter in the Firestone Library, Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University, Hannay Collection, box 5, f. 19. He notes that Hayley gives a slightly later date of 23 January 1802 in his *Memoirs*.

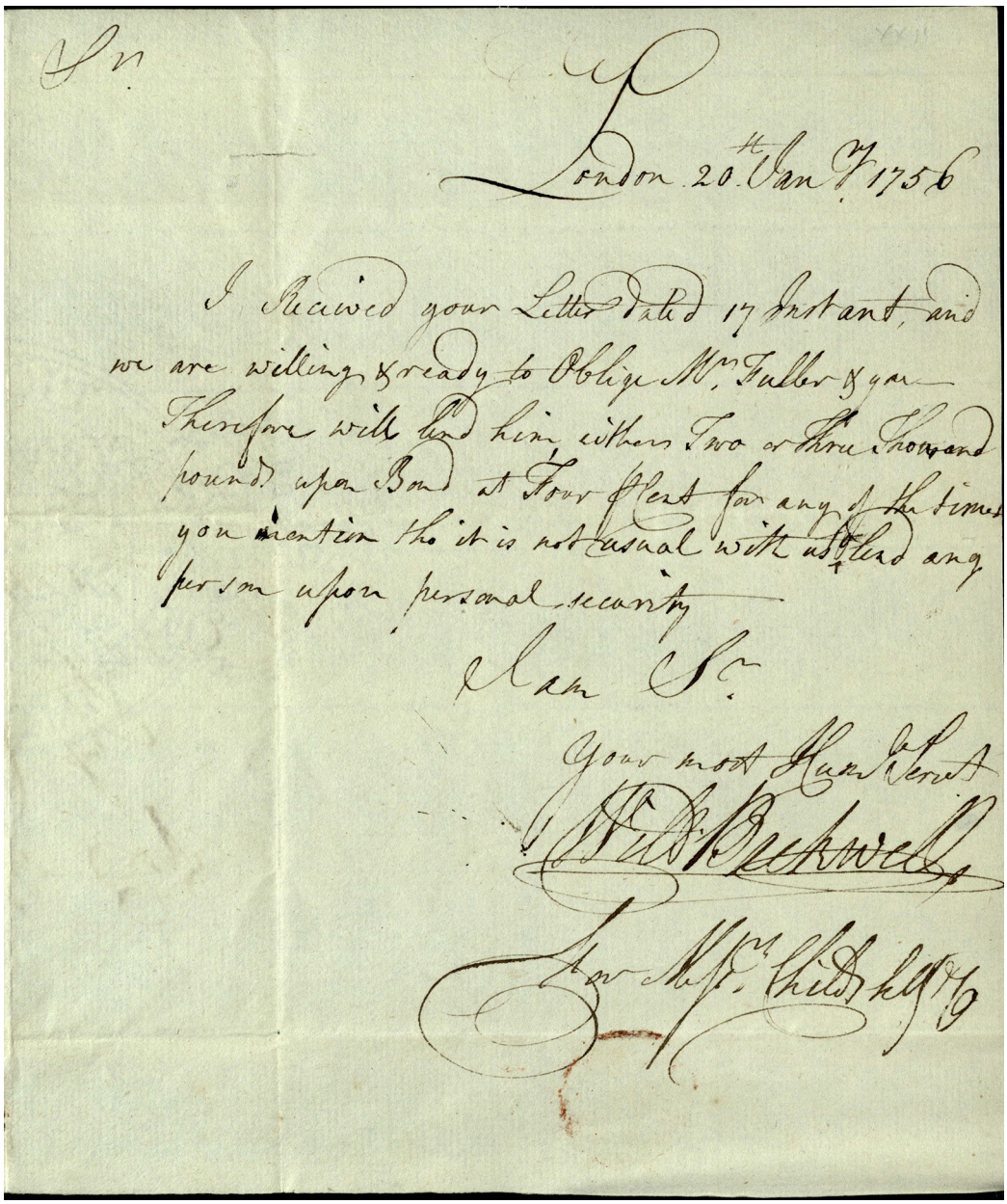
9. "Lines Composed for a Memorial of Ashley Cowper, Esqr. Immediately after His Death, by His Nephew William of Weston" was reproduced by Hayley in his *Life of Cowper* (2: 228).

10. See Crosby's note 61 in his essay in the *Book Collector*.

7 At least two of the copies were in Hayley's library between 1800 and 1803, when Blake was working there, researching and painting the series of eighteen portraits of the poets, including Milton, while also producing engravings for Hayley's *Life of Cowper*. During his three years in Felpham, Blake began *Milton a Poem*, inspired, as G. E. Bentley speculates, by visions that he experienced in his garden in Felpham, which are at the heart of the poem (*Stranger* 222, 244). In a letter to Thomas Butts in July 1803, Blake refers to the prospect of being "fully employd" engraving his own designs, along with those after George Romney and John Flaxman, for "Cowpers Milton."

The Handwriting of the Annotations and Blake's Letters to Thomas Butts

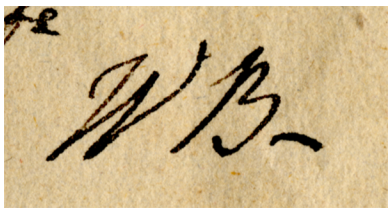
8 A sample of Backwell's handwriting (illus. 5) illustrates that it is not the same hand that penned the annotations on



5. Letter from William Backwell to Stephen Fuller, 20 January 1756. Reproduced with the permission of the East Sussex and Brighton and Hove Record Office. SAS-RF/19/25.

pages 355 and 398 in the copy of Bentley's Milton (illus. 10 and 11). The criticism leveled against the attribution of these annotations to Blake predominately disputes that they are in his hand. As others have pointed out, Blake's handwriting changes depending upon the context in which he was working, whether in annotations, correspondence, or other writings as they survive in manuscript.[11] The hand that appears in the manuscript Notebook varies from the hand in the books that Blake is known to have annotated. His handwriting and the hand that wrote the "WB" marginalia in the copy of Bentley's Milton have not been fully compared to the letters that Blake wrote from Felpham to his friend and patron Butts at the same time that he was employed by Hayley and immersed in the work of Milton.

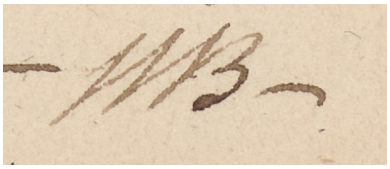
9 Toward the end of his letter to Butts on 2 October 1800, Blake composed a verse directed to Mrs. Butts and signed it with a monogram (illus. 6) that bears comparison with the one in the annotation on page 355.



6. Blake's monogram on his 2 October 1800 letter to Thomas Butts. Reproduced with the permission of the City of Westminster Archives Centre. Preston Blake Collection: Letters from William Blake to Thomas Butts, 1800–03.

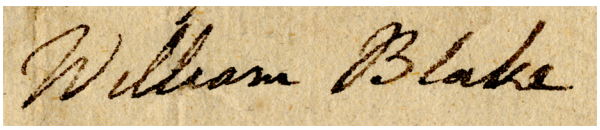
The "WB" monogram on p. 355 (illus. 7) is in a spiky style characteristic of Blake's handwriting in his letters, marginalia, and other manuscripts, and the tilde-like downward-tilting dash after the B matches what is seen in the letter to Butts.

11. As noted by Phillips in his response to Snart in the *European Romantic Review* and acknowledged by Snart, "The range of styles available to Blake was considerable" (Snart, *The Torn Book* 170). In "William Blake and the Sophocles Enigma," G. E. Bentley, Jr., notes that Blake "used at least four quite distinct hands" (69) in the *Vala* manuscript.

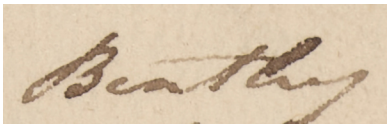


7. "WB" from the annotation on p. 355. *Milton's "Paradise Lost,"* ed. Richard Bentley (London, 1732). Victoria University Library (Toronto). Blake Suppl. no. 1079. Reproduced with the permission of Victoria University Library.

Notable also is Blake's full signature at the bottom of the same letter to Butts (illus. 8): the B in "Blake" is written with the same upward loop that the annotator uses to complete the B in the second occurrence of "Bentley" (illus. 9) in the marginal note on page 355 of the Milton edition (illus. 10).

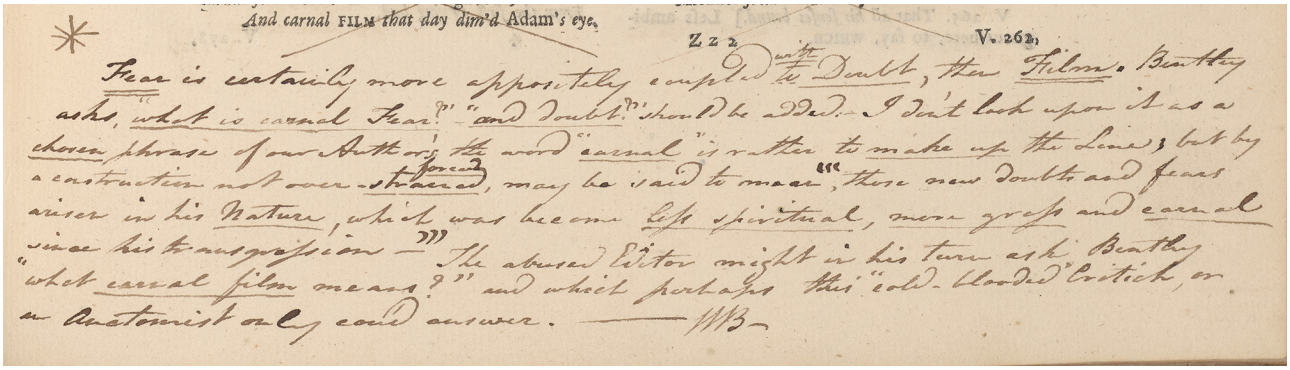


8. Blake's signature on his 2 October 1800 letter to Thomas Butts. Reproduced with the permission of the City of Westminster Archives Centre. Preston Blake Collection: Letters from William Blake to Thomas Butts, 1800–03.

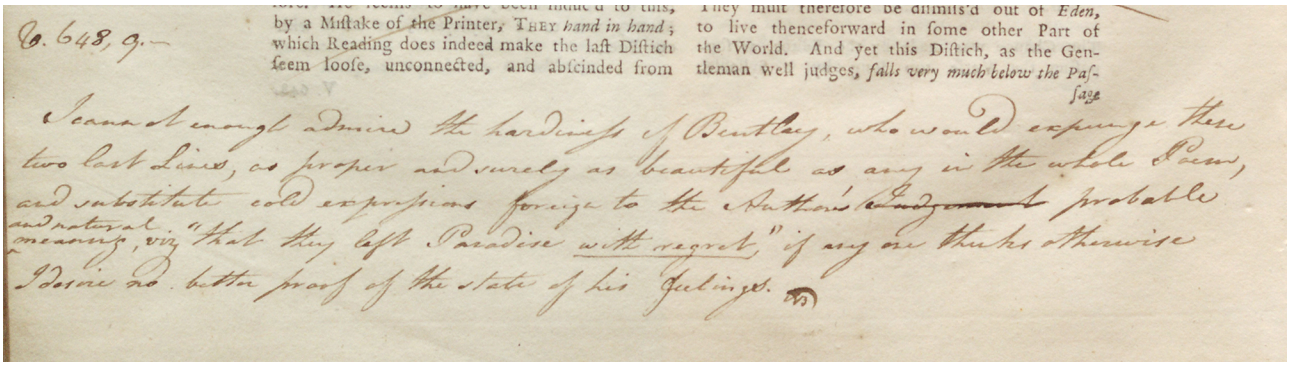


9. "Bentley" from the annotation on p. 355. *Milton's "Paradise Lost,"* ed. Richard Bentley (London, 1732). Victoria University Library (Toronto). Blake Suppl. no. 1079. Reproduced with the permission of Victoria University Library.

In both marginal notes (illus. 10 and 11), the annotator alternates between forming the letter B with a straight back and a looped back in the same way that Blake alternates between the two letter forms in his monogram and signature on his October 1800 letter to Butts.



10. First annotation signed by "WB", p. 355. *Milton's "Paradise Lost,"* ed. Richard Bentley (London, 1732). Victoria University Library (Toronto). Blake Suppl. no. 1079. Reproduced with the permission of Victoria University Library.



11. Second annotation signed by "WB", p. 398. *Milton's "Paradise Lost,"* ed. Richard Bentley (London, 1732). Victoria University Library (Toronto). Blake Suppl. no. 1079. Reproduced with the permission of Victoria University Library.

10 A subsequent letter to Butts, on 22 November 1802, is liberal in its use of quotation marks, either double or triple marks in some instances, to denote that Blake is quoting Joshua Reynolds (illus. 12). This practice is in play, too, in the annotation on page 355 of the Bentley Milton. We see quotation marks to demarcate the annotator's reiteration of Bentley's note that queries Milton's text:

> Bentley asks, "what is carnal Fear?" "and doubt?"

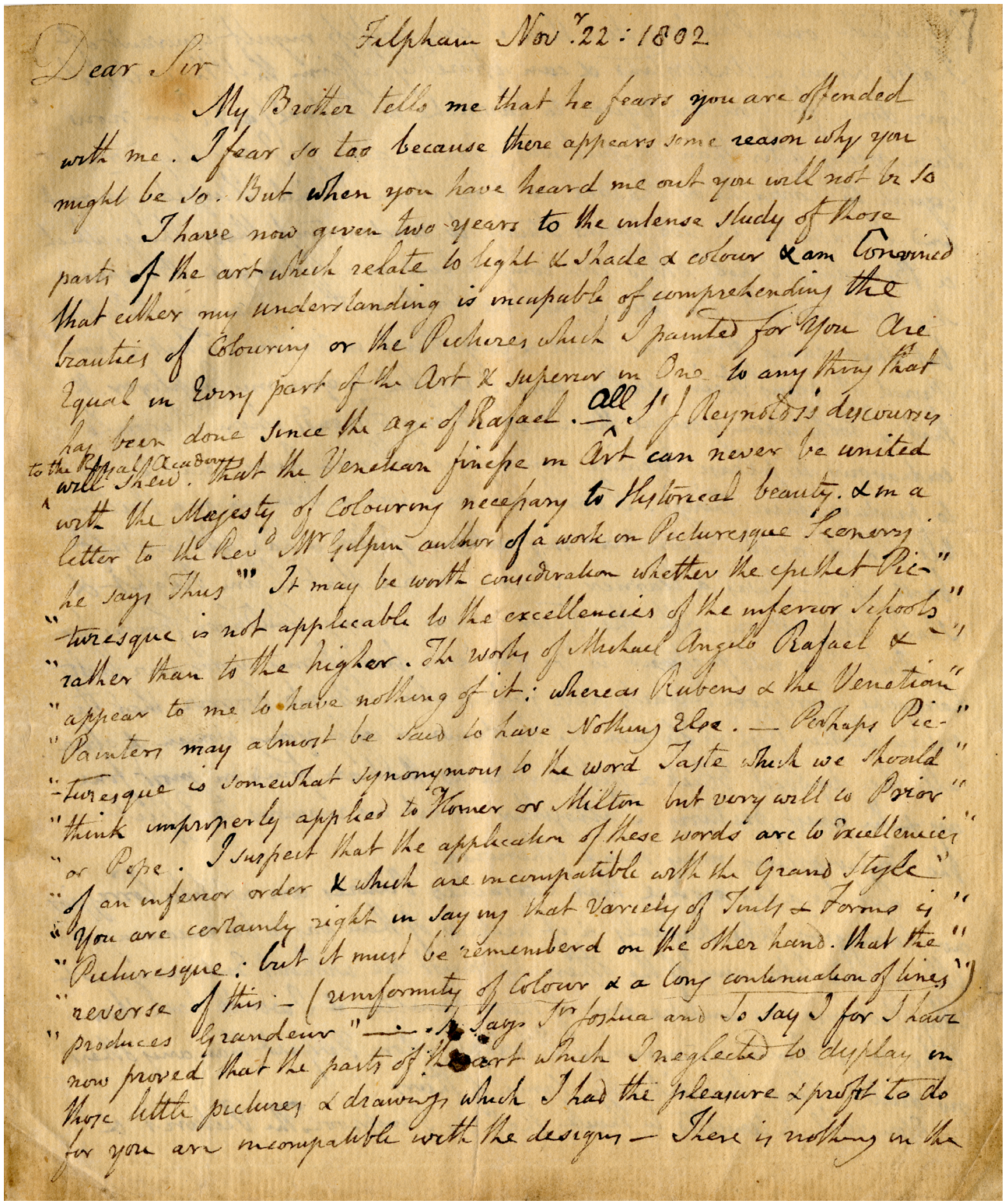
A few lines down, triple quotation marks enclose a further response to Bentley's changes:

> "'those new doubts and fears arisen in his Nature, which was become less spiritual, more gross and carnal since his transgression —'"

Other Examples Compared

11 The first marginal note signed with the monogram "WB" (page 355) refers to book 11, line 212 of *Paradise Lost*, in which Adam, in his loss of innocence, can no longer see God. Richard Bentley suggests that the word "film" be substituted for Milton's "fear," and it is to this emendation that the author of the annotation responds:

> Fear is certainly more appositely coupled with to Doubt, than Film. Bentley / asks, "what is carnal Fear?" "and doubt?" should be added. I don't look upon it as a / chosen phrase of our Author's the word "carnal" is rather to make up the Line; but by / a construction not over- forced strained, may



Felpham Nov.r 22: 1802

Dear Sir

My Brother tells me that he fears you are offended with me. I fear so too because there appears some reason why you might be so. But when you have heard me out you will not be so

I have now given two years to the intense Study of those parts of the art which relate to light & Shade & colour & am Convinced that either my understanding is incapable of comprehending the Beauties of Colouring or the Pictures which I painted for You Are Equal in Every part of the Art & Superior in One to any thing that has been done since the age of Rafael. — all Sr. J. Reynolds's discourses to the Royal Academy will Shew. that the Venetian finesse in Art can never be united with the Majesty of Colouring necessary to Historical beauty. & in a letter to the Rev.d Mr. Gilpin author of a work on Picturesque Scenery he says Thus "It may be worth consideration whether the epithet Pic-" "turesque is not applicable to the excellencies of the inferior Schools" "rather than to the higher. The works of Michael Angelo Rafael &" "appear to me to have nothing of it: whereas Rubens & the Venetian" "Painters may almost be said to have Nothing Else. — Perhaps Pic-" "turesque is somewhat synonymous to the word Taste which we should" "think improperly applied to Homer or Milton but very well to Prior" "or Pope. I suspect that the application of these words are to Excellencies" "of an inferior order & which are incompatible with the Grand Style" "You are certainly right in saying that Variety of Unity & Forms is" "Picturesque: but it must be remembered on the other hand. that the" "reverse of this — (uniformity of Colour & a long continuation of lines)" "produces Grandeur" — &c. Says Fuseli and so say I for I have now proved that the parts of the art which I neglected to display in those little pictures & drawings which I had the pleasure & profit to do for you are incompatible with the designs — There is nothing in the

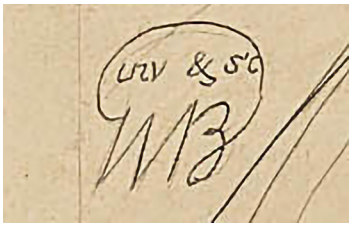
12. First page of a letter from Blake to Thomas Butts, 22 November 1802. Reproduced with the permission of the City of Westminster Archives Centre. Preston Blake Collection: Letters from William Blake to Thomas Butts, 1800–03.

be said to mean, "'those new doubts and fears / arisen in his Nature, which was become less spiritual, more gross and carnal / since his transgression —'" The abused Editor might in his turn ask Bentley / "what carnal film means?" and which perhaps this "cold-blooded" Critick, or / an Anatomist only could only answer. ———WB—

The second annotation (page 398) refers to book 12, lines 648-49, the final two lines of the poem. This was the page-opening displayed in the exhibition. Bentley proposes changing these lines to alter their rhythm and alleviate the desolate atmosphere created by Milton as Adam and Eve leave Paradise. The annotator is emphatic in stating his opposition:

I cannot enough admire the hardiness of Bentley, who would expunge these / two last Lines, as proper and surely as beautiful as any in the whole Poem, / and substitute cold expressions foreign to the Author's ~~Judgement~~ probable / and natural
^ meaning, viz "that they left Paradise with regret," if any one thinks otherwise / I desire no better proof of the state of his feelings. WB

12 In his 2008 article, Crosby provides instances of monograms that Blake employed in his work between 1797 and 1805 that are similar to that which appears on page 398 of the Bentley Milton. They come principally from his engravings for Richard Edwards's edition of Edward Young's *Night Thoughts* (1797) and paintings such as *Bathsheba at the Bath* (c. 1799–1800) (Crosby 521). Intermittently, this monogram appears in the *Vala* manuscript, often on the bottom left- or right-hand side of the images (illus. 13).



13. *Vala*, or *The Four Zoas*, monogram on f. 22r. © British Library Board. Add MS 39764.

In all examples, Blake executes a semicircle that overarches the "WB" in the style of the "WB" on the page 398 annotation. However, the pen stroke moves from a loop formed at the base of the B and circles around and back over that letter, attaching to the top of the W from right to left. This is an opposite movement to that which forms the monogram on page 398 of the Bentley Milton, where the overarching pen stroke moves from left to right from the top of the W, curling over and in a semicircle around the B (illus. 14).

14. "WB" from the annotation on p. 398. *Milton's "Paradise Lost,"* ed. Richard Bentley (London, 1732). Victoria University Library (Toronto). Blake Suppl. no. 1079. Reproduced with the permission of Victoria University Library.

Yet the looping of the pen stroke over the letters, whether forward or backward, gives the same stylistic impression. As Blake had been for some years proficient in reverse or mirror writing, he would have been able to write in either direction with ease (Bentley, *Stranger* 37).

Conclusion

13 An annotated copy of Richard Bentley's edition of Milton's *Paradise Lost* was displayed in the Blake exhibition, first in London and then in New York, in 2000 and 2001. Immediately following, the attribution to Blake of two annotations signed "WB" was disputed. In response, the copy was made available for study from 2003 to 2005 in the manuscript reading room of the British Library, and, from 2005 to 2007, in the Bodleian Library, Oxford. During this time only Mark Crosby took the opportunity to examine it. It should be noted that, while on exhibition, the volume was open to the annotation on page 398; the annotation on page 355, with the clear and distinctive monogram matching, for example, the one that Blake used to sign his letter to Thomas Butts on 2 October 1800, was not on display, nor did it appear in the exhibition catalogue.

14 In his paper in the *Book Collector*, Crosby concluded by asking if help could be given in identifying the fragment of

an eighteenth-century bookplate in the volume. It is now identified as belonging to William Backwell, who lived near William Cowper at his home in Weston Underwood, making it possible that it was the Backwell copy that Cowper borrowed for his work on Milton.

15 We know that Cowper's books and papers were present in William Hayley's library from September 1800 to September 1803, when Blake was employed by Hayley and spending much of his time working in the library. As Crosby has shown, Blake's portrait of Milton for Hayley's library contains distinctive features that are found only in George Vertue's portrait engraving of Milton in Bentley's edition of *Paradise Lost*. Furthermore, Hayley described the copy that Cowper borrowed, and that presumably arrived in his library with Cowper's papers, as "containing many very severe censures"—in other words, numerous annotations, many of a critical nature. This also describes the Backwell copy, which has nearly eighty anonymous annotations, many disapproving of Bentley's emendations.

16 As shown here, some of Blake's letters to Butts written from his cottage at Felpham are in a style of handwriting, and signed with a monogram, that share characteristics, some idiosyncratic, with those of the two annotations signed "WB" in the Backwell copy of Bentley's edition. Other examples of Blake's writing style and distinctive monogram have been cited by Crosby.

17 Are the two annotations signed "WB" in the Backwell copy of Richard Bentley's edition of Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1732) attributable or not to *the* William Blake? The new evidence presented here must be worthy of consideration.

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A R T I C L E

Redefining Apocalypse in Blake Studies

By G. A. Rosso

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> It must be stated at the outset that a great deal of the current discussion of apocalypticism and of the apocalypses is being carried on in the midst of a semantic confusion of the first order.
>
> Michael E. Stone, "Lists of Revealed Things"

1 MICHAEL Stone argues that biblical scholars sow confusion by defining the ancient apocalypses in terms of the eschatological content or worldview that many contain (their "apocalypticism") at the expense of other defining features. This conflation of apocalypse with eschatology emerged with the first comprehensive study of the apocalypses, by the German theologian Friedrich Lücke in 1832.[1] The problem has been exacerbated in our time by the ubiquitous use of the term "apocalypse" in the media, popular culture, the churches, the arts, academe, and environmental studies, which has all but emptied the term of its core meaning as "revelation" or "disclosure." When "the apocalypse" is invoked, it most often refers to a large-scale catastrophe or cataclysm, usually involving the collapse of civilization or the end of the world. Such references comport better with the concept of eschatology, the study of last things or the "end" of history, than with apocalypse. The terminological confusion appears in the history of Blake criticism as well, from S. Foster Damon, through Northrop Frye, Harold Bloom, and Morton Paley, to more recent work by Steven Goldsmith and Lucy Cogan. It is marked by an uncritical and inconsistent use of "apocalyptic" or "*the* apocalypse" to refer primarily to an end-time judgment. A scholar who has resisted this critical conflation in both biblical and Blake criticism is Christopher Rowland, who wrote the landmark book *The Open Heaven: A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity* (1982), as well as *Blake and the Bible* (2010). Rowland, along with a burgeoning cadre of biblical scholars who address the issue, can help bring more precision to the way these concepts are used in Blake studies.

2 Though the word "eschatology" does not appear in English until the mid-nineteenth century (*OED*), most Christian writers viewed the two concepts as parts of a single phenomenon, mainly because the two biblical apocalypses (Daniel and Revelation) combine them, with Revelation serving as the capstone of an entire tradition. The concepts do overlap, insofar as both derive from biblical prophecy.[2] Eschatology, which emerges in the eighth century BCE, is rooted in the belief that God acts "purposefully in history, guiding events toward the fulfillment of [his] promises" (Bright 265). As a theology of history, it carries both a temporal and a teleological meaning, with the goal of establishing God's kingdom on earth, including a final judgment against evil and salvation for the just. It is concerned with both the sweep of history and God's power to do "a new thing" (Isaiah 43:19), to bring a "decisive turning-point" in the present (Barton 218-20; see also von Rad 112-15). In this sense, eschatology plays a defining role in the emergence of Christianity and the New Testament. Early Christians believed that Jesus inaugurated the kingdom during his ministry and that his resurrection foretold a general resurrection at his return (1 Corinthians 15:20-28).

3 Apocalypse, which appears later (c. 250 BCE-150 CE), is a mode of communication in which God reveals his secret knowledge to a human recipient through vision or angelic mediation, with an emphasis on the present relevance of what the seer or prophet experiences. The revealed secrets or mysteries are often but not always eschatological. They also contain revealed cosmology and speculative wisdom, which suggests that apocalypse is not reducible to its eschatological content. Such content appears in other genres and modes of expression beside apocalypses. If John's Revelation offers a definitive account of eschatological mysteries, that does not make those types of mysteries "apocalyptic,"

1. According to Richard Sturm, Lücke set himself two goals in the book, a study of John's Revelation: to provide a history of apocalyptic literature and to determine its "concept and character." But in addressing the latter goal, he introduced an "ambiguity" that persists into our time: "Theoretically the concept and character … are presented as a unity, but they are approached as though they were independent of one another" (Sturm 18). Lücke took Revelation as his primary example and identified eschatology as its core feature. Thereafter, while scholars continued to debate which characteristics define the genre, they treated apocalypse and eschatology as synonymous.

2. For the continuity of prophecy and apocalypse, see Barton 122-32; Rowley 13-14; J. J. Collins, "From Prophecy" 139; and Najman 36-48. Rowland and Stone show that wisdom traditions and esotericism also are central to the apocalypses (Rowland, *Open Heaven* 245-47; Rowland and Morray-Jones 3-12; Stone, "Apocalyptic Literature" 388-91, 431-32).

any more than the cosmological ones would be inherently apocalyptic. More determinant are the means of communication and the transformative experience in the present that the seer undergoes, an experience that authenticates the work. While congruent with the usage of "apocalyptic" in the Jewish context, New Testament use of the adjective refers primarily to the manner or mode of communication that is authenticated by its source in Christ.

4 I want to acknowledge at the outset that I am treating the conflation of a pair of concepts in modern theological exposition and in Blake studies, not covering the entire vast phenomenon. Nor do I assume that Blake scholars should have "known better," since explicit distinctions between apocalypse and eschatology did not emerge until the 1970s-80s. Also, in the sections below, I emphasize apocalypse over eschatology not because it is more important, but to highlight the problem of conflating them.

5 The first section provides an overview of the term "apocalypse" as used in biblical scholarship since 1900; it is followed in section II by an extended discussion of "apocalypse" and "apocalyptic" in Blake criticism over roughly the same period. A final section analyzes a specific Blake work to show the heuristic value of recent studies for understanding his approach to apocalypse and eschatology. I focus on *Milton a Poem* because it foregrounds these concepts, in both structural and thematic terms, and does so without conflating or confusing them. Narrative setting and action take place both in heaven and on earth, organized around three major descents from the eternal world to Blake's dwelling in Felpham. The first is by Milton, the eponymous hero; the second by Ololon, his divine counterpart; and the third by Los, Blake's prophetic persona. Although these descents appear sequentially, Blake presents them as occurring simultaneously, in the same apocalyptic moment. Also, Los and Ololon announce the end of 6000 years of history, the traditional time frame of Judeo-Christian eschatology, though the last judgment does not occur in the space of the poem. This section argues that while Blake maintains a strong sense of the future hope and its pending fulfillment in history, he emphasizes the primacy of revelatory experience (apocalypse) and its capacity to open eternity *within* time.

I. "Apocalypse" in Biblical Scholarship (1900–2020)[3]

6 At the beginning of the twentieth century, Albert Schweitzer and R. H. Charles helped revolutionize New Testament studies by establishing the eschatological foundation of early Christianity. Schweitzer's epochal *Quest of the Historical Jesus* (1906) showed that, contrary to orthodox and liberal views, Jesus did not preach about an internal kingdom of repentance but about an imminent end to the reigning world order (224).[4] Drawing on the ancient apocalypses available—1 Enoch, 4 Ezra, 2 Baruch, Psalms of Solomon—he demonstrated their close similarities to New Testament texts (367-87). His use of the word "apocalyptic" to designate the eschatological form of these texts, however, sealed the conflation of the concepts through most of the twentieth century. Alongside Schweitzer, Charles was equally important, mainly through his textual editions and translations of extrabiblical apocalypses, especially his two-volume *Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament* (1913), the standard reference for the first half of the century.[5] He also wrote the oft-reprinted *Critical History of the Doctrine of a Future Life* (2nd ed., 1913), retitled *Eschatology* in 1963. In a chapter on "The Eschatology of … Apocalyptic Literature," Charles made several points that gained wide currency; namely, that the apocalyptic writer "despairs of the present," that "his main interests are supramundane," and that he offers a "deterministic view of history" (174-75). These views were extended in two major studies at midcentury, H. H. Rowley's *The Relevance of Apocalyptic* (1944) and D. S. Russell's *The Message and Method of Jewish Apocalyptic* (1964), which similarly rooted discussion of apocalypse in Old Testament eschatology.

7 It was not until the 1970s and early 1980s that biblical scholars began to make a distinction between the two concepts. Four scholarly texts appeared that shaped subsequent debate: Klaus Koch's *The Rediscovery of Apocalyptic* (1972), Paul D. Hanson's *The Dawn of Apocalyptic* (1975), Christopher Rowland's *The Open Heaven* (1982), and John J. Collins's *The Apocalyptic Imagination* (1984).[6] Koch outlines a set of conceptual features typical of apocalypses, though he distinguishes these from "apocalyptic as a historical movement" and ideology, which, he says, are "dominated by an urgent expectation of the impending overthrow of all earthly conditions in the immediate future" (28). He asserts that, in addition to "cosmic catastrophe," apocalyptic texts express a fundamental "pessimism" and "predetermined" view of history, though individual behavior is not predestined (28-29). Similarly, in his widely influential book, Hanson

3. The most helpful overviews of modern apocalypse studies are by Sturm, DiTomasso, A. Y. Collins ("Apocalypse Now"), Fletcher-Louis, and Henze.

4. In Schweitzer's view, Jesus failed as a prophet because the kingdom never materialized. For his impact on New Testament studies, see A. Y. Collins ("Apocalypticism" 327-31) and Rowland ("*Immediate Revelation*" 449-60).

5. On Charles, see J. J. Collins (*Apocalyptic Imagination* 14-16).

6. Henze comments that while apocalypse studies continue to make substantial advances, the "basic framework" established in the 1970s and 1980s "has remained largely intact and continues to set the terms for discussion" (407).

argues that the "matrix" of apocalyptic prophecy emerged in the post-exilic era (sixth-fifth centuries BCE) as prophecy fell into distrust and declined. Having gradually abandoned a realistic hope in history as the theatre of divine activity, a group of "hierocratic" writers developed a mythical vision "transcending all mundane institutions and structures, a vision which constantly calls those institutions and structures into judgment" (30-31). Hanson's primary texts antedate the appearance of actual apocalypses, limiting his theory's effectiveness, but he also published an article on "Apocalypticism" that made three enduring distinctions: between *apocalypse* as a literary genre, *apocalypticism* as a symbolic worldview, and prophetic and *apocalyptic eschatology* (30).

8 Of the four studies, Collins's *The Apocalyptic Imagination* has gained the most traction, and his definition of an apocalypse is the most frequently cited to this day. Developed in concert with a group of scholars at the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL) in the mid-1970s, it first appeared in the journal *Semeia* under the title *Apocalypse: The Morphology of a Genre* (1979):

> An apocalypse is defined as: "*a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial insofar as it involves another, supernatural world.*" (*Apocalyptic Imagination* 5)

Collins recycled this definition in subsequent works, including an introductory essay to volume 1 of *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism* (1998), a standard overview of the subject, and in the more recent essay "What Is Apocalyptic Literature?" that opens *The Oxford Handbook of Apocalyptic Literature* (2014), which he edited. It advances study by uniting form and content, linking the "spatial" or vertical dimension that discloses transcendent reality with the "temporal" or horizontal dimension of history with which it corresponds. The revelation is mediated by an otherworldly figure, which for Collins distinguishes apocalypses from traditional prophecies. In *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, he makes a further distinction between two kinds or "strands" of apocalypses: the "historical" and the "otherworldly" (6-9). The former—typified by Daniel and 4 Ezra (2 Esdras)—largely concern themselves with eschatology, while the latter—typified by 2 Enoch and 3 Baruch—are characterized by otherworldly journeys and focus on cosmological speculation, showing "no interest in the development of history" (7).[7] While the latter type of apocalypse suggests that eschatology is not central to its definition, Collins insists that the cosmological feature alone is incomplete, since "the distinctive conceptual structure" of apocalyptic writing is defined by its worldview or "shared presuppositions" about reality. "Most crucially," he writes in "What Is Apocalyptic Literature?," "the apocalypses are distinguished by the belief in the resurrection and judgment of the individual dead," a feature "sometimes missed by critics who think of 'eschatology' only in historical terms" (5). Collins thus loosens the formal boundaries of the genre to allow for the inclusion of eschatology as the defining feature of the "apocalyptic" worldview.[8]

9 Despite its usefulness and staying power, this definition has not gone uncontested, as scholars, most forcefully Rowland and Michael Stone, have questioned the stress on eschatology in the *Semeia* approach. In a pioneering essay, "Lists of Revealed Things in the Apocalyptic Literature" (1976), Stone argues that the lists or catalogues of subject matter "stand at the center of the revelatory experience" and thus "form an integral part" of the definition of apocalypse (414). The subjects, which are often cosmological and oriented toward nature, are connected with the wisdom tradition as well as prophecy, and contain aspects of esotericism. In "Apocalyptic Literature," Stone insists on a clear distinction between "apocalypticism as a pattern of thought, primarily eschatological in character," and apocalypse as "a literary genre" (388-94). Building on the discovery of fragments from the book of Enoch among the Dead Sea Scrolls, his definition of apocalypse begins with 1 Enoch rather than Daniel; he states that "the content and character of these oldest fragments of apocalyptic literature are far from exclusively or even predominantly eschatological" (391). He asserts further that eschatology cannot account for "the presence or absence of a real experiential basis of the visionary form" (433-37; "Lists" 452n79), a central component of Rowland's approach as well.[9]

10 As Rowland's work on Blake is discussed in the section that follows, my focus here is on his broader account of apocalypse and apocalypticism.[10] It is important to state that Rowland recognizes the relevance of eschatology to the apocalypses and to the origins of Christianity and the New Testament.[11] His main objection is to making eschatology,

7. The standard edition of Jewish apocalypses is Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 1.

8. In his "Introduction" to vol. 1 of *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*, Collins writes: "The genre apocalypse provides the focal point," but "the focus … is on a worldview … and the objective is to be as inclusive as possible" (xiv).

9. See also Stone's "A Reconsideration of Apocalyptic Visions."

10. Rowland's many essays on apocalypse and apocalypticism have been collected in the volume *"By an Immediate Revelation,"* which includes a section on Blake.

11. In *Christian Origins* (1985), he traces the development of ancient Jewish eschatology as the defining context for the emergence of Christianity.

or "the future hope of Israel," the core element in a theory of apocalypse. Rowland hews close to the etymological roots of apocalypse as revelation or disclosure. Acknowledging that apocalypses offer hope for the future, he insists that the temporal horizon is not the most distinctive feature of apocalyptic texts. The primary feature is their "mode of revelation" or the "direct communication of the heavenly mysteries in all their diversity" (*Open Heaven* 13-14, 26). For him, apocalyptic texts concentrate on the "vertical" dimension of revelation, on the fact that divine knowledge exists in heaven before it manifests itself on earth, making heaven a "kind of repository" of hidden knowledge in which "the whole spectrum of human history," not simply its future culmination, is available to the seer. The "unveiling of the counsels of God directly to the apocalyptic seer" through "dreams, visions or angelic pronouncements" forms the "key to the whole movement" (9-11). Rowland locates the origin of apocalyptic vision in biblical texts that offer glimpses of the divine court (1 Kings 22:19; Isaiah 6; Ezekiel 1, 8-10; Zechariah 1-6), focusing especially on Ezekiel's vision of the divine chariot-throne. He takes his title concept from Ezekiel's opening verse: "In the thirtieth year … as I was among the exiles by the river Chebar, the heavens opened, and I saw visions of God" (1:1). For Rowland, Ezekiel's extraordinary depiction of his encounter with God's "glory" or presence shows the impact of "direct" experience on his vision.

11 In an introductory "Rationale and Retrospect" for his collection of essays on apocalypticism, Rowland states that study of early Jewish mysticism rather than biblical scholarship informed his reading of apocalyptic writing. He credits the work of Gershom Scholem for inspiring a lifelong interest in the subject of "*merkabah* mysticism," the tradition of creative exegesis stemming from engagement with the throne scene in chapter 1 of Ezekiel (1:4-28).[12] Scholem convinced him that "there was a visionary experiential dimension to engaging with biblical visionary texts, which persisted for centuries" ("*Immediate Revelation*" 3-4). The revisionings of Ezekiel's vision in 1 Enoch 14, Daniel 7, Revelation 4-5, and the Apocalypse of Abraham 18 are exemplary, as is the reinterpretation of Daniel 7 in 4 Ezra 12-13 (*Open Heaven* 214-32).[13] Rather than a repetition of Ezekiel or Daniel, however, these interpretations involve "actually seeing again" (re-experiencing and re-creating) what the former writer saw (219, 226). Rowland lays out specific borrowings and departures from Ezekiel in these texts, but he finds that their lack of "precise biblical language" and the "variety" in their content suggest that "while Ezekiel may have been the starting-point," the "order and detail of the original have been left behind in favour of a more elaborate view" of God's dwelling (226). In accentuating the psychological impact of the vision on the seer, these and similar texts can be taken as credible accounts of experiences in which "the imagination of the visionary enabled him to transcend the original," producing "an entirely new view of the character of God and his world" (226-27). Even as these texts include a significant amount of material concerning divine judgment and messianic expectation, Rowland asserts that for the apocalyptic writer, "it was not the details of eschatology which most concerned him but the affirmation of their verisimilitude by means of heavenly authentication" (227). Content remains central to a definition of apocalypse, but a key aspect of content is its mode of revelation, which enables access to "the innermost recesses of heaven," where knowledge of the divine purposes is stored. Such access empowers a writer to stand "in visionary continuity" with the text, not succumb to its scriptural authority ("Common People" 155).

12 A final aspect of Rowland's theory can serve as a transition to Blake studies. He writes that it was Scholem's emphasis on the anthropomorphic form of Ezekiel's deity that "above all else" intrigued him to pursue it as a subject of study ("*Immediate Revelation*" 2). Scholem declared that the essence of "throne-mysticism" was not oneness with or "absorbed contemplation of God's true nature, but perception of his appearance on the throne" (*Major Trends* 43-44). Referring to the human-like figure of fire and light in Ezekiel 1:26-28, Scholem writes that the "vision of the shape of God on the throne" manifested his hidden glory or *kavod*, "his transcendence bridged by revelation" (*Mystical Shape* 16). Rowland develops the point by focusing on the reappearance in Ezekiel 8 of this figure, now detached from the chariot-throne, who lifts the prophet "between the earth and heaven" and "in the visions of God" brings him to Jerusalem (8:2-3). For Rowland, this ascent and "separability" from the throne "enabled the figure to act as an agent of the divine purpose," a "quasi-angelic mediator" (*Open Heaven* 96-97). He traces the evolution of this mediator in apocalyptic texts, notably to the "Son of Man" in Daniel 7:13, who resembles Ezekiel's *kavod* figure but who functions more as a vice-regent of God's power than as his human form (98). Rowland then turns to the angelic vision, or "angelophany," in Daniel 10—of a man in linen, with eyes of fire, arms and feet of brass, and the voice of a multitude (10:2-6)—which, he says, develops Ezekiel's figure in terms that John applies to the risen Christ in Revelation (1:12-18). He asserts that Daniel's anthropomorphic figure is no "ordinary angelic being" but "an exalted angel" that John viewed as a "natural

12. In Scholem, this tradition stretches from the ancient Jewish and Christian apocalypses, through rabbinic mystical texts such as *Ma'aseh Merkabah* ("work of the chariot") and the *Hekhalot* ("heavenly palaces") literature of late antiquity, to the early modern Kabbalah.

13. In a letter of 12 Sept. 1800 to John Flaxman, Blake identifies "Ezra" as an important early influence, with Isaiah (E 707). He knew 4 Ezra as 2 Esdras in the Apocrypha of the Authorized Version.

quarry for imagery to describe his Lord." He concludes that the traditions stemming from Ezekiel helped to form the mystical-apocalyptic matrix of Christianity, not least its language of mutual indwelling and being "clothed with the divine Christ," which he describes as "mystical in its intensity and conviction" (Rowland and Morray-Jones 6). These connections have obvious relevance for Blake, as S. Foster Damon was among the first to recognize, though his work came before Scholem and the Dead Sea Scrolls altered the direction of apocalypse study.

II. "Apocalypse" in Blake Studies (1924–2022)

13 My aim in this section is to trace the scholarly views that have shaped critical discourse on Blake's use of apocalyptic traditions. This discourse tracks with developments in biblical studies, especially its merging of apocalypse with eschatology. Northrop Frye is treated at length because *Fearful Symmetry* (1947) is a foundational work, still cited in discussion. He exerted a strong influence on Bloom, Paley, Altizer, Abrams, and Wittreich, though each developed his own emphases and insights. Goldsmith's *Unbuilding Jerusalem* (1993) offers a counterresponse to previous views from a post-structural approach, while Cogan provides strong feminist readings of the prophecies and an innovative thesis about Blake's response to the eschatological "failure" of the French Revolution. With the partial exception of Wittreich, Rowland is the one scholar who avoids conflating apocalypse with eschatology, though most scholars recognize that Blake's apocalypse highlights revelatory experience.

Damon and Frye

14 Damon's *William Blake: His Philosophy and Symbols* (1924) appeared during a surge of interest in mystical, esoteric, and occult writings in England and the United States, led by two popular books, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902) by William James and *Mysticism* (1911) by Evelyn Underhill. Drawing especially on the latter's more proselytizing approach, Damon identifies her "five stages" of "the mystic way" with Blake's work, claiming that Blake himself "passed through these identical five states" (2). While he explicitly uses the term "eschatology," he refers only indirectly to "apocalypse," as when he cites Swedenborg's phrase "Influx from above" and speaks of "mystical revelation" as the "highest moment possible to the flesh" (152). In an exposition of Blake's "fourfold" myth, though, he cites a recent translation of the Apocalypse of Abraham, quoting a passage that builds on Ezekiel's chariot-throne vision:

> I saw under the fire a throne of fire, and round about it four all-seeing ones, reciting the song, and under the throne four fiery living creatures singing, and their appearance was one, each one of them with four faces. (quoted on 146)

Damon does not comment, moving on to discuss Blake's zoas and view of the last judgment. He associates this event with the traditional "six thousand years allotted to the created world," though he makes a distinction between "a" last judgment and "the" last judgment: "There must be innumerable such Last Judgments, which will not end until the ultimate day terminating this continuous eschatology. No Last Judgment will be final until the six thousand years are completed" (151-52). Finally, he speaks of the revelatory moment in *Milton*, saying that the last judgment may appear either "in a mystical revelation" or "not until death," depending on the person (152). But he does not pursue the insight.

15 With the publication of Frye's *Fearful Symmetry* (1947), Blake's relation to mystical tradition was severed in one fell swoop. Or so it seemed at the time.[14] This move helped turn Blake into a canonical poet, but the break, coupled with Frye's persistent conflation of apocalypse with eschatology, cast a spell on Blake scholarship for the next two generations. Although Frye's complex and varied deployment of "apocalypse" and "apocalyptic" displays his vast erudition and ingenuity and has moments of vivid clarity, the sheer proliferation of these terms is dizzying and ultimately counterproductive. Since *Fearful Symmetry* remains a fundamental text and continues to inform critical discourse on Blake's idea of apocalypse, a fresh assessment of Frye's approach is needed.

16 An account of Frye's treatment of apocalypse cannot avoid his larger archetypal theory of literature that develops out of *Fearful Symmetry*. This theory is rooted in his typological reading of the Bible, his view that the Old Testament culminates in the New Testament figure of Christ, forming what he calls "a total body of words" whose analogy is the "Word of God" incarnate in Jesus. This "anatomy" or "total body" becomes the governing idea in all of Frye's criticism. In a seminal chapter for his literary theory, "The Word within the Word," he similarly states that "the universal visionary" mind or Logos embodied in Jesus "sees this world of time and space as a single creature in eternity and infinity," a view that "works of inspired art" turn into a "gigantic myth" whose outlines are "creation, fall, redemption and apocalypse" (108). The use of "apocalypse" here refers mainly to its function of providing a narrative or thematic

14. Scholarship on Blake's mysticism continued to appear—by G. M. Harper, Désirée Hirst, and Kathleen Raine—but it was disparaged by critics influenced by Frye. More recently, Sheila Spector has explored Blake's relation to Kabbalism, though without reference to apocalyptic tradition.

"ending." He puts it most succinctly in *Anatomy of Criticism* when discussing his theory of symbols. In the archetypal phase, civilization builds "a total human form out of nature" (*Anatomy* 105), but in the final or anagogic phase, nature itself disappears and becomes "apocalyptic." "By an apocalypse," he adds, "I mean primarily the imaginative conception of the whole of nature as the content of an infinite and eternal living body" (119). These statements indicate that in the first part of *Fearful Symmetry*, Frye uses apocalypse and apocalyptic to refer to a narrative mythos, largely avoiding the confusion that comes with his treatment of Orc and revolutionary history in part 2.

17 In analyzing Blake's views of the American and French revolutions, Frye continues to define apocalypse in narrative terms, but he also identifies it with eschatology. Two central concepts in the book contribute to the confusion, the "Orc cycle" and the "Seven Eyes of God," which are intersecting eschatological constructs.[15] Frye associates the Orc cycle with nature as well as history, making Orc a symbol of both elemental energy and political revolution. But in his view, while revolutions can signal "apocalyptic" or "utopian" desire, "they cannot be the cause of an apocalypse" because they come in cycles (*Fearful Symmetry* 202-06). That is why Orc cycles must be supplemented by the Seven Eyes of God, each of which contains an Orc cycle but which evolves in a "seven times recurring" pattern, until Jesus breaks the pattern and opens time and space into eternity (128-34, 207-18). Frye argues that Blake expected "a final apocalypse" with the spread of Orc's revolutionary energy around the world, but that he rejected Orc "as an apocalyptic agent" because, bound to nature, he inherently "falls short of a complete apocalypse"—meaning "a transfiguration of the world into Paradise" (216-18). In Frye's account, only Los as an eternal being can bring a "final" apocalypse, though he does not say if this means it is eschatological.

18 In his interpretation of the long poems, Frye contends that Blake fully articulates his "central myth" only in *Milton* and *Jerusalem*, a view that persists among many to this day. It implies that we must read Blake's work backward, much as Frye reads the entire Bible from the perspective of John's Revelation, an approach that underpins his treatment of apocalypse (317). His influential analysis of *The Four Zoas* is a case in point. Frye says that Blake retains a place for Orc's redemptive capacity, but only when Los shapes him into a "permanent form" and incorporates him into the larger body of the "One Man" Jesus. For Frye, the problem is that in Night IX (Blake's "apocalypse") neither Jesus nor Los exerts agency over "the end of time," so that the last judgment is basically "the old revolutionary doctrine of a spontaneous reappearance of Orc" (308). In effect, Blake has not brought the Seven Eyes of God construct to bear sufficiently on the Orc cycle, as Frye explains in the *Milton* chapter that follows. He informs us that insofar as Jesus was depicted as dying and rising in spring, he "was a rebirth of Orc," but as "the seventh 'Eye' or vision of God" who fulfills the scriptural prophecies, "he was an incarnation of Los" (322). This claim is based on Los's symbolic role as the "Eternal Prophet" who shapes time, including the historical Jesus, into "a permanent eternal form" (323). Frye adds that this "archetypal form" emerges when "any one visionary attains a final recreation of another's vision" (323), so that by merging with Los and Milton in the poem, Blake achieves "an apocalyptic restatement" of Milton's vision (323-37). This recasting of Milton's work into "a single human form" is also eschatological because it is "the labour of six thousand years" (339), but again Frye does not distinguish between these concepts.

19 In his account of Blake's "Final Synthesis," Frye declares that *Milton* and *Jerusalem* form a "double epic" in which the former serves as an "individual prologue" to the latter's universal "Last Judgment" or "full apocalypse" (323-24). But when he finally comes to discuss this apocalypse on the final plates in *Jerusalem*, he finds that "nothing very tangible" happens and that the poem ends in "an anticlimax" (358). To address this problem, he makes a virtue of it. He returns to his underlying premise, the body of the "God-Man," but he throws in a Viconian *ricorso* to move beyond the impasse. He says that while all things "proceeded from a divine Man … and will be reabsorbed into him," this "total vision of life must have a circular form" (386). Frye insists that he does not mean an eternal recurrence, for that implies a "closed circle," like the orthodox Christian view of the Bible as canonically sealed. Instead, he posits an approach in which the hermeneutical circle remains open and incomplete, requiring readers to make an "apocalyptic" or revelatory leap into the "gap" that follows Revelation and precedes the return to Genesis.

> The final comprehension of the Bible's meaning is in the spark of illumination between its closing anode and its opening cathode, and if that gap were not there the Bible would not stimulate the imagination to the effort of comprehension which recreates instead of passively following the outline of a vision. (386)

Frye contends that within this gap a decision confronts the reader: to "remain inside the gap with the Jesus of history" or to push through it "into eternity," where the division between human creature and divine creator disappears—*if*

15. Hobson offers a critique of Frye's "myth" of the Orc cycle (*Chained Boy*, chapter 2). Scholarly discussion of the Seven Eyes of God also distorts or inflates its importance in Blake, since it appears primarily in *Milton*.

readers identify their own bodies with Jesus's eternal body (431). This last point is especially intriguing, not least because Frye describes this identification as "the real apocalypse" in a general note on "Blake's Mysticism" at the end of the book (431-32). There he restates his view that the word "mystic" only causes confusion in relation to Blake, but he qualifies it by saying that he refers to the "conventional mystic," adding that when readers come to experience "the identity of God and Man," then "the struggles of the mystics to describe the divine One … begin to have more relevance for Blake" (431). This concluding volte-face suggests that Frye ultimately recognized the link between apocalypse and mysticism that Damon introduced and he initially denied. But he did not develop the point and in the decades following it was not pursued by most scholars.

Bloom and Paley

20 In *Blake's Apocalypse* (1963), Bloom adheres closely to Frye and assumes throughout that readers know the meaning of apocalypse, obviating his need to define it. This results in an amorphous and inconsistent use of the term that comes to typify subsequent studies. In discussing *The French Revolution*, he cites the phrase "slumbers of five thousand years" of fallen history as "an apocalyptic fog" and then speaks of "a world over-ripe for apocalypse" (63-64). In the first instance, he seems to mean "eschatological" fog; in the second, "eschatological transformation." Concerning *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, he refers to the "improvement of sensual enjoyment" that will "precede the Apocalypse" (capital A) and to the "time of troubles that must precede apocalypse" (small a), without explaining the difference. More confusions follow: the French Revolution is "an outward apocalypse"; the Memorable Relations alternate with "groupings of apocalyptic reflections" (72-74); the Bard's dualistic separation of earth from heaven in the "Introduction" to *Songs of Experience* echoes "orthodox Christian accounts of apocalypse" (131); and Night IX of *Vala*/ *The Four Zoas* is a "visualization of apocalypse" (266). Then, in *Milton*, the seven angels "sound the trumpets of apocalypse" but the poem functions only as a "prelude to apocalypse" (360), which, as Frye claimed, is not "revealed" until plate 96 of *Jerusalem* (431). Bloom is unique in showing the importance of Ezekiel's *merkabah* vision to *Jerusalem* and to Blake's poetic myth overall, but he does not associate it with apocalyptic tradition, despite speaking of Scholem's influence on him. He observes that Albion resembles the Adam Kadmon or "Divine Man" of the Kabbalah (189), but he repeats Frye's caveat that Blake is not a mystic, emphatically rejecting the idea in his commentary to the Erdman edition (E 898).

21 While also indebted to Frye, Paley's understanding of apocalypse is clearer and more refined than Bloom's, exerting an influence that continues to shape discussion. Paley tends to overrely, though, on the eschatological doctrine of millennialism. First alluded to in *Energy and the Imagination* (1970), the millennial focus is developed especially in *The Continuing City* (1983) and *Apocalypse and Millennium in English Romantic Poetry* (1999).[16] In *Energy and the Imagination*, Paley's approach seems to be an amalgam of Frye's theory of the Seven Eyes of God and Orc cycles, Mircea Eliade's "myth of the eternal return," and R. H. Charles's distinction between prophecy and apocalypse. Echoing Charles, Paley argues that in *The Four Zoas*, as opposed to his earlier prophecies, "Blake, having abandoned his revolutionary hopes, no longer employs the eschatological conception of the Hebrew prophets, who had looked for a fulfillment of God's design *in* history." Instead, he "turned to Revelation," which presents "an apocalyptic view promising other-worldly fulfillment" (163-64). Channeling Frye, Paley asserts that only with the "Eighth Eye" will the "apocalyptic" dawn arrive, a time when history will be "abrogated" and the "regeneration" of the cosmos will occur (140). His language closely mirrors Eliade's *Cosmos and History* (129-30), drawing especially on the idea of an "apocalyptic syndrome," which Eliade says involves a "premonitory phase" of "cosmic and human deterioration" leading to destruction of the wicked, "followed by the millennium of bliss" (Eliade 126-27). This sequence underpins Paley's treatment of apocalypse, making it virtually synonymous with eschatology.

22 In *The Continuing City*, his study of *Jerusalem*, Paley offers a concise overview of millennialism from the church fathers to Blake's contemporaries, but in *Apocalypse and Millennium* he most succinctly, and problematically, elaborates his argument. The opening sentence encapsulates the idea of a sequence: "A major topos in English Romantic poetry is the imminence of an apocalypse that will be succeeded by a millennium" (1). While he states that it is important "to stress that the whole conception of apocalypse has to do with a revelation of ultimate truths" (2), adding the key point that the "apocalyptic mode … involves a seer who communicates his visions" (2-3), he does not emphasize these features in his analyses. He focuses more on apocalypse as a narrative that moves "from a revelation … of human history, usually characterized by great upheavals, to a society characterized by harmony and justice for a very long period of time" (4). Paley asserts that while Revelation is the "master prototype for the movement from apocalypse to millennium," its details are less important than the transition from catastrophe to millennial peace (4-5). He finds examples of this narrative pattern in other biblical texts—

16. This focus is not prominent in *The Apocalyptic Sublime* (1986), which includes an illuminating chapter on Blake.

Joel 2:28-32 and Matthew 24:29-30—and in Thomas Burnet's *Sacred Theory of the Earth* (1684). His handling of the pattern yields impressive insights, especially in the English Romantic poets, including Blake, who write in the prophetic mode. But it is important to recognize, as Paley states, that his model of apocalypse prioritizes the eschatological over the revelatory element (3), for his influence has been extensive.[17]

Abrams and Altizer

23 Although M. H. Abrams did not write on Blake alone, his approach to apocalypse and eschatology in the Romantic period influenced a generation of scholars.[18] He builds on Frye's work while being more grounded in contemporary biblical scholarship. His views are expressed most fully in the first chapter of *Natural Supernaturalism* (1971), which contains a succinct overview of biblical eschatology, using the book of Revelation as its definitive example of an "apocalypse." Abrams takes unusual care in defining the term, though he does merge it with eschatology, referring to "the apocalypse of the world" or speaking of apocalypse as the "last act of the drama of history" (37-38). Despite this conflation, he offers an illuminating account of the development of New Testament eschatology, one that grasps both the gradual demise of its historical urgency and its present-oriented focus, changes that he closely relates. Citing the passage in Luke that speaks of the "kingdom of God within you" (17:20-21) and the passage in John on the last judgment that is both "coming, and now is" (5:24-25), he argues that they "internalize apocalypse by transferring the theatre of events from the outer earth and heaven to the inner spirit of the single believer" (47). Of course, as a visionary experience, apocalypse already is internal or interior, even if it is attributable to a transcendental source. But if we take Abrams to mean eschatology and not apocalypse, his insight stands: New Testament writers individualize eschatology, displacing what in Jewish tradition and early Christianity was a collective concept involving the people of Israel. In arguing that "the coming universal kingdom may achieve an immediate realization in the spirit of each believer," he captures the already inaugurated aspect of Christian eschatology. But unlike New Testament writers (and Blake), Abrams interjects his own dualism, arguing that the "here and now" kingdom "all but displaces reference to an historical apocalypse" (47). His oft-quoted idea about an "apocalypse of imagination" that separates a "mental" from a "historical" mode of eschatology (334) does not accord with the New Testament understanding, which maintains a dynamic tension between the "already" arrived aspect of the kingdom initiated by Jesus and its "not yet" fulfilled promise in the future.

24 It is a virtue of Thomas Altizer's approach that he preserves this tension in his study of Blake, *The New Apocalypse* (1967), drawing on Rudolf Otto's *The Kingdom of God and the Son of Man* (1934), which helped to popularize the idea of inaugurated ("realized") eschatology in biblical studies. Otto maintains both the present and future aspects of eschatology but insists that the "supramundane, future" kingdom "already extends its operation into the present" (59). Altizer adds another element to the discussion, asserting that, like "the mystical way," the kingdom of God negates the "fallen form of history and the cosmos" (174-75). His idea of negation derives from the Hegelian dialectic rather than apophatic mysticism, thus preserving a role for history. Altizer's theory pivots on a view of "kenosis" developed from Paul's letter to the Philippians (2:6-11), in which the preexistent Jesus is said to "empty" or divest himself of divine status to incarnate in human form. He interprets this emptying as the "death of God" because it leads, inexorably, to Jesus's suffering and death on the cross. He finds this process at work in Blake's long prophecies, which, he says, enact the negation of transcendence in the historical embodiment of God in Jesus. What Altizer finds most original in Blake is that his Jesus appears within Albion, who "embodies the promise of … final things while simultaneously calling for a total identification with our neighbor," defined as "the weak and broken ones about us." This act is "a repetition of God's eternal death" and it enables "participation even now in the End which he has promised" (134-35). While Altizer often lumps apocalypse with eschatology and rivals Frye's profusion of meanings for the term, he joins the mystical and eschatological aspects in a unique way, asserting that "the function of an apocalypse" is to facilitate "an immediate and total participation in ultimate Reality" (175). He also recognizes that the mystical eschaton, "even now becoming all in all," is shadowed by the "totality of darkness" that is contemporary history (176; *Living* 167-68).

Wittreich and Goldsmith

25 While Joseph Wittreich writes within the orbit of Frye, Paley, and Abrams, his approach to apocalypse is unique in two main respects. One, he concentrates on its formal and epistemological rather than its eschatological aspects, foregrounding the relational dynamic between the prophet and precursor. Two, he redefines its genre as a special mode of prophecy, tracing the emergence of its "new form" in Reformation commentaries on the book of Revelation and, con-

17. See the volume dedicated to Paley, *Romanticism and Millenarianism*, edited by Tim Fulford. The introductory essay foregrounds the eschatological aspect, as does Beer's essay on Blake.
18. The key statements are in "English Romanticism: The Spirit of the Age" (1963), *Natural Supernaturalism* (1971), and "Apocalypse: Theme and Variations" (1984).

currently, in the epic poems of Spenser (*The Faerie Queene*) and Milton (*Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*). He presents his theory in the essay "Opening the Seals: Blake's Epics and the Milton Tradition" (1973) and its programmatic sequel "'A Poet Amongst Poets': Milton and the Tradition of Prophecy" (1975), and in *Visionary Poetics: Milton's Tradition and His Legacy* (1979), especially the opening chapter, "Revelation's 'New' Form."

26 We can focus on "Revelation's 'New' Form," since it encapsulates and develops the argument of the essays. Wittreich describes Revelation as both the "epitome" of biblical prophecy and the "prototype" of a new mode of prophecy, distinguished by its own set of literary features: visionary rhetorical strategies, synchronistic narrative structure, encyclopedic form, and antiestablishment ideology. "Recognizing the encyclopedic character of John's Apocalypse," he writes, "is an indispensable guide to understanding its genre; for that recognition unlocks the meaning of the fusion of epic and prophecy that, initiated by Spenser, is completed by Milton" (*Visionary Poetics* 9). While it evolved over centuries, the new genre, "epic-prophecy," does not fully emerge until Reformation exegetes discern Revelation's "inner workings" and codify its poetics, focusing especially on its "strategies of vision" and "the kind of revelation" that John experiences, which, they insist, is both visual and aural, "pictures together with words" (22). This feature is of obvious relevance to Blake. The visionary strategies—generic mixture, obscurity, allusiveness—and the synchronistic structure both contribute to an "unmasking process," one of gradual "revealment" that culminates in an "epiphany," which is "marked by an unveiling, a sudden recognition of error—an apocalypse" (29). The revelatory moment serves as the primary goal of the new genre, whose "motive force" is to "brighten the mind" and expand consciousness. This objective is facilitated by the strategy of allusion, which "turns prophecy into a literature of contexts," "pushing the reader beyond the confines of any one prophecy," thus enabling a view of all prophecy as "one central form" (30). This form, the hybrid genre of epic-prophecy, finds its fullest expression in Milton, though it extends back through Spenser to Revelation and forward to the Romantic poets, especially Blake. Though Wittreich subsumes apocalypse under the "transcendental form" of prophecy, the target of Steven Goldsmith's critique, his emphases on visionary experience, the process of revealment, and the creative relationship between prophet and precursor are his salient contributions.

27 In *Unbuilding Jerusalem: Apocalypse and Romantic Representation* (1993), Goldsmith covers similar historical ground to Wittreich but criticizes the idea of what he calls the "formal apocalypse" of Revelation exegesis. Like Paley, he places eschatology, especially millenarianism, at the center of his definition of apocalypse—the "idea that history can come to an end," he writes, is "the most basic assumption of apocalyptic literature"—but he claims that it "has often been bound up with the promise of an aesthetic space relieved of historical determinants" (xii, 2). He locates the model for this "formalist aesthetics" in both Revelation and its exegetical history: "John's apocalypse describes how the end of history and the appearance of an ideal form occur simultaneously, how time stops with the revelation of a utopian architectural space, the New Jerusalem of monumental and perfect symmetry" (5). Goldsmith argues that "formal apocalypse evolved as a means of suppressing social conflict and, more specifically, of containing millenarianism" (19). He finds this strategy in biblical scholarship from Irenaeus, through Joseph Mede and Richard Hurd, to Austin Farrer and Leonard Thompson. It is said to operate through Revelation's "linguistic allegory" and canonical function. In his "linguistic model," Goldsmith asserts, John transmutes history into "a heavenly city and a book," so that the end-time can "seem already to participate in a language beyond history" (56). This move enables John to silence rival voices in the name of the transcendental "Logos" (67). Goldsmith says that the strategy also underpins the text's "canonical work," which is "to create and even impose the universal and metaphysical consensus in Christ that it claims to transcribe." Most importantly, he states that it aligns with "the incipient institutionalization of the church" (20), which sought to negate millenarianism, along with "the multiplicity of tongues" inherent in fallen history (61-62).

28 Goldsmith argues that Blake adopts Revelation's millenarian politics while rejecting its "universalizing transcendentalism," a feat he achieves through the "strategies of textual indeterminacy" that characterize his narratives (137-39). In emphasizing the "primacy of representation over apocalypse," Blake aligns himself with the "intrinsically counterapocalyptic" discourse of democratic politics, especially as practiced by Thomas Paine, whose enlightened skepticism toward language and truth undercuts any claims to universal authority. Identifying fallen human language with the "preapocalyptic condition" of existence, Goldsmith contends that both Blake and Paine organize their discourse "around the counterapocalyptic resistance to the Logos by Babel" (180-81). Blake's primary symbol for this condition is the "Whore of Babylon" (Rahab or Female Will), who has "a nearly ubiquitous presence in his work" (140). For Goldsmith, "Babel/Babylon" does not symbolize the empire-religion nexus or the ideology of nature but post-structural difference and heterogeneity, the "multiplicity of voices that is never [or can never be] subsumed into a commanding unity" (141). In an analysis of Blake's painting *A Vision of the Last Judgment*, he reads the placement of the Babylon harlot in the lower center of the design as countering the

"absolute authority" of Christ the Logos enthroned above, her female body and sexual power refusing to succumb to the fires of consummation (142-52). In a deconstructive move, he inverts the two figures, saying that the "persistence of Babylon …, her refusal to go easily," is the "governing logic of the image" (147). In Goldsmith's view, Blake's portrayal of her is "a lesson in negation and critique," the "subversion of apocalypse through representation" (141).

29 While Goldsmith sharply critiques the authoritarian and exclusivist tendencies in Revelation, its patriarchalism, and the antimillenarian aims of its conservative exegetes, neither he nor other Blake scholars have considered the main political theology in John's text. It is not the millenarian eschatology of chapter 20 but the redefinition of "conquering" that appears throughout, from the letters to the seven churches (chapters 2-3) to the advent of New Jerusalem (chapter 21).[19] Translated as "overcoming" in the KJV, John's "conquering" (NRSV) refers to the act of witnessing or being "faithful unto death" practiced by early Christian martyrs: Antipas at Pergamum (2:13), the slain witnesses under the altar (6:9), the two witnesses "conquered" by the beast (11:3-12), and the army of 144,000 whose robes are "washed … in the blood of the Lamb" (7:1-14, 14:1-3). Their model is the slain Lamb of chapter 5, whose self-sacrifice exalts him to the throne of God and sets in motion the eschatological narrative events that follow. This political theology, rooted in the concept of passive resistance, has been displaced by the pyrotechnic violence of John's imagery and the influence of millenarianism on subsequent interpretation. While the theology of passive resistance is not foregrounded in Rowland's approach, he is the only scholar to show the central importance of chapter 5 to Blake's idea of apocalypse (*Blake and the Bible* 224-25, 235-36). His work offers several counterpoints to Goldsmith's that can help clarify discussion of the concept.

Rowland and Cogan

30 First, Rowland takes a hermeneutic rather than a formalist approach to apocalypse that places the "primacy of the interpreting subject's experience" at the center of his method. Like Wittreich, he emphasizes the allusive nature of scripture and the "scope for exploration" that it affords, describing the "room" or "semantic space" of the text that, applied to Revelation, refers not to the transcendental "building" exegetes construct but to its capacity to stimulate creative interpretation ("'Rouzing'" 542). Second, he stresses Blake's own "mystical" experiences as crucial to the meaning of apocalypse in his work, highlighting the two well-known episodes at Felpham that Blake recounts in letters to Thomas Butts. In the first letter (2 Oct. 1800), Blake describes a visionary scene in which he is lifted into the sky and heavenly beings enfold his body as "One Man." Rowland calls it "a moment of apocalypse, a disclosure, about the totality of Blake's life" and likens it to accounts of visionary transformation in ancient "apocalyptic ascent texts" (*Blake and the Bible* 135-36). In the second (22 Nov. 1802), Blake depicts a merger with his own prophetic persona Los, from which he develops the concept of "fourfold vision" that becomes a central feature of his art and poetry (E 722). For Rowland, this experience underpins Blake's appropriation of Ezekiel's chariot-throne vision, particularly as reenvisioned in Revelation 4-5. He speaks of Blake's "creative fusion" with John's vision, his conviction that John had "*already* seen what he, Blake, had seen and was writing about," as Blake states explicitly at the end of Night VIII in *The Four Zoas*.[20] In *Blake and the Bible*, Rowland covers an array of Blake's texts and designs that reinvent John's vision, including *Europe*, *Milton*, *Jerusalem*, the watercolors on Revelation and Enoch, the Dante illustrations, the commentary on *A Vision of the Last Judgment*, and, especially, the Job engravings.

31 He views the Job engravings as providing a unique lens on Blake's hermeneutic approach, one that stages the "visionary, or apocalyptic, theme" of the book as a prompt for the reader-viewer's "personal revelation" (14). The revelatory response is not an end in and of itself, however, but leads, "above all," to "a way of life, a practice demonstrated in universal brotherhood and forgiveness of sin" (62). This ethical emphasis offers a third counterpoint to Goldsmith's approach to Revelation, and to apocalypse more broadly. In his reading of Blake's *Job*, Rowland highlights the contrast between the plates numbered 1-2, which present an image of the divine throne and its separation from earth, and plate 17, which depicts Job and his wife in direct contact with Christ. He argues that their experience removes "the division between heaven and earth" and thus "reflects a major theme of the Book of Revelation," namely the descent of the New Jerusalem in John's final chapters (17). Moreover, the caption below the image on plate 17, "but now my Eye seeth thee," and the quotation from the gospel of John about the mutual indwelling of Jesus and his followers inscribe Blake's central theme. For actually "seeing" God, which Rowland says is "the goal of the heavenly ascents in the apocalyptic seers," is in John's gospel "related to the revelation of God in Jesus," and particularly to Jesus's manifes-

19. In the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), each letter ends with Jesus urging members to conquer, "as I myself conquered" (2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21), and when the New Jerusalem descends, he promises that if they "conquer," they will become his son (21:7). See A. Y. Collins, "Political Perspective" 243-45, 254-56; Blount 37-89.

20. *Blake and the Bible* 146-52. Speaking of his own characters and events in the poem, Blake says that "John Saw these things Reveald in Heaven / On Patmos Isle" (115/111.4-5; E 385).

tation in his followers' acts of love and self-giving. The last point is especially important, Rowland argues, because Job's epiphany remains incomplete without an ethical transformation (64), which is depicted on plate 18 as Job praying for the "friends" that have persecuted him. This inclusion of an ethical dimension in revelatory experience is a feature that Blake shares with such radical Christian forebears as Gerrard Winstanley and Abiezer Coppe (157-74).

32 Rowland's theory has yet to take hold in Blake studies, but he is cited in several recent books that engage with Blake's view of apocalypse—Susanne Sklar's *Blake's "Jerusalem" as Visionary Theatre* (2011), Naomi Billingsley's *The Visionary Art of William Blake* (2018), and Lucy Cogan's *Blake and the Failure of Prophecy* (2021).[21] Drawing widely on Rowland's work, Sklar defines apocalypse as revelation, though she associates it more broadly with the transformative potential of reading and performing texts, applied to *Jerusalem* in particular (19, 42). Billingsley argues that in his "visual representations of Christ," Blake develops an "apocalyptic religious aesthetic" (9), and she too defines "apocalyptic" as the viewer's transformation or "regeneration" (14, 130); unlike Sklar, she conflates it with eschatology throughout. Cogan's approach is similar. She argues that Blake seeks to expand the reader's self-understanding and to bring "a transformative truth." His works enact change through the "subversive potential" of their "formal experimentation" (22), especially their use of multiple perspectives, a view that echoes both Wittreich and Rowland. Although she curiously grounds her understanding of apocalypse in the Old rather than the New Testament, Cogan offers a substantial account of Blake's relation to prophetic traditions that deserves further elaboration.

33 Cogan's primary claim is that the defeat of Blake's eschatological hopes in the mid-1790s compelled him to reinterpret the meaning of prophecy throughout his career, incorporating failure as a key component. Taking his comments on Jonah in the Watson annotations as "his definitive statement on prophecy," she emphasizes the prophet's agency in negotiating terms with God: the "paradox of prophecy as prognostication," she writes, is that "the future it sees may be changed," as Jonah's story demonstrates. However, Cogan finds the "subcategory of prophecy, apocalyptic literature," lacking in this respect because in it "the prophesied future cannot be changed" (3). Echoing the views of Charles and Hanson, she defines apocalypse as a deterministic mode of eschatology, rooted in mythical rather than historical categories and thus "abstracted from practical reality" (75). She acknowledges that, in *America*, Blake combines myth and history in "a hybrid mode in which the two sides seem … to pull against one another," but she says that as Orc comes to dominate, he "seems to draw the work ever further towards the mythic and [thus] to displace human agency within the historical narrative" (76-77). Her reduction of apocalypse to a mode of eschatology, coupled with her disregard of Christian apocalyptic tradition, limits her argument, which otherwise yields impressive insights about Blake's engagement with prophetic traditions. These include a robust treatment of gender and sexual themes and a lucid account of Blake's merger with Los—recorded in both the Felpham letter and *Milton* (22/24.5-14)—which leads him to reenvision "the eschatology of apocalyptic," creating a more personal "*parousia*" or return of Christ. Cogan argues insightfully that in this new vision, Blake and his audience are "capable of accessing Eternity within any individual moment but only as part of an intersubjective visionary experience" (167-68). In her view, however, only *Milton* achieves this aim because *Jerusalem* succumbs to "a surprisingly conventional" view of the *parousia*, one in which Jesus displaces Los as the primary agent of transformation (190-91).

21. My review of *Blake and the Failure of Prophecy* is in *Blake* 56.3 (winter 2022–23).

III. Apocalypse and Eschatology in Blake's *Milton*

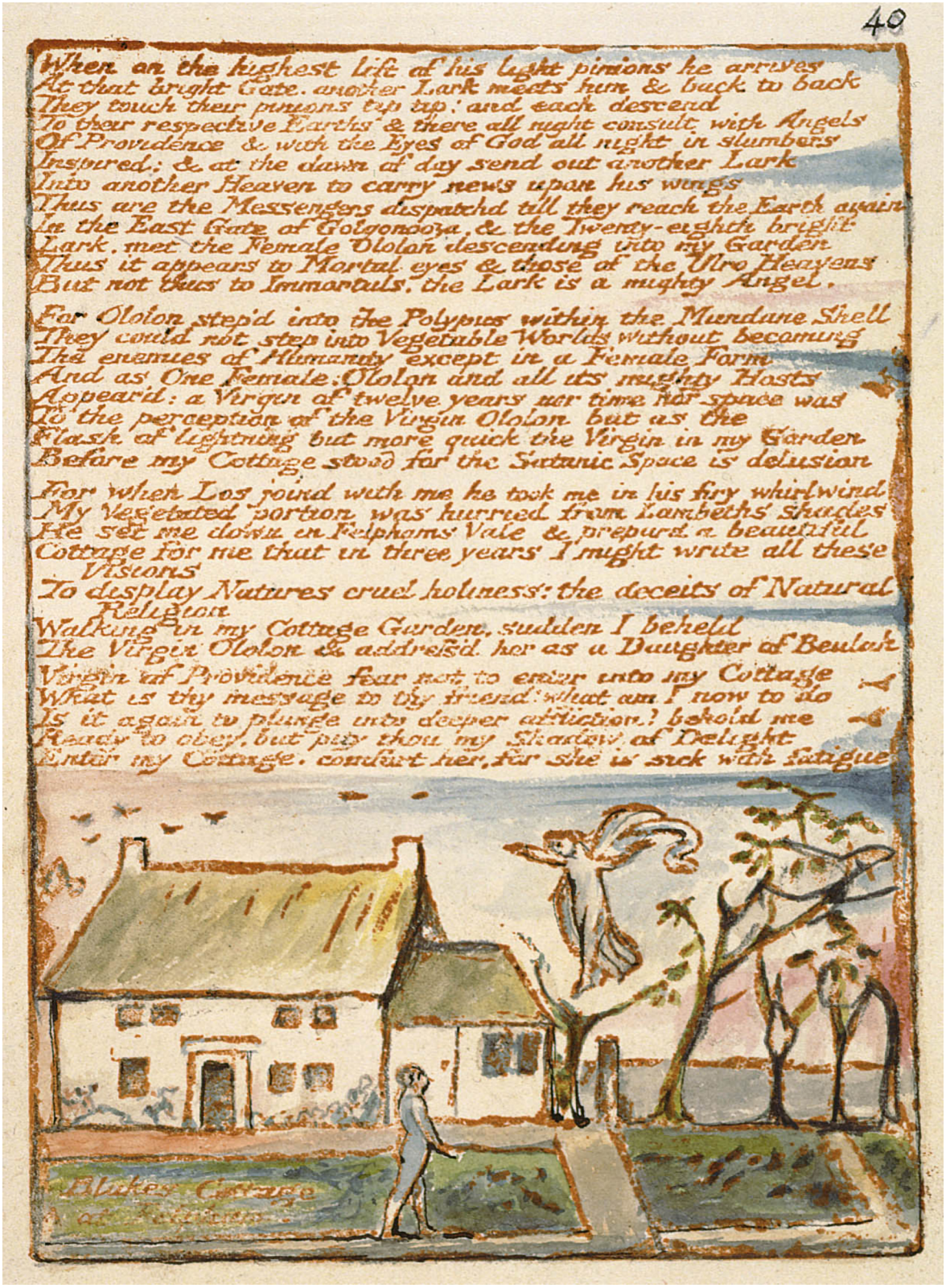
34 While indebted to each of the Blake scholars discussed above, I want to show how recent biblical studies can help clarify Blake's treatment of apocalypse and eschatology. I have chosen to examine *Milton* because it foregrounds these concepts without conflating them. It is especially valuable for the way it distinguishes the immediacy of the apocalyptic moment from the futurity of the end-time hope. As indicated in my opening section, the narrative reflects the two-tiered structure of apocalypse and is organized around the descents of the three major characters, Milton, Ololon, and Los, who depart from heaven and arrive, simultaneously, in Blake's cottage garden at Felpham. The readiest way to grasp this apocalyptic feature is through Blake's illustrations.[22]

35 The vertical relationship is prominent in each design. And while each descent leads to discussions of eschatology, their simultaneity cuts across the visual frames as it does the textual sequences of the narrative, focusing attention on the revelatory moment itself. As he prepares to descend, Milton prays for the last judgment and imminent return of Je-

22. Blake's watercolors also feature the vertical dimension of apocalypse: see especially *Ezekiel's Wheels* (Butlin #468), *The Four and Twenty Elders Casting Their Crowns before the Divine Throne* (#515), *"And the angel which I saw lifted up his hand to Heaven"* (#518), *The Baptism of Christ* (#475), *The Magdalene at the Sepulchre* (#504), *The Conversion of Saul* (#506), *Jacob's Dream* (#438), and *Epitome of James Hervey's "Meditations among the Tombs"* (#770).

1. Milton, as falling star. *Milton* copy D (composed c. 1804–11, printed 1818). 16.0 x 11.2 cm. Library of Congress, Lessing J. Rosenwald Collection. PR4144.M6 1815.

2. Los, in the sun. *Milton* copy D (composed c. 1804–11, printed 1818). 16.0 x 11.1 cm. Library of Congress, Lessing J. Rosenwald Collection. PR4144.M6 1815.



3. Ololon, descending. *Milton* copy D (composed c. 1804–11, printed 1818). 14.1 x 10.2 cm. Library of Congress, Lessing J. Rosenwald Collection. PR4144.M6 1815.

sus (14/15.18-23), and both Ololon and Los announce the completion of 6000 years of eschatological history (21/23.51-52; 22/24.15-17). At the same time, Blake seeks to interrupt the temporal movement of the narrative, compressing history within the visionary moment, as shown in the following well-known passage:

> Every Time less than a pulsation of the artery
> Is equal in its period & value to Six Thousand Years.
> For in this Period the Poets Work is Done: and all the Great
> Events of Time start forth & are concievd in such a Period
> Within a Moment (28/30.62-29/31.3)

Blake asserts something more radical and innovative than the arrival of the end-time, saying that the experience of a time "less than" a human pulsation is equal in value to, not identical with, the 6000-year span of Christian eschatology. He redefines the end-time as an apocalyptic or revelatory experience, albeit one that takes place within time. As a discussion of the three descents will show, Blake maintains an urgent expectation of the last days while emphasizing the capacity of apocalypse to disrupt the linear movement of time, opening it to a perception of eternity.

36 Readers conversant with *Milton* know that it begins with a long preamble, "a Bards prophetic Song," which is set entirely in the heavenly world. It motivates Milton to descend to earth, giving up immortal life to redeem his "Sixfold Emanation." The identity of this figure is not revealed until the main narrative begins, when Milton enters his "Shadow … hermaphroditic," a composite of the male Satan and female Rahab whose formation is one of the two principal subjects of the Song (2.25-14/15.9). The other is Satan's conflict with Los and his sons for control over the "harrow of the Almighty," the key eschatological symbol of the Song. Satan no longer is the heroic rebel celebrated in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, but an amalgam of Milton's God and Newton's Pantocrator, the "Supreme Being" who governs his deistic cosmology. Satan's egoism and imperial ambition enable him to gain control of the harrow, but when he drives it "among the constellations," a "third" of the stars fall from heaven like Milton's apostate angels (12/13.25-26). But rather than denounce Satan, as Milton did, the Bard says that Enitharmon (Los's counterpart) creates a "New Space" or cosmos to "protect" him from punishment, to which an "Assembly" of eternals adds a time frame, the "Six Thousand years" of traditional Christian eschatology. A central feature of this construct is its division into seven periods, culminating in the appearance of Jesus as the "Lamb of God," whose self-sacrifice on Satan's behalf inspires Milton to both reclaim Satan and redeem his posthumous emanation, Rahab, born at the end of the Bard's Song (13/14.12-42).

37 When Milton descends, he embraces Satan as his "Selfhood," described as "twenty-seven-fold" (14/15.30-41), the dimensions of the fallen cosmos that Blake names "the Mundane Shell" (17/19.21-26). At the same time, Milton's "real and immortal Self" is guarded by "Seven Angels of the Presence," a group of eternals who enter the Shadow with him, "journeying above" the Mundane Shell (15/17.9-12; 17/19.18-19). Milton's descent thus introduces the two-tiered narrative setting into the poem. He first appears to Blake as a falling star that lands on the "tarsus" of his left foot (15/17.47-50), an image many scholars view as an allusion to Paul of Tarsus (Essick and Viscomi 27). This reference is bolstered by the small design above the passage, depicting the star trailing light and fire as Blake's body arcs backward in an ecstatic pose, echoing Paul's encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus.[23] As Wittreich observes, Blake "magnifies" this interlinear design into a full-page illustration (illus. 1), showing its importance to "the underlying concept of the poem" (56). The underlying concept is the moment of Milton's descent, when Los and Ololon also descend, events whose simultaneity Blake seeks to suggest by placing them in consecutive order (21/23.4-22/24.5).[24]

38 In describing the descent of Los, Blake writes that Los appears just as he (Blake) ties the "immortal" sandal onto the foot that Milton enters: "And Los behind me stood; a terrible flaming Sun: just close / Behind my back; I turned round in terror, and behold. / Los … also stoop'd down / And bound my sandals on" (22/24.6-9). In the illustration of the passage (illus. 2), Los appears within the flaming sun as Blake kneels on the earth, turning to face Los with his head directly in Los's groin, suggestive of sexual contact. The passage and design also allude to Ezekiel's second vision of God, in which the spirit lifts him "between the earth and the heaven" and he beholds "a likeness as the appearance of fire, from the appearance of his loins even downward … and from his loins, even upward" (8:1-3).[25] Blake brings the apocalyptic and homoerotic aspects of the design into proximity, the image of physical intimacy conveying his merger and identification with Los: "I became One Man with him" (22/24.12). Rowland observes that the image of Los's "potency" being "transmitted" to Blake is an innovation that accords with the tradition of apocalypse, in which the vision and power of the former prophet serve as "the medium of a new form of creativity" (*Blake and the Bible*

23. Blake illustrates this encounter in *The Conversion of Saul* (Butlin #506). Acts refers to Paul's experience as a "trance" (22:17); Paul refers to it as a "revelation" (*apokalýptō*) (Galatians 1:12).

24. In book 1, Blake inserts a passage on Ololon's descent in between the descents of Milton and Los (21/23.45-60), reserving its narration for book 2 (31/34.8).

25. Rowland's discussion of the Ezekiel passage is included in my section 1 above; also see *Blake and the Bible* (75-76, 237).

237). The creative impact of their union is shown in Los's speech, which introduces the concept of the apocalyptic moment into the poem.

> I am that Shadowy Prophet who Six Thousand Years ago
> Fell from my station in the Eternal bosom. Six Thousand Years
> Are finishd. I return! …
> I in Six Thousand Years walk up and down: for not one Moment
> Of Time is lost, nor one Event of Space unpermanent
> ……
> They vanish not from me & mine, we guard them first & last (22/24.15-23)

The traditional 6000-year framework presented at the end of the Bard's Song takes on new meaning, as Los announces both its completion and his capacity to render permanent each moment and event in history. While he transforms its meaning, Los retains an essential feature of the Bard's Song construct, the act of "guarding" each moment. This feature links the seven tutelary figures "sent" by the Assembly to serve as "Guard[s]" to protect Satan with the other sevenfold entities in the poem: the Seven Angels of the Presence who comfort Milton and "guard round him" (15/17.14); the "Seven Ages" of providential history, each with its own angelic "Guard" (28/30.58-61); and, most importantly, the "Seven Eyes of God" that Los says "continually / Guard round" the generations of time (24/26.7-9). Though the Seven Eyes culminate in the "Last Vintage," which becomes the main eschatological symbol in the narrative, they also are closely related to the apocalyptic moment, which both arrests and condenses time, dislocating its movement toward the eschaton.

39 Blake introduces the Seven Eyes of God in the first of Los's final two speeches, which offer an impassioned account of Christian eschatology that dramatizes the tension between its already-not yet features (23/25-25/27). On the one hand, Los hails Milton as the "Awakener" whose return is a "Signal that the Last Vintage *now* approaches" (24/26.42), proclaiming that "the Great Vintage & Harvest is *now* upon Earth," and adding that every living thing "*now* is flocking to the sound of the Trumpet" (25/27.17-22; emphases added). On the other hand, he addresses the fear of his sons that Milton will bring the eschatological violence associated with his support of the English revolution and regicide. Los thus counsels the kind of patient endurance that John advocates in Revelation, urging his sons to "be patient yet a little" (using variations on the phrase four times) until "the Last Vintage is over" (23/25.32-59).[26] Los's explanation for the delay, "that the Seven Eyes of God may have space for Redemption" (23/25.52), seems straightforward, referring simply to the "time" needed to prepare for redemption. But it also goes to the heart of Blake's redefinition of the end-time, which transforms time in a uniquely spatial way, as he reveals in the pulsation of an artery passage (29/31.4-26).

40 Blake delivers this passage himself, having turned abruptly from Los's last speech to a discussion of "the Constellations," showing his interest in the cosmological dimension of history, akin to the ancient apocalypses. As he narrates the actions of Los's sons, "Labourers of the Vintage," he calls attention to their creation of the multiple divisions of time—from moments and hours to ages and periods—which he describes as "wondrous buildings," a spatial metaphor. He adds that just as "Seven Ages" can contract into a moment "less than a pulsation of the artery," so "every Space smaller than a Globule of Mans blood. opens / Into Eternity" (29/31.21-22). This opening of space into eternity, correlated with the compression of time into the moment, provides the liminal path for Ololon's descent in book 2.

41 The descent of Ololon is arguably the most significant event in the poem. It enables Milton to complete his journey, it manifests the second coming of Jesus, and it situates the Seven Eyes of God within the apocalyptic moment, as conveyed through the figure of the Lark, who symbolically enacts the extension of time into eternity. As soon as Milton and the Seven Angels behold Ololon, they rejoice to see that "a wide road was open to Eternity," making possible the fulfillment of Los's prophecy that Milton would "up ascend / Forwards" from Felpham back to Eden (35/39.34-35; 20/22.57-60). They also fall silent in awe, "for they saw the Lord in the Clouds of Ololon" (35/39.41): Christ's second coming is associated with Ololon throughout (21/23.60; 31/34.10-16; 42/49.10-12). An account of the apocalyptic moment follows, elaborating the descriptions in book 1. Blake first identifies Ololon's descent with the "Moment" that Satan and his "Watch Fiends" cannot find and which, "if rightly placed," can renovate "every Moment" of the day. In a series of abrupt transitions, he adds that "Just in this Moment" a fountain appears and that "Just at the place" where "the Larks nest" is located, Ololon sits beside the fountain. Blake describes the Lark as "a mighty Angel" and as Los's "Messenger," whose purpose is to ensure that "the Seven Eyes of God who walk … / Thro all the Twenty-seven Heavens may not slumber nor sleep" (35/39.48-65). The Lark's awakening function is especially important in shifting the eschatology of the Seven Eyes toward apocalypse.

26. The phrase "patient endurance," which occurs at several key places in Revelation (1:9; 2:2-3; 14:12; NRSV), underpins the militant pacifism at the core of Revelation's political theology, discussed in my section 2 above.

42 The Lark performs this shift in a beautiful lyrical passage that appears early in book 2, just as Ololon descends to earth. As it leads "the Choir of Day" in song, the Lark mounts "upon the wings of light" and "vibrates with the effluence Divine," compelling all of nature to listen in silence; the sun "Stands still upon the Mountain" (31/34.31-37). The image of the motionless sun, which derives from the book of Joshua (10:12), is used by Augustine in the *Confessions* to demonstrate God's power not only to stop time but to distend it into eternity, Blake's meaning also.[27] Similarly, when the Lark mounts into the twenty-seven heavens, it interacts with a series of twenty-six other Larks who "all night consult with Angels / Of Providence & with the Eyes of God," until a twenty-eighth Lark meets Ololon "descending into [Blake's] Garden," and time and space are transcended altogether.

> … nor time nor space was
> To the perception of the Virgin Ololon but as the
> Flash of lightning but more quick the Virgin in my Garden
> Before my Cottage stood for the Satanic Space is delusion
> (36/40.17-20)

The hyper-quickness of Ololon's descent matches in speed the "less than a pulsation" moment described in book 1. Both passages seek to convey the effect of simultaneity linking the three descents. What makes the experience of such an instantaneous moment possible is Blake's belief in the reality of the eternal world behind the "delusion" or epiphenomena of rationalist space and time. In concert with the activity of the Lark and Seven Eyes, Ololon's descent opens a "space" for redemption that passes through the Mundane Shell into the world above, the "spatial" dimension of transcendence in J. J. Collins's definition of apocalypse. Rather than a movement toward the end, the "more quick" moment creates an interval or duration that is discontinuous with chronology.[28]

43 On the penultimate plate of *Milton*, Blake writes that the multiple events in the poem occur during a "moment" of ecstatic trance as he lay "outstretchd upon the path" of his garden at Felpham. In this moment, Ololon, Milton, and the Seven Angels all merge with "Jesus the Saviour," who returns in the Clouds of Ololon as the Lark mounts and the Four Zoas sound their trumpets, heralding the imminent arrival of the Last Vintage (42/49.7-30). It is significant that the Last Vintage has not arrived. Blake underscores the fact that eschatological history continues despite the apocalypse he records in the poem. This experience prepares him for an event that remains a future hope, one in which he ardently believes. Even so, he shows that revelatory experience can facilitate what Altizer views as "an immediate and total participation" in divine reality, distinguishing it from the horizontal movement toward the eschaton. As readers of Blake know, such apocalyptic moments are fundamental to his art and theology, even as he situates or leverages them from within history. He is a deeply eschatological thinker and artist, but he recognizes the qualitative distinction between the future hope and the richness and depth that apocalypse unveils in the present moment. The unilinear direction of history remains the defining feature of eschatology, but apocalypse abridges and transforms time from within, creating what Hannah Arendt describes as "the small non-time space in the very heart of time."[29] What *Milton* reveals more clearly than any other work in Blake's canon is how to keep the telos of eschatology open to further apocalypse. Both concepts are essential to Blake, but he does not confuse or conflate them.

27. Blake applies the image to the Lark's song rather than to Joshua's battle at Gibeon. See Augustine, *Confessions*, book 11, chapter 23.
28. I draw on Agamben's treatment of "messianic time" in Paul's letters (60-71).

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29. Arendt uses this description in defining the medieval concept of eternal time, citing Blake's aphorism about holding "Eternity in an hour" (204, 210).

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A R T I C L E

William Blake's "Introduction" to *Songs of Innocence*: The Role of the Pipe

By Ian Thomson

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1 THE "Introduction" to *Songs of Innocence* (illus. 1) is a short poem about a piper. This article addresses one particular feature that has not been thoroughly considered: the significance of the piper's pipe. Examining the instrument and its role throws fresh light on the poem.

Background and Previous Commentaries

2 The "Introduction," actually a proem, is a concise tale in lyric form with five quatrains relating an episode that occurs to a piper, apparently a shepherd, wandering in the countryside. While he is piping a child appears on a cloud and advises him to pipe a song about a Lamb and then to stop playing and instead sing his songs, and subsequently to stop singing and write down the words of the songs. The poem contains motifs that appear in later poems in *Songs of Innocence* (for example, a lamb, clouds, shepherds, children, and pastoral settings), as well as issues of a religious and philosophical nature. The apparent focus is on happy circumstances, and numerous commentaries recognize that it has joyous and endearing qualities that have ensured its popularity.

3 While many commentators have focused on the poem's structural, emotional, and poetic features, few have referred to the piper's pipe and none has seriously questioned its role. General observations that mention the pipe only in passing, if at all, are not addressed in this article.

4 The lack of attention paid to the pipe is curious, given its prominence: the first word of the first line of the first stanza of the first poem in the collection refers to the act of "piping"; the poem's development depends on the instrument; and images of a piper piping appear on the frontispiece (illus. 2) and on the title page (in the fold of the letter "*I*" of *Innocence*).[1] When the pipe has been mentioned in criticism, there is no consensus as to what it is. For example, some refer to it as a shepherd's pipe—an unarguable position, given that the player is portrayed with sheep—but the description is too imprecise to be helpful. Wicksteed, on the other hand, writes that "the reeds … supplied his pipes" (80), which assumes, contrary to the frontispiece, that the piper has more than one pipe and, again without justification, that it is fabricated from reeds. Bite maintains that it is a panpipe. Erdman is more perceptive, suggesting on the basis of the frontispiece that it is "no simple shepherd's pipe, it looks like an oboe" (*Illuminated Blake* 43). Such varied commentaries make unwarranted assumptions about the instrument's construction and thus obscure its identity and purpose.

5 One reason for this confusion is the lack of clarity about Blake's intentions when he used the generic term "pipe." Did he, in the frontispiece, portray an instrument simply and imaginatively rather than accurately, an approach taken by many artists? Or did he have in mind a particular kind of pipe, and, if so, which? While all pipes fall under the generic term "woodwind" and all derive, mythologically at least, from a syrinx made of reeds (discussed later), some produce tone when air is directed toward a sharp edge, whether internal or external, and others produce tone when air vibrates a reed. The former category includes the syrinx, duct flutes (including simple pipes, recorders, and flageolets), and transverse flute; the latter includes the ancient Greek aulos (often translated confusingly from ancient texts as "flute"), oboe, clarinet, saxophone, and shawm. Many of the pipes in both categories—notably, the aulos, syrinx, some duct flutes, and clarinet (particularly in its early form as a chalumeau)—have been associated with shepherds.

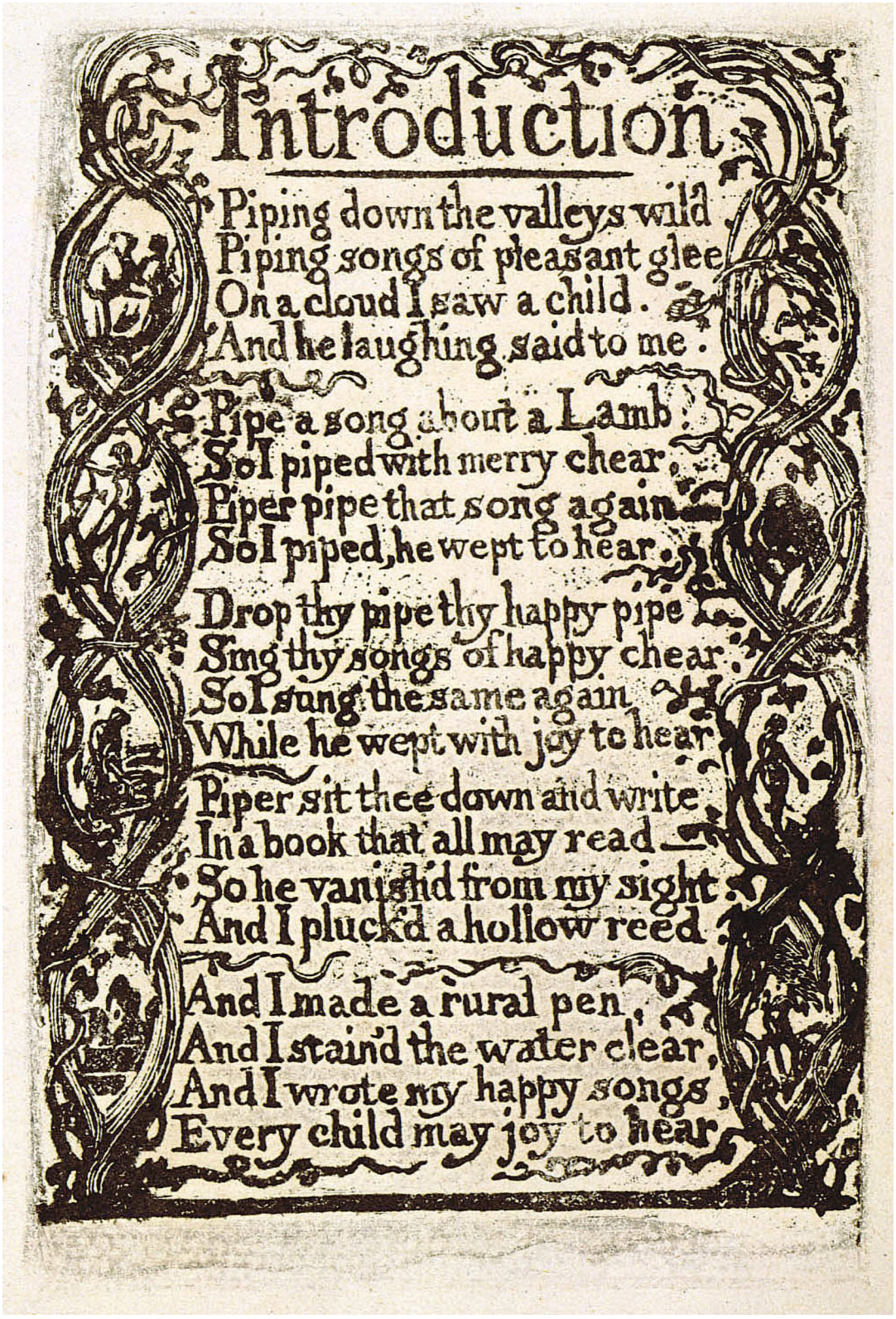
The Piper's Features

6 The first stanza conjures an image that is common in folk art: the solitary piper. He is "Piping down the valleys wild / Piping songs of pleasant glee."[2] This shepherd appears to be

1. Erdman's *Concordance* (2: 1435-36) shows that "pipe" and related words ("piping," etc.) are spread thinly among Blake's works. A flute is mentioned in *Songs of Innocence* in connection with a new beginning in "Spring" (E 14).

2. This opening line, referring to a piper wandering in the world of nature, resembles a scene in Mozart's opera *Die Zauberflöte* (Vienna, 1791) in which Papageno enters piping.

Glen suggests that the unattached present participles "give a sense of undirected, timelessly spontaneous energy" (65). Not all commentators agree with the idea of a contented shepherd. In Gleckner's view, for example, Blake's shepherd leads a way of life that is far from peace-



1. "Introduction," *Songs of Innocence* copy U (composed and printed 1789). 11.3 x 7.9 cm. Houghton Library, Harvard University. Typ 6500.34u.

2. Frontispiece, *Songs of Innocence* copy U (composed and printed 1789). 11.0 x 7.0 cm. Houghton Library, Harvard University. Typ 6500.34u.

at peace in nature and content with his pastoral circumstances, a picture of tranquillity that has been portrayed in literature and visual art since classical times.[3] Classical authors express the extent to which contemporary shepherds revered Pan, the ancient Greek god of the natural world, who inhabited the fields and forests, usually playing pipes: Theocritus reports that pipes were not played at noon because that was when Pan slept, and he was not to be disturbed. It is difficult to conceive that Blake constructed an image of a shepherd-piper in woodland valleys without having Pan in mind, and the allusion has accordingly been recognized by many commentators (see, for example, Wicksteed 79).

7 While Blake's piper cannot be dissociated from the idea of Pan, he is not "Pan-like" (McLane 427) and does not represent Pan figuratively. Pan was given form as a disreputable, licentious, zoomorphic figure with cloven hooves, while the frontispiece of *Innocence* depicts an upright, statuesque human form, barefoot and in token clothing, evoking classical representations of gods in sculpture. These contrasting features of Blake's piper cease to be contradictory when they are linked to the idea of progression or spiritual development—the principal theme of this poem. The pipe plays an important role in this process.

What Is the Pipe?

8 The piper-Pan allusion serves to define some fundamental features of the pipe and its ability to establish heavenly communication. The source for this is Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, a work that records the ancient myths. Despite harboring doubts about the neoclassical tendencies of his period, Blake was well aware of the *Metamorphoses*, which had been published a number of times in English during the eighteenth century, and is said to have "delighted" in it (Damon 313, quoting Samuel Palmer). Ovid explains how Pan chased the nymph Syrinx, who, wishing to escape his clutches, prayed to be transformed. In the margins of the water, she was transfigured into reeds, which in the breeze produced "sweet tones" (Ovid 53).[4] Pan cut the reeds into different lengths and joined them together, making a set of proportionate pipes, each open at one end, which has since been called a syrinx in memory of the nymph (and frequently a panpipe in memory of Pan). The syrinx became—mythologically—the first flute. While Pan was unable to fulfill his carnal desires, he could communicate with Syrinx through the reed pipes—"This union, at least, shall I have with thee"—and thus the reeds were the means by which he could overcome desire and embrace a spiritual attitude.[5] In Blake's "Introduction," this story is the mythological basis of the piper's communication with the heavenly child, who appears in the third line of the first stanza. In that case, does the piper play an instrument derived from, or related to, the syrinx and reeds?

9 There is no evidence that he plays a syrinx. The poem's text refers to a "pipe," not pipes. The frontispiece depicts the piper with a single pipe, even using the correct left/right hand positioning for such an instrument. However, this identification can be dismissed for a number of reasons. The design shows a pipe approximately fifty centimeters in length, which implies that it has keys, and, most importantly—Blake makes this absolutely clear—it has a beak and terminates with a pronounced bell, characteristics that exclude the possibility of its being a *simple* pipe. It is not a rustic device but an engineered instrument, most likely fabricated from boxwood or ebony. The size of the bell rules out other forms of flutes, such as the recorder or flageolet, and the beak rules out the oboe, a woodwind that produces tone when air is directed to a slim, exposed double reed, which then vibrates. It is also unlikely to be a shawm: there is no indication of a pirouette (a disc against which players rest their lips to prevent strain), and while shepherds have on occasion been portrayed with shawms the instrument tended to be played ceremonially by professional musicians.

10 Blake's piper appears to be holding an eighteenth-century clarinet, an instrument that the musicologist Johann Gottfried Walther records in his 1732 *Musicalisches Lexicon* (168). Originally called a chalumeau, a bucolic instrument played by peasants, and alternatively and confusingly a "shepherd's pipe," the clarinet is suited in its upper register to outdoor use and remains an outdoor instrument in marching bands and folk ensembles in eastern Europe. It became increasingly popular in European art music as the eighteenth century progressed. Most specimens were fabricated from boxwood and ebony and all had a relatively

ful: "irresponsible," "infantile," and "aimless" (he uses the latter adjective on four occasions [86, 89 (twice), 97]). Gardner notes that the piper is coming "back from the open country towards the congenial, inhabited locality" (19), which may mean that he is guiding his flock down the valley from upper summer pastures. As Gardner suggests, this piper is a "guardian of Innocence" (18).

3. The shepherd with his pipe appears, for instance, in the *Idylls* of Theocritus, the first of the bucolic poets, and as Daphnis in the early novel *Daphnis and Chloe* by Longus (Theocritus 19, 21, 107, 161; Longus 12-197). As a symbol of what came to be called Arcadian bliss, the image remained popular (see, for example, John Craxton's 1948 *Pastoral for P. W.*).

4. Blake refers in *The Four Zoas* to the "soothing flute" (E 319).

5. Pipes, even when not made from reeds, have continued to evoke a connection with the spiritual world. Flutes appear on Etruscan tomb decoration and a flute is the sound of the underworld in act 2 of Gluck's *Orphée et Eurydice* (1774).

large bell.[6] It is related to the reed, insofar as a clarinet produces tone by means of a vibrating reed secured to its beak. Moreover, there is a close relationship between the clarinet and the changes that occur later in Blake's poem: clarinet is a diminutive of clarion, which was formerly the name for a trumpet.[7] Walther refers to this when he writes that the early eighteenth-century clarinet produced "the far-away sound of a trumpet, softened and sweetened by distance" (168).[8] There are numerous references, particularly biblical, to trumpets' announcing or introducing important changes or events, so a trumpet-like instrument is perfectly appropriate for heralding the spiritual change that the piper experiences later in the poem.[9] A trumpet itself would have negated the essential image of a bucolic shepherd, whereas a clarinet, which is associated with shepherds and with a sound that has the qualities of a trumpet, makes an extremely effective compromise.

The Piper's Spiritual Transition

11 The opening lines of the poem present the piper in a pagan culture and in a lowly place, a valley. He is addressed by a child in a higher place, on a cloud, who asks him to pipe a song about a Lamb. As many commentators have pointed out, the child almost certainly has a Christian imperative, given that the capitalized "Lamb" in Christian imagery refers to Christ. The pagan piper cannot at this point distinguish "Lamb" from lamb and is unlikely to have piped a hymn—he probably played a well-known traditional tune such as "Baa, Baa, Black Sheep"—but the child is nevertheless ecstatic about what he hears. Previously overlooked, but of particular significance in this Christian context, is the child's subsequent instruction to the piper to discard the pipe: "Drop thy pipe thy happy pipe."

12 The child's command is critically important for understanding the poem's purpose, for two reasons. It signals change in accordance with the biblical comment "And the voice of … pipers … shall be heard no more" (Revelation 18), a chapter that refers to overcoming unChristian activities. Secondly, it alludes to the way in which the early church restricted piping. The circumstances are rooted in the use of pipes in agrarian economies to deceive birds—the *Distichs of Cato*, for instance, uses the metaphor of birds' being deceived by the hunter's pipe to caution people to be wise:

> Approve not men who wheedling nothings say:
> Fowlers pipe sweetly to delude their prey.
> (*Disticha* book 1, no. 27)

The early church developed the metaphor, linking the pipe to the phallus and arguing that heretics and nonbelievers were deceived by the passions aroused by the pipe, just as they were by passions related to the phallus. An example may be found in the *Panarion*, in which St. Epiphanius expresses his profound concern about phallocentric Gnostic doctrines and likens the phallus to an end-blown pipe (and thus the pipe to the serpent that deceived Eve):

> For there is a spirit of imposture which, like breath in a flute, sets every fool in motion against the truth …. Indeed, the flute itself is a replica of the serpent through which the evil one spoke and deceived Eve. For the flute was prepared to deceive mankind, on its [the serpent's] model and in imitation of it.
> (*Panarion* book 1, no. 25, par. 4.9-10)

Phallocentric activities were considered degenerate, idolization of the phallus was condemned, and the church chose to stigmatize the pipe.[10] Abandoning the pipe was the means by which people were directed away from passions and toward reason/wisdom.[11] Pipers were dissuaded from piping and the instrument fell into disuse for centuries, to be replaced in art by images of harps and other stringed instruments. Despite Blake's nonconformist beliefs and his misgivings about the established church, he alludes in the "Introduction" to one of the early Roman Church's earliest challenges and appears to be siding with the church fathers.

13 Discarding the pipe signals that the piper's association with Pan has ended and refers, by implication, to the end of Pan, who was the only Greek god to die. The story was told by an Egyptian sailor named Thamus, who heard the cry "Great Pan is dead" coming from over the sea in the vicinity of Paxi. His experience was subsequently documented by the Greek historian Plutarch in *De defectu oraculorum* (*The*

6. See images of the early clarinet in Baines, plate xxvii; Rendall, plates 1 and 2.
7. It is not always clear what instrument Blake is referring to when he mentions the clarion—he distinguishes clarions and trumpets in *The Four Zoas* (E 400) and *America* (E 55), but appears to associate trumpet and clarion as an instrument of revelation in "let the clarion of war begin" (*Poetical Sketches*, E 436).
8. See also Baines 117-18; Rendall 64.
9. For example, in 2 Chronicles 13:12 trumpets "sound the battle cry"; in Matthew 6:2 they "announce"; and in Revelation 8-11 seven trumpets are sounded, one at a time, to signal each of the apocalyptic events.
10. Epiphanius would have been referring to an aulos, an end-blown double-reed instrument that subsequently developed into the oboe. Flute instruments did not reemerge significantly in western European culture until around the tenth century, and the images that accompanied their return were in the main courtly.
11. Other Christian writers condemned pipes: St. John Chrysostom calls them "the very pomp and hotchpotch of the devil" (quoted in Fitzgibbon 270).

Obsolescence of Oracles, c. 100 AD) (Plutarch 401-03). Medieval scholars considered the tale credible because it conveniently defined the point at which the era of paganism was over and Christianity was in the ascendant. John Milton refers to Pan's having descended to the underworld on Christ's birth in his celebratory work *Ode on the Morning of Christ's Nativity* (written in 1629), a poem that Blake knew well and illustrated (Milton 22; Swaim 487-93).[12] Blake's "Introduction" alludes unmistakably to the tale: the piper's pagan associations stop when he develops as a Christian, arguably as a Christ figure.

14 In reality, the transition from Pan to Christ was not as abrupt. Paganism decayed as Christ gradually acquired many of Pan's characteristics. Some poets then fused the two: for example, the glossary to May in Edmund Spenser's *The Shepheardes Calender* (1579) states that "Great Pan is Christ, the very God of all the shepheards." The Pan-to-Christ transition serves in part to explain the ambiguous two-god representation of the piper-shepherd in the frontispiece.

15 Discarding the pipe is the piper's first step into the church: he is ready to conform to Christian doctrine. Accordingly, the pipe is not mentioned again and the piper acquires a more spiritual way of life, adopting first the voice and then the written word as a means of expression. The child weeps with joy at this development—another unbeliever is converted and saved.

16 It is generally accepted that the child is a channel for conveying divine favor to an otherwise undeserving human being, a pagan shepherd, but the significance of this in a Christian context has not been addressed. The piper's conversion means that the child has conveyed grace. The manner in which grace is applied is theologically complex and doctrines differ from church to church, but three points illustrate Blake's awareness of the issues: the poem is aligned with the idea that grace precedes faith; the grace is efficacious, which in reformed doctrine means that it is applied directly to the person (the shepherd) whom god wishes to save, and is irresistible, so the shepherd must comply with the child's demands, giving the impression that he does so freely;[13] and intellectual faith is useless without accompanying good works, in this case writing the songs ("Grace" 698; Holy Bible, James 2:14-17; Jeffrey and Davids 317).

12. Milton writes: "Full little thought they then, / That the mighty Pan / Was kindly come to live with them below."

13. This explains Essick's comment about the piper's "responses being immediate, almost as though his independent will is suspended" (29).

17 The poem is thus not entirely about the progression from rustic innocence to civilizing experience but about the power of reason over passion and in religious terms the enlightened progression out of an unChristian culture.

The Reed Pen

18 With the pipe dropped, the child calls for the piper to sing, and then transcribe, his songs. The demand for singing associates the poem with the Moravian aspects of Blake's religious beliefs. Count Zinzendorf, founder of the Moravian Church, promoted singing, writing over 2000 hymns. Moreover, the requirement for the piper to instantly fit words to his music reflects Zinzendorf's ability to write songs extremely quickly, often while religious services were in progress.

19 In order to write the songs the piper fabricates a "rural pen" from a plucked reed. It is a writing implement that suits the circumstances, but its inclusion in a late eighteenth-century poem is curious, given that reed pens had been replaced by quills as early as the sixth century and possibly during Roman times. John Beckmann's *History of Inventions and Discoveries* (published in English in 1797) notes that Isidore of Seville (c. 560-636) reported the use of quills in *Etymologiae* (Beckmann 2: 214-16; Finlay 1-2). Quills offered better elasticity and durability, were easier to cut, did not require seasoning, and were suitable for small writing. Why, then, does Blake not refer to a quill? It is partly because of the continuing use of the reed pen by artists, who appreciated its ability to produce bold strokes—an attribute that draws attention to the significance of the piper's words—and partly because the reed pen supports Blake's allusion to the period when Pan's influence was declining and Christ's rising—a time when such pens were commonplace. The reed, moreover, is a unifying feature in the poem. Through the pipe's mythological origin in reeds and its development in the clarinet (which requires a reed to produce tone), the instrument's tones at the beginning of the poem are linked with the words transcribed by the reed pen. However, those who too closely associate the piper's notes with his subsequent words (Gillham 149-53) are incorrect. His notes are not sustained long term—they are transitory and can never be played and heard in exactly the same way again. Written words, on the other hand, last forever. This refers to the consistent authority of the "Word of God."

20 The reed, with its Ovidian mythology relating to spiritual conversion and communication between earth and heaven, is crucial to Blake's storyline. No other type of instrument would have served his purpose. It underpins the poem as a metaphor for the continuity of the human soul in changing circumstances: Blake is saying that while humans are root-

ed in nature, they can, by restraining natural passions, acquire wisdom.

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21 There is more to this poem than has been recognized to date. In particular, the works of Ovid are fundamental to a full appreciation. Ovid's tale about Pan's conversion to a more spiritual way of life offered Blake a perfect basis for developing a tale about a piper who is converted to Christianity. It is a poem that relies on the juxtaposition of Christ and Pan, god figures representing (as Blake writes of *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* in 1794), "the two contrary states of the human soul."

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