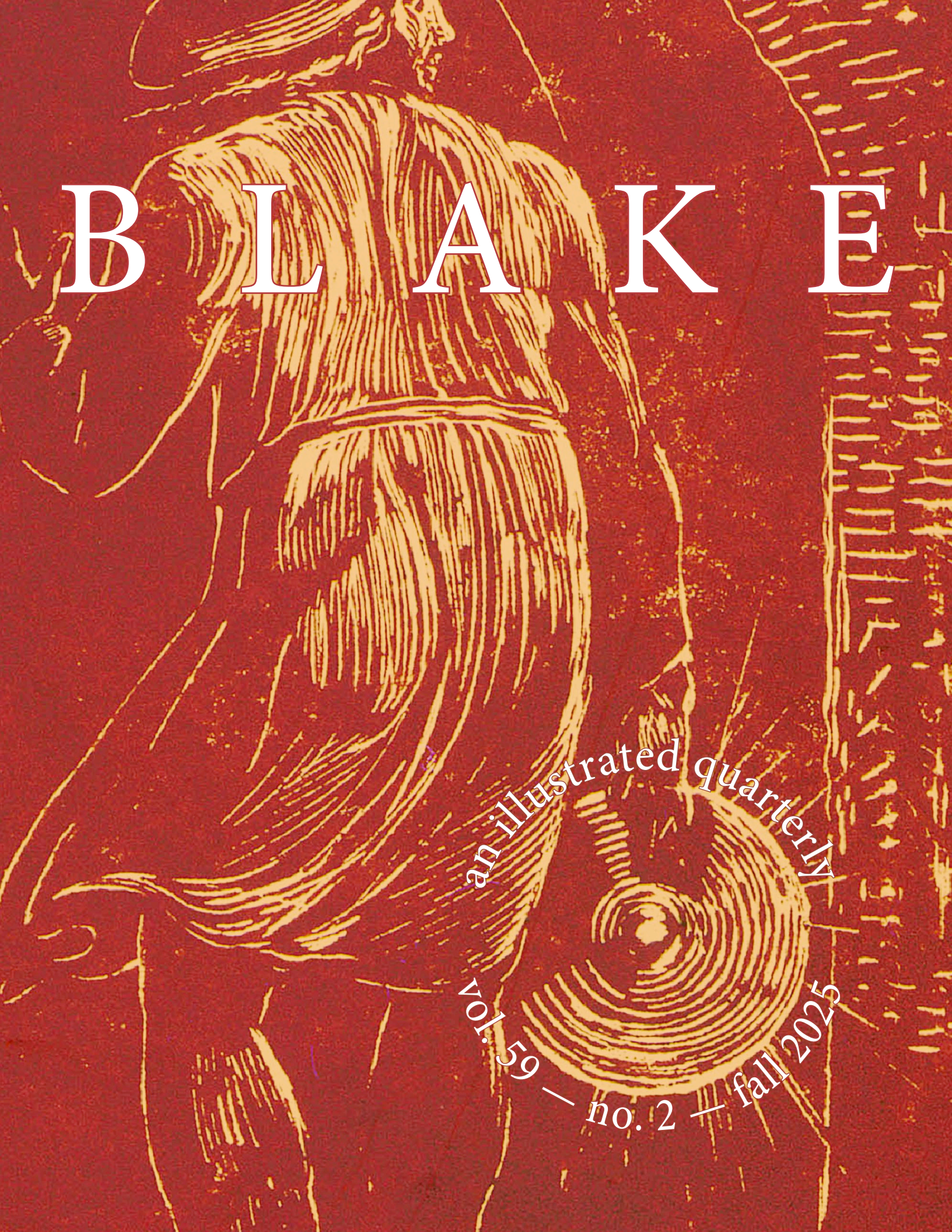

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Cover: Color-modified detail of *Jerusalem* copy I, frontispiece, printed c. 1832. Original held by the Library of Congress, Rare Book and Special Collections Division, Lessing J. Rosenwald Collection, catalogue number 1811. Original photo courtesy of the *William Blake Archive*. Cover design by Dina Garber.

A R T I C L E

Who Are Blake's Eternals?

By Christopher Z. Hobson

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And they conversed together in Visionary forms dramatic …
. . . . . .
Creating Space, Creating Time according to the wonders Divine
Of Human Imagination, throughout all the Three Regions immense
Of Childhood, Manhood & Old Age[;] & the all tremendous unfathomable Non Ens
Of Death was seen in regenerations terrific or complacent …
(*Jerusalem* 98.28, 31-34, E 257-58)

1 THIS essay answers the question in its title by analyzing Blake's differing presentations of Eternal beings from their introduction in *The First Book of Urizen* (1794) through his culminating long poem *Jerusalem* (1804–20).[1] The essay proposes, as well, a meaning for this evolution. It argues that the limitation of Eternal awareness to immortals and the conception of a sharp divide between the eternal and material worlds, in *Urizen*'s dominant narrative, clashed with earlier Blake presentations of similar issues, but that he turned back to his earlier conceptualizations in late work. In doing so, he came to present mortal humans, not only immortals, as able to inhabit Eternity, a possibility all but excluded in *Urizen*.

2 Blake's initial presentation of Eternal beings, usually called the Eternals in *Urizen* and by this and other designations later, is divided. In the dominant narrative within *Urizen*, Eternals appear as immortal and assumedly immaterial but, in a subordinate view, they are mortal and material even as they inhabit Eternity. As it develops, the poem places the Eternals in the divided cosmos already mentioned, a construct that becomes explicit in Blake's works around this time. *The Four Zoas* (1797–1807) then develops *Urizen*'s dominant presentation to its logical conclusion, presenting the Zoas as suprahuman entities who remake the world in an apparently benevolent way. But in time Blake reverses course, arguably regarding *The Four Zoas* as having taken a wrong path, and uses previously marginalized ideas, including the alternative view in *Urizen*, to suggest new relations between Eternal and mortal beings.

3 In *Milton* (1804–21) and *Jerusalem*, he redefines the distinctions between the two levels of his universe and their inhabitants: immortals descend to and labor in the material world, and that world's mortal inhabitants participate in divine gatherings and can access Eternity mentally and imaginatively. These changes make the barrier between the levels of Blake's cosmos more permeable without fully removing it or the distinction between Eternal and material beings. Finally, in the eschaton he envisions at the end of biblical-historical time, narrated in *Jerusalem*'s conclusion, Blake shows Eternity as containing both immortals and mortal, material humans with Eternal capabilities. Based on these changes, the essay proposes a major and a minor arc in his work, in order to determine which ideas were core convictions he returned to throughout life and which proved transient, and ventures an answer to the question it began with.[2]

Contradictory Views and a Divided Cosmos: *The First Book of Urizen*

4 Who, then, are Blake's Eternal beings? Milton O. Percival, in *William Blake's Circle of Destiny* (1938), answers intriguingly, "Who these Eternals are it is impossible to say. Are they those who never fell, those who have fallen, died, and reascended, or those who, though alive in the flesh, participate in immortality by their visionary powers? Or are they all three? To the writer, this last seems the most likely answer to this highly speculative problem" (45-46).[3] Percival's suggestion, in common with his general synchronic approach to Blake, presents these possibilities as existing simultaneously in all Blake's works. In fact, Blake did not begin with a finished conception nor get to one easily.

5 As suggested, *Urizen* is where Blake introduces the Eternals as a specific class of beings, as distinct from other su-

1. Blake's writings are cited from Erdman's *Complete Poetry and Prose*; artwork from the *William Blake Archive*.

2. Several ancillary aspects of Blake's treatment are not discussed in detail here in order to maintain a more focused approach. These include a premundane Eternity, sexual differentiation in Eternity, and how eschatological change may occur. The essay also does not consider possible sources for Blake's ideas of the Eternals.

3. For Percival's brief elaboration, see 142-44.

pernatural actors in earlier works.[4] At the start of chapter 2, the narrator establishes Eternals' immortality and flexile perceptions—a consistent part of all Blake's descriptions of full humanity—together with the prematerial Eternity that Blake assumes in this and subsequent works: "Earth was not: nor globes of attraction / The will of the Immortal expanded / Or contracted his all flexible senses. / Death was not, but eternal life sprung" (3.36-39, E 71). Eternals' immateriality is established by implication as Urizen and then Los acquire bodily form and lose Eternal awareness (chs. 3-6, E 72-80).[5] Finally, the two-level cosmos emerges partly in Urizen's formation of a womb/globe and definitively through the Eternals' creation and closure of the "tent" around the Los-Enitharmon-Orc family, suggested in the (usually) preceding image of several figures viewing a planetary orb from above (5.28-34, E 73; 19.2-20.2, E 78-80; see illus. 1).[6]

6 The alternative view of Eternals becomes explicit only in Urizen's two questions to them in his sole speech, on plate 4: "Why will you die O Eternals? / Why live in unquenchable burnings?" (4.12-13, E 71). This plate is included in three copies (A-C), printed alongside or after others without it; hence, neither version is a definitive revision.[7] If taken seriously, as they should be, Urizen's questions present Eternals as beings who are willing to die, assumedly do die at some point, and are also subject, like other mortals, to physical and psychic "burnings"—passions and emotional turmoil of such kinds as rage, jealousy, adoration, obsession, and sexual hunger.

7 The interpretive record on *Urizen* provides little discussion of this possibility, or of the divided presentation argued here. Northrop Frye and S. Foster Damon, in other contexts, see Eternal beings and groups as including living humans, as parts of Blake's all-encompassing Jesus (Frye 125) or of the Divine Family, "consisting of all the Elect, dead or alive" (Damon 105). Thus, some aspects of the present analysis are already familiar. However, neither applies the cited points to *Urizen*.

8 Most discussions of the Eternals in *Urizen* either pass over Urizen's questions in silence or explain them as a mental or perspectival error, a misapprehension of Eternal life. Such discussions usually treat 3.36-39 as ontologically true in this poem, and many also slide nonexplicitly from the Eternals' relation to death to issues of order and regularity. As an example, a thoughtful analysis by Robert E. Simmons implicitly responds to Urizen's questions in commenting on the "Earth was not …" passage. Noting that the "key components" of Eternal life are "flux," a "creatively sensual existence," and unification of "all men's experience into one man's," Simmons asserts: "Such an existence makes all abstract notions, including that of the shape and motion of the planets, irrelevant. Similarly irrelevant, and thus nonexistent, is the abstract notion of death" (171). Simmons, then, sees Urizen's questions as a misconstrual of Eternal reality. Among current writers, Lucy Cogan goes further than most in observing that Urizen "absurdly" queries Eternals on death since "it is he who has introduced temporality and thus made death possible" (113). This formulation admits death for them, but as a new reality, not as an aspect of basic Eternal existence. In general, reading both questions as Urizenic miscomprehension remains the dominant critical response.[8] An exception is Donald Ault, who accepts that Urizen's attribution of death to the Eternals (4.12) "conflicts with the narrator's explicit exclusion of Death from Eternity" and sees this polarity as basic to the poem's staging of contending viewpoints ("Blake's De-formation" 126; see also 124, 131). This point, for Ault, is the poem's main meaning, and so he does not further explore the idea of the Eternals as mortal.

9 The general approach just summarized has two weaknesses: it fails to adequately explain Urizen's concerns, and it neglects to contextualize his questions in relation to Blake's other works or even *Urizen*'s full text. Simmons's essay exemplifies the first problem. If Urizen asks, "Why will you die O Eternals?," it is, most logically, because he believes they do die, and not because he thinks they find death as an abstraction unimportant. Further, Urizen's preceding statement, "I have sought for a joy without pain, / For a solid without fluctuation" (4.10-11, E 71), would not express only his desire for order and dominance, the usual reading. Rather, behind and helping to explain this desire, it would

4. "Eternals" first appears in *Urizen*. "Eternal" (lowercase or capital) appears earlier in various senses, but not as denoting a class of beings. The Eternals are mentioned once in *Ahania*, in reference to Urizen's division from them in *Urizen* (3.55-56, E 86), and not at all in *The Song of Los* or *The Book of Los*.

5. See Connolly 78 on Blake's nonspecification of the form of eternal bodies.

6. Copy F, *Blake Archive* object 15, same in Erdman's numbering. Copy G has four figures, all others three.

7. Copies A and C were printed in 1794 alongside others lacking plate 4, and copy B separately in 1795 (Viscomi 280). Additionally, Robert N. Essick argues that plate 4 was produced for copy G (1818), but dropped because of misalignment (Essick). Joseph Viscomi believes plate 4 was, however, excluded as overfavorable to Urizen (283-84). It has not been suggested that lines 12-13 were a reason for omission. Since the lines exist in three copies and were intended for a fourth, they are, in any case, a real but not dominant part of Blake's conception.

8. On Urizen's second question, see Andrew M. Cooper's exegesis that Eternals' "kindlings and consummations of … desire" are felt by Urizen "as an agony of ungratified craving" (216). For omission of the questions while referring to the Eternals, see articles/chapters by Choe, Goss, Fletcher, and Rajan.

1. Blake, *The First Book of Urizen* copy F, object 15. 14.8 x 10.9 cm. Houghton Library, Harvard University, Typ 6500.42 F. Image courtesy of the *William Blake Archive*.

reveal dread of discontinuance and extinction and a hope for endless bliss, elements in most views of an afterlife and heaven. In this case, Urizen's error is not one of supposing that flux equals death, but one of imagining that hierarchy, rigidity, and an ordered universe under his control can somehow negate his mortality.

10 Contextualizing the possibility of the Eternals' mortality shows that some features of their description in *Urizen* are ascribed to mortals in earlier and contemporaneous works. Specifically, the "ancient Poets" of *Marriage* (1790) possessed variable perceptions, seeing gods in "whatever their enlarged & numerous senses could percieve," contrary to *Urizen*'s reserving of this faculty for immortals (*Marriage* 11, E 38; *Urizen* 3.37-38, E 71). Similarly, Enitharmon's dream in *Europe* (1794) places the loss of flexible perceptions in a mortal human society, either within the dream's 1,800-year timespan or at the time of the biblical flood (10.10-31, E 63-64).

11 Moreover, within *Urizen* itself, elements of Blake's earlier conceptions appear largely unchanged except for the defining context of 3.36-39. The Preludium's reference to "the primeval Priests assum'd power," if construed to mean power over mortal populations, recalls *Marriage*'s point that abstracting "the mental deities from their objects" was what "began Priesthood" (*Urizen* 2.1, E 70; *Marriage* 11, E 38), and this process of abstraction correlates with Urizen's abstractive reasoning in *Urizen* 4.34-40 (E 72). In the framework of the whole poem, the final segment—from Urizen's awakening to Fuzon's exodus, including the Net of Religion and the loss of perception of Eternity—is consistent with the focus on priesthood from the Preludium to plate 4. It is also compatible, with differences, with *Marriage's* elevation of priesthood over a society of mortals originally having expansive senses.[9] Ideas of mortals with something akin to Eternal understanding, then, and of usurpations of power over them, are not new in Blake. The new element in *Urizen* is the occlusion of such possibilities in the dominant narrative.

12 Placing this occlusion in its own context, *Urizen* stands at a crossroads in Blake's development. Here, an earlier concept in which mortals have elements of Eternal awareness and knowledge of Eternity is revised into one reserving both abilities solely to immortals. The latter idea, dominant in *Urizen*, will become the only one in *The Four Zoas*.

13 The second major issue we must consider, *Urizen*'s two-level cosmos whose levels are closed off from each other, emerges as a plot development within the dominant narrative. The idea of a tiered cosmos, in general, can perhaps be interpreted as a mental or perspectival misconception, a false belief reflecting Eternal humanity's imperfect awareness. (We have already encountered a similar approach in relation to Urizen's questions.) This interpretive tack, however, is too abstract. Blake's narratives are centered within the span of biblical-historical time and treat such divisions as real conditions within—and, we will see, beyond—it. In any case, a differentiation between earthly and higher existence is an explicit or tacit feature of both earlier and later Blake works.

14 A division between "eternal" and "material" worlds, for example, is explicit in the fairy's song in *Europe* (iii.4, 13, E 60, copies H and K). While earlier works do not state such a division directly, some *Innocence* poems imply an upper or spiritual world in references to angels and guardian spirits (1789; for example, "Night," "A Dream"). In these and other early poems, contact between the two spheres is frequent and knowledge of God seems innate ("The Little Boy Found" line 3, E 11; *Thel* [1789] 1.19, 5.1, E 4-5). However, the contrasted *Experience* poems (1794) show a material existence almost devoid of contact with or even awareness of a spiritual or divine realm, or direct awareness of God (for example, "Holy Thursday," "London," "The Chimney Sweeper"). In what must be considered a brilliant and fateful fusion, *Urizen* combines these attributes, presenting a two-level cosmos without contact between mortal and Eternal beings. In effect, *Urizen* theorizes the world of *Experience* as the sole condition of mortal humanity, with no "contrary" state of Innocence and over a timespan from material creation onward.

15 The vehicle for this shift in Blake's ideas is the Eternals' erecting and closing the "tent" hiding the Los-Enitharmon-Orc family in chapters 5-6 (19.2-20.2, E 78-80). This, as well as earlier actions by the Eternals, such as pouring fire on Urizen in chapter 3, has been seen as defensive and inadequate. Andrew Lincoln, for example, in his study of *The Four Zoas,* observes that the Eternals in *Urizen* "do not represent a foreknowing providence," and so share responsibility for "the terrible progress of history" (24-25).[10] Lincoln's larger concern, to which we will return, is Blake's need "to retain in some capacity a supervisory providence" (25). These points, however, do not get to the core issue of relations between the levels in Blake's universe. On this issue, G. A. Rosso notes that a two-level division is basic to the

9. In *Urizen*, Urizen's earthly descendants complete their mortalization and lose Eternal awareness as they become enmeshed in the Net of Religion (25.23-42, E 82-83).

10. For criticisms similar to Lincoln's, see Goss 96, 101, 106-07; Rajan 68-70.

human accession of divine knowledge, which he defines as the fundamental meaning of "apocalypse" ("Redefining," especially pars. 1-5, 34-35). The possibility of this accession is what *Urizen* appears to bar within its own context of primordial-biblical time. In imagery and plot, completing and closing the tent signify both that Eternals turn away from the lower world and that those in that world are deprived of Eternal perception: "'Spread a Tent … / … / That Eternals may no more behold them'"; "No more Los beheld Eternity" (*Urizen* 19.2-4, 20.2, E 78, 80). Those so blocked include Urizen (5.39-41, E 73); the Los-Enitharmon-Orc family; and, ultimately, mortal populations, initially Urizen's human descendants, who "forgot their eternal life" (25.42, E 83). Analytically, the Eternals' action is arbitrary; there is no necessary reason why the advent of human reproduction must close both worlds to each other, and in *Innocence* and *Thel* it does not. Evidently, though, this plot device fits Blake's sense at the time of how Eternal-mortal relations did develop. Closing the tent begins a largely abstentionist role for Eternal beings, starting with their absence from later events in *Urizen* and continuing with modifications in *The Four Zoas*, that leaves non-Eternal immortals and mortal humanity to shift for themselves.

16 Both sides of this development are momentous. For mortals, inability to access or view Eternity will come to mean, for Blake, inability to save themselves. In *The Four Zoas*, this inability will produce the need for a supernal agency to save them through its own acts. For those immortals no longer in contact with Eternity (Urizen and Los in *Urizen*, the Zoas later), the Eternals' continuing, though modified, abstention will mean that the Zoas—formally, collective aspects of "the Human Brain," yet functioning poetically as agents over and above humanity—act as substitutes for Eternal beings in their relations with humanity, and do so without full Eternal awareness.

Intensifying and Offsetting the Division: *The Four Zoas*

17 In *The Four Zoas*, Blake intensifies but offsets *Urizen*'s account of separation between mortal and immortal beings. The Zoas emerge in this poem as supernal actors of potentially overbearing power who, in the end, purge and remold a passive human population. This role becomes a predominant theme in the poem. Its logic seems clear: if mortal humanity is cut off from transcendent or Eternal understanding, human renovation can occur only through some suprahuman entity. Countering this focus somewhat, Blake also portrays Eternal beings, no longer fully absent from mundane affairs, acting at certain junctures as a "supervisory providence" (Lincoln 25), though in limited ways. Finally, in one scene, Blake implies new possible relations between Eternal and mortal beings that point to his future work.

18 Dramatically, the Zoas function largely on a suprahuman level, intermediate between Eternal beings and mortal humanity. In doing so, they become the poem's main driving force, immortal, immensely powerful, and yet, with the partial exception of Los and Enitharmon, acting without Eternal understanding or contact with Eternal entities.[11] The two-level dualism becomes most pronounced in Night 9, examined briefly here as the endpoint of the poem's treatment of the Zoas' development. An interpretive crux in study of the poem, Night 9 has been read variously as an intentionally disturbing but largely positive portrayal of human reformation (Wilkie and Johnson; Lincoln); as a culpable endorsement of elite terror (Aers); as enacting "counter-apocalyptic resistances" (Ault, *Narrative*); as a failed attempt to transcend the physical body (Otto); and in other ways.[12] Its political-cultural dimensions are seen here as linked to the Night's role as a major, though later abandoned, development in Blake's view of the relation between immortal and mortal beings.

19 In structure, following an introduction covering some major events of the Night in overview,[13] Night 9 presents a series of segments shifting from actions by mortals to those by Zoas done to mortals, initially in distinct episodes but later in two-level actions, and marked by contrasting "above" and "below" images that are first implied and later explicit.[14] These elements form a double pattern of imagery and action.

20 The Night's above/below imagery begins at the juncture between the self-undertaken renovations of the Eternal Man and Urizen and the following explosion of the universe, as Urizen asks the Eternal Man, "Where shall we take our stand … / Or where are human feet for Lo our eyes are in the heavens" (122.24-25, E 391).[15] The two parts of Urizen's question represent, topologically and sequentially, the remaining action of Night 9. After the universe explodes (122.26, E 392), the implied earthly locale of the feet ap-

11. The dividing line between levels is one of many points in his schema that Blake never defines precisely. In practice, it runs between mortal humans and both Zoas and Eternal beings in regard to immortality, but, with regard to awareness of Eternity and the divine, between Eternals and both Zoas and mortals.

12. See Wilkie and Johnson 228-37, especially 231-32 on the vintage; Lincoln 214-19 on the vintage; Aers 253-70; Ault, *Narrative* 347-465; Otto ch. 12, especially 331-35 on the vintage and 337-39 on the conclusion.

13. 117-119.23, E 386-88. Lincoln characterizes this section, added on new pages and over the erased original Night heading, as an "overture or 'Preludium' which summarizes some of the central issues of the Night" (193).

14. Ault first noted the "above/below" figuration; see *Narrative* 414, 430, 431, 434-35, 437-39 for analyses.

15. Erdman suggests two possible emendations (E 844). Neither changes the implied location of the feet.

pears, as dead and living mortals take violent revenge against past and present tyrants, priests, merchants, warriors, and judges, ending as the prisoner's foot "dashd" his father's judge (123.32, E 393). These pages are the only part of the Night's main action in which mortals act on their own. The next pages move back to action by Zoas: Urizen's sons plow on the earth (124.8 and following, E 393); Urizen sows "immortal souls" that "fall like stars / Into their own appointed places" (125.4-7, E 394). Finally, on ground level, souls of "naked warriors" and "Kings & Princes" fall on or are driven upon seashores, rocks, and "unproducing sands," as "flames of Orc" and "the Trump of Tharmas" reenact the prior human uprising as a Zoic purification (125.8-13, E 394).

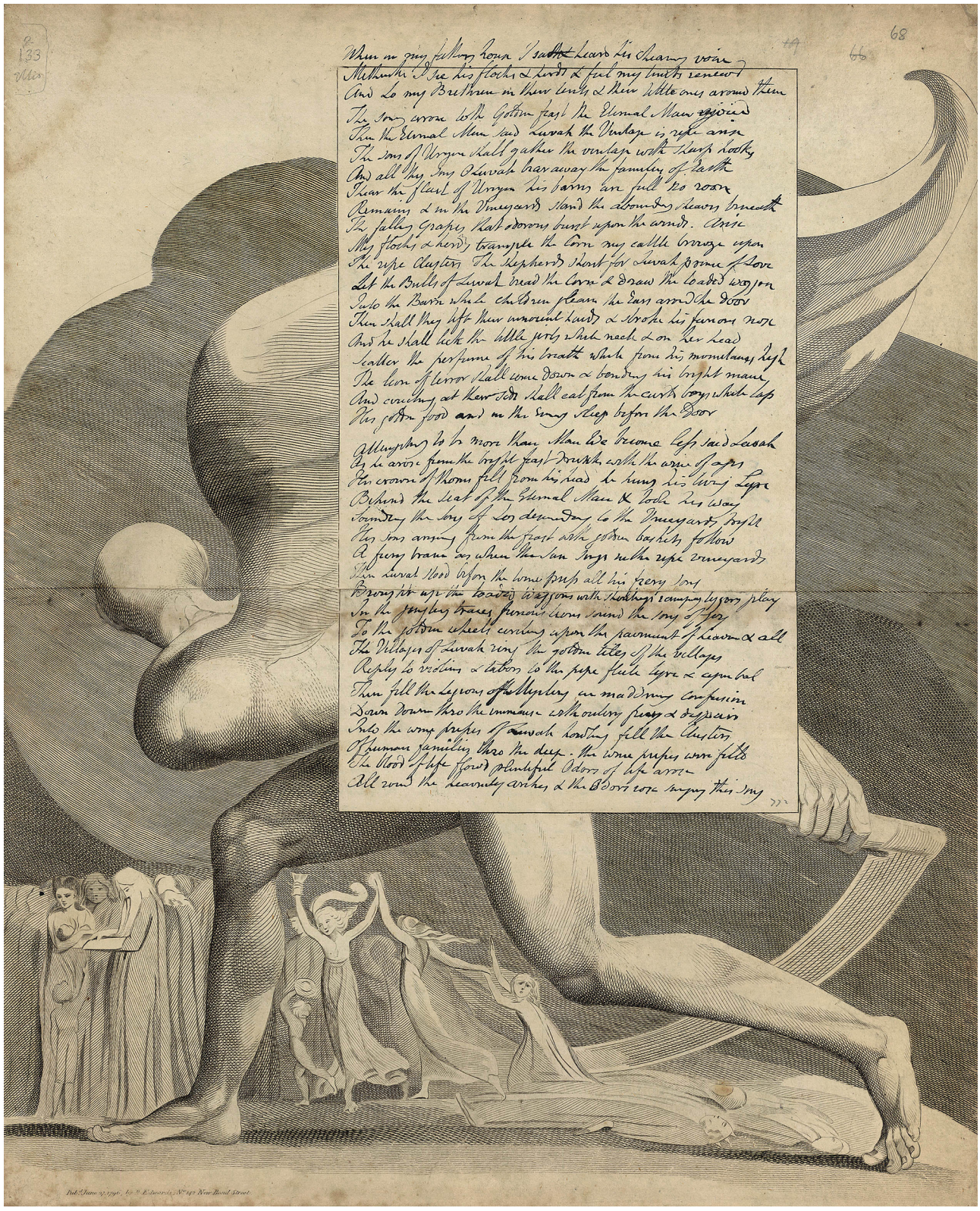
21 Above/below imagery fuses with active/passive action in the Night's harvest-vintage sections. As harvest commences, Luvah sits "*Above* in the bright heavens in peace" as "the Spirits of Men *beneath* / Cried out *to be deliverd*" (131.37-38, E 400); at the threshing, Urizen "*rose*" and the sound of his flail is "*heard* terrible by all *beneath* the heavens" (133.34-35, E 402). And at the vintage, "Thro all the golden rooms / *Heaven* rang with winged Exultation All *beneath* howld loud" (137.14-15, E 405; all emphases added). Similar imagery appears visually on page 135 (see illus. 2), a *Night Thoughts* design originally signifying Time that shows a huge figure with a scythe striding before cowering mortals, some already dead. Here, the image may refer to the scything by Urizen's sons (page 132), or may anticipate violence to come (Otto 327).

22 Following these episodes, topological imagery and active/passive plot events become tacit in the closing episode of Urthona's milling and baking. We read that "Los who is Urthona rose in all his regenerate power"; that "Terrible [was] the distress / Of all the Nations of Earth ground in the Mills of Urthona"; and that, as the bread bakes (inferably on earth), those "bound to sullen contemplations in the night / … turn on beds of sorrow" and then "they rise they write the bitter words / Of Stern Philosophy & knead the bread of knowledge …" (137.34, 138.2-3, 138.12-15, E 405-06). If turning, rising, and writing indicate counteractivity and, possibly, the bread of knowledge represents an opposing form of Urthona's "Bread of Ages" (138.17, E 406), these are responses of a small fraction of earth's people. Earlier, following the vintage, the narrator stated that once the "Lees" were discarded (and how many human souls were those?), "the Human Wine stood wondering in all their delightful Expanses" (137.23, 32, E 405). About the great majority of human souls who are ground and baked in the bread episode, we learn nothing at all.

23 What to make of such a narration? In earlier work, the present writer related Night 9 historically to events during the French Revolution, with the extended torture episode of the wine presses representing and perhaps rationalizing the 1793–94 Terror (135.34-137.4, E 404-05; *Chained Boy* 200-05). Focusing differently, David Aers critiques Night 9 as justifying elite dictatorship based on an ahistorical denial of lower-class capacity for self-liberation (253-70). In either case, or both, the "Human Grapes" crushed in the vintage (136.21, E 404) and the grain ground in Urthona's mills represent whole human populations. During Urizen's sowing (above), the warriors, kings, and princes fell or were driven to barren land where they would not grow; it is those who lived under their rule who are planted and ultimately harvested, implying the need for purification before they can be fully human. They are the ones—shopkeepers, farmers, farm laborers, housewives, scullery maids, draymen, miners, country parsons, chimney sweepers, beggars, thieves—who, living in a Satanic system, have tried to get by, get a little ahead, and leave something to those they love. Their poetic fate has been determined by Blake's treatment of the Zoas as the actuating force in human restoration. Much later, he will draw up a balance sheet on this portrayal.

24 *The Four Zoas* only partly tempers this presentation in its main treatments of Eternal beings and, under various designations, Jesus as savior. Eternal beings act in several parts of the work. At the Council of God in Night 1, consisting of "those in Great Eternity," the Family Divine designates the Seven Eyes of God (both first introduced here). The Council meets again in Night 4, when the Saviour finds (that is, establishes) the limits of Opacity and Contraction, and at the start of Night 8, to "fix" the limit of Contraction, allowing the fallen Man to stir. Later in Night 8, "the Sons of Eden" or "they in Eternity" (before/after speech designations) sing their recognition of the Lamb in Jerusalem's bosom, and "those in Eden" or "the Eternals" nominate the specific forms of God assumedly constituting the "Eyes" (not so named here).[16] These and other elements, many introduced in what Lincoln calls the "major revisions," add what he terms "A Christian Vision" to the poem (223). Their significance is enhanced by Lamb imagery that becomes prominent in Nights 7a and 8, and by artwork such as Night 8's large images of Jesus on the final three pages (objects 114-16, *Blake Archive*). These Eternal or divine ap-

16. 21.1-21 [19].11, E 310-12; 55.10-56.27, E 337-38; 99.1-14, E 371-72; 104.5-18, incorporating 113.1-37, E 376-77; 107 [115].42-50, E 381 (also discussed below). The composition of the Family Divine, mentioned only here in *The Four Zoas*, is not specified. It seems cognate with "those in Great Eternity" meeting as the Council and beholding "As One Man all the Universal family" (21.1, 4, E 310-11). Hence, it would include only Eternal beings; despite Damon's general suggestion that the Family includes mortals, there is no text indication of their presence.



2. Blake, *The Four Zoas*, object 135. 40.5 cm. x 32.8 cm. British Library Collection, Add MS 39764. Image courtesy of the *William Blake Archive*.

pearances are relatively ineffective, however, in imparting such a Christian vision to the Zoas themselves. Their main plot impact is on Los and Enitharmon (Nights 4, 7a extension, and 8); they do not similarly affect the other Zoas, and Los and Enitharmon themselves are absent from the Zoas' main actions in Night 9. The "major revisions," in fact, largely end on page 123, after the first third of Night 9.[17] Equally, these acts are limited in scope. They take place within Eternal beings' upper tier in Blake's cosmos, as indicated at the end of the Night 1 conclave, when the Family Divine draws "up the Universal tent / … / Till the time of the End," and in the song by the Sons of Eden/they in Eternity in Night 8, who "look down into Ulro" from Eden, without going there (21 [19].7-9, E 312; 113.22, E 377). Blake has not yet taken the steps of providing for Eternal beings' descent to the material world or mortal beings' access to Eternity.

25 Blake suggests further possibilities in one of three passages concerning the Eternals under that name. The earliest, already mentioned, specifies the individual "Eyes" of God. In the third, in Night 9, the Eternals rise "to labour at the Vintage / Beneath," confirming their complicity in the Zoas' vintage actions as well as their position above humanity (133.31-32, E 402). Between these, however, in an appearance at the harvest feast, the Eternals grapple with issues of Eternal status and their relation to mortals in ways that imply shifts in Blake's view of both.

26 These emerge when, shocked at Enion's presence at the feast, "Many Eternal Men," seeing "[t]he female form now separate," weep "to see their shadows" and say, "This is the Generative world" (133.5-9, E 401). The immediate focus, then, is on sexual division and generation, and the response, by "One of the Eternals," serves to reconcile Eternals to the presence of both in Eternity. Its relevance to the present analysis lies in its implications for Eternals' responsibilities and for correspondences between Eternal and mortal existence. The speaker asserts that

> inclosd around
> In walls of Gold we cast him [Man] like a Seed into the Earth
> Till times & spaces have passd over him duly every morn
> We visit him covering with a Veil the immortal seed
> With windows from the inclement sky we cover him & with walls
> And hearths protect the Selfish terror till divided all
> In families we see our shadows born. & thence we know
> That Man subsists by Brotherhood & Universal Love
> We fall on one anothers necks more closely we embrace
> Not for ourselves but for the Eternal family we live
> Man liveth not by Self alone but in his brothers face
> (133.15-25, E 401-02)

27 The speech enlarges Eternal responsibility for mortal life to include providing care and protection to mortals—the veil, windows, walls, and hearths of lines 18-20. Equally new is the passage's implied correspondence between Eternal and mortal existence. The crucial words here are "families"/"family" (lines 21, 24) and "thence" (line 21). The echo of "families" in "the Eternal family" links human families with the Eternal one; the similar repetition of the Eternal men's "shadows" as part of the response (lines 8, 21) reinforces the link. "[T]hence" connects these points to the broad statement that follows, "Man subsists by Brotherhood & Universal Love"—probably using "Man" for mortal and Eternal beings jointly. The implication is that Eternals know this truth both from their own work ("duly every morn / We visit him") and from the growth of human families, who embody these qualities, if imperfectly.[18]

28 Finally, beyond its immediate purpose and meaning, the speaker's linkage of "families" with "the Eternal family" implies a modified view of mortal existence. In an obvious but crucial way, generation gives families and communities a literal continuity, a kind of immortality outlasting individual death. Additionally, the possibilities of selfless conduct within families and communities, though limited and crosscut by negatives, provide partial and provisional access to the divine, a way "Man" can live "not by Self alone but in his brothers face" (line 25). All these implied changes in Blake's view of Eternals and mortals, though not realized in plot action in *The Four Zoas*, play out in the two poems that follow.

Descent and Linkage: *Milton* and *Jerusalem*

29 In *Milton* and *Jerusalem*, Blake revises his presentation of Eternal beings and their relations with mortal humanity in two pivotal ways. First, he expands Eternal beings' duties to require involvement with and care for mortals. (He also broadens his terms, referring to "Eternals" or an individual "Eternal" only twice in each poem.)[19] In particular, to discharge their mission, Eternal beings must descend from Eden to labor in the material world, creating a link between these levels in Blake's cosmos. Simultaneously, Blake opens the membership of divine groupings so that mortals can be

17. See Lincoln 222 for a list of "major revisions"; 223-79 for discussion.

18. See Otto 325-26 for a reading contrasting the human and Eternal families.

19. See *Milton* 11 [12].16 and 27, E 105 (repeated speech attribution), and 20 [22].43, E 114. In *Jerusalem*, see Albion's brief reference, 23.18, E 168, and Eternals' mockery of the Zoas, 32 [36].43, E 179, discussed below. There are also a few ambiguous uses of "Eternal" as an adjective.

part of them, and he proposes that mortals may mentally and imaginatively access Eternity. With these revisions in action and imagery, discussed in this and the following section, Blake maintains his core conception of a two-level universe, but qualitatively redefines the relation between the levels and the permeability of the divide between them.

30 The best context for understanding these changes is Blake's identification, in *Milton* and *Jerusalem*, with evangelical and pietistic Christianity, based on and reinforcing his increasing sense of humanity's sinfulness, imperfection, and inability to save itself without divine contact. These affinities and concerns are emphasized in doctrinal expositions in *Jerusalem*, such as the apothegm "[H]e who waits to be righteous before he enters into the Saviours kingdom, the Divine Body; will never enter there" (3, prose, E 145) and the preface to chapter 3, and in lyric and dramatic passages in both poems, including references to prominent figures in both traditions.[20]

31 Blake's expanding the responsibility of Eternal beings can be illustrated in a preliminary way through his successive accounts of selecting the "Seven Eyes of God." In *The Four Zoas*, they are chosen by the "Family Divine," and possess an apparently overseeing function as the "Seven lamps of the Almighty" (21 [19].7, 10, E 312). In *Milton*'s Bard's Song, they are appointed by the "Great Solemn Assembly," consisting of "all Eden," which has been "called down" by Palamabron and has "descended into Palamabrons tent" (8.46, 9.1, E 102), an instance of the descent idea. The Assembly settles disputes between Rintrah and Palamabron and successively appoints the Eyes, but does not otherwise engage long term in the material world (9.9-10, E 103; 13 [14].12-29, E 107). In *Jerusalem*, finally, the focus is on descent and service; the Eyes are not the main point in the episode in which they are chosen.

32 This episode chiefly concerns involvement in or abstention from the material world. It recounts an "Assembly" formed among "those who disregard all Mortal Things," when, observing events in the material world, "Many … / … said, let us go down / And see these changes!" They are opposed by others asking, "[W]hat have we to do with the Dead?"—one of several examples of Eternal beings urging abstention in earthly matters, and ultimately a minority position (55.1, 3-6, E 204). As discussion proceeds, at first "far the greatest number" are "about to make a Separation," and they designate both the Seven Eyes and an unnamed "Eighth" (55.30-33, E 205). The "Separation" would, most logically, be between themselves and the mortal realm, leaving the Eyes to watch over the latter. If so, the separation is aborted. The narrator relates that "first they" (this majority) decide that whether they "sit down within / The plowed furrow, listning to the weeping clods" or rise "Upon the chariots of the morning," they remain "One Family! One Man blessed for ever" (lines 34-46), and then that "many" say:

> It is better to prevent error, than to forgive the criminal:
> Labour well the Minute Particulars, attend to the Little-ones:
> And those who are in misery cannot remain so long
> If we do but our duty: labour well the teeming Earth.
> (55.50-53, E 205)

Thus, a major portion of those "who disregard all Mortal Things"—a group whose self-description as "One Family! One Man blessed for ever" bespeaks Eternal status (line 46)—accept, against their first inclination, a "duty" to involve themselves in mortal things ("labour well the teeming Earth"). This acceptance is the significant result of the Assembly. No more is heard of the Eyes; this is the only reference to them in *Jerusalem*.

33 The full meaning of descent, including its implications for mortal humans, can best be approached through *Milton*'s plot thread involving Ololon, a plural, sexually mixed population living by the river of that name in Eden.[21] Rosso calls Ololon's descent "arguably the most significant event in the poem" ("Redefining" par. 41). Their descent is, of course, paralleled in *Milton* by those of Los and Milton; and, in *Jerusalem*, Los's laboring in earthly locales extends through the whole work. Yet these plot threads do not share the full range of meaning seen in Ololon's descent, for immortals' relationship to mortals and for mortals themselves.

34 Unlike earlier bodies of Eternals, such as the Council of God in *The Four Zoas* and the Great Solemn Assembly in *Milton*, Ololon does not set "limits" or act as arbiter or judge, but descends in atonement and sacrifice—that is, in self-annihilation. They leave their riverine dwelling place to right a wrong—their having driven Milton into Ulro—and to give themselves for others. Further, they go not to an intermediate locale, but to the depths of human existence. First purposing to descend to "give / Ourselves to death in

20. Besides *Jerusalem* 3, see *Jerusalem* 52, prose, on sin, the need for religion, and monks and Methodists as "[w]e," and verse, "I saw a Monk of Charlemaine" (E 200-02). On individuals, see *Milton* 22 [24].55, 61 (E 118) on Whitefield and Wesley; *Jerusalem* 52, prose, on Whitefield; *Jerusalem* 72.50-51 (E 227) on Fenelon, Guion, Teresa, Whitefield, and Hervey. For discussion, see this writer's "Blake, Methodism, and 'Christian Perfection.'"

21. Eugenie Freed, Mary Lynn Johnson, and others recognize Ololon's initially plural character. Few note their being sexually mixed, but see Elfenbein (for example, 16, 153, 166) and Rosso, *Religion* 141-56.

Ulro among the Transgressors," they are advised by the Divine Family to halt in Beulah: "Watch over this World, and with your brooding wings, / Renew it to Eternal Life," an allusion to *Paradise Lost* 1.20-21 (*Milton* 21 [23].45-46, 55-56, E 116.) Ololon, however, rejects this passive stance. As the account continues in book 2, they "[seek] the Or-Ulro & its fiery Gates," described as the most "dreadful" among four sub-Edenic "States of Humanity in its Repose" (34 [38].19, 13, 8, E 134).[22] There, "before the Gates of the Dead / … Ololon looked down into the Heavens of Ulro in fear" (lines 48-49), seeing, amid much else, that

> [l]oud roll the Weights & Spindles over the whole Earth
> let down
> On all sides round to the Four Quarters of the World,
> eastward on
> Europe to Euphrates & Hindu, to Nile & back in Clouds
> Of Death across the Atlantic to America North & South
> (35 [39].14-17, E 135)

Or-Ulro, then, represents evils spread across Blake's contemporary society. Ololon's descent there to prostrate themselves before the "Starry Eight" and to ask "with tears forgiveness / Confessing their crime with humiliation and sorrow" (35 [39].29-33, E 135) is an act of moral heroism paralleling Milton's own, perhaps more significant as indicating the new role of Eternal beings giving themselves in sacrifice in mortal realms.

35 The effects of their action are equally important. Ololon's descent has opened "a wide road … to Eternity," for "mighty were the multitudes of Ololon, vast the extent / Of their great sway, reaching from Ulro to Eternity" (35 [39].35-38, E 135). This last phrase implies more than a "road" for those specifically mentioned (Los and Enitharmon). Ololon's "sway" over this whole span suggests a road for all under the "Heavens of Ulro," including their extent "eastward on / Europe to Euphrates & Hindu, to Nile & back … / … to America North & South." While it is not said that these others can take the "road," neither is it stated that mortals cannot perceive or participate in Eternity while in their mortal bodies.[23]

22. The other three states are Beulah, Alla, and Al-Ulro (lines 9-12, E 134). Previously, Beulah was called the place of "Rest" or "repose" (30 [33].14, 31 [34].7, E 129-30). Provision of four sub-Edenic states with this function, and of a two-level Ulro, is unique to this passage and seems done to emphasize the extremity of Ololon's descent. Alla substitutes for Generation, the usual state below Beulah, and is mentioned also in *Jerusalem* 89.58, E 249; Al-Ulro and Or-Ulro are not named elsewhere.

23. As, in reverse, it is stated that Ololon cannot view Golgonooza while in immortal form (35 [39].18-25, E 135).

36 A further indication that mortals may travel the "road" opened by Ololon lies in the evocative passage on the Lark and Wild Thyme that immediately follows (35 [39].42-36 [40].12, E 136). Narratively describing Ololon's point of transition into the material world, the passage also defines at least one form of mortal access to Eternity. Its details are well known: the Wild Thyme as "Los's Messenger to Eden," the Lark's nest "at the Gate of Los," the Lark as Los's "Messenger" (35 [39].54, 66, 67). The symbolic values of thyme and lark are established earlier: the Mundane Shell "finishes where the lark mounts," the Lark's song reechoes "against the lovely blue & shining heavenly Shell," and each flower, including the Wild Thyme, is a "Center" within which "Eternity expands."[24] But we miss the passage's full meaning if we read its nature imagery only in these symbolic terms. Rather, if the description is "concerned with each day, and not a particular day of Blake's experience," as Harold Bloom's commentary rightly emphasizes (E 925), so also it does not concern only Los's or Blake's access to Eternity, but anyone's. The ascending lark's song or the smell of the thyme provides a kind of ascent to heaven, or a glimpse of a different life on earth—which is what Blake's Eternity, in the end, means—and this moment is available for ordinary untutored children, men, and women, not only for bards and prophets. *Milton* does not further explore the ideas of a double road, from Eden to Or-Ulro and Ulro to Eden, but Blake returns to the idea, using different narrative devices and imagery, in *Jerusalem*.

Membership and Access: *Jerusalem*

37 In *Jerusalem*, Blake introduces two further changes not considered so far. First, he broadens his descriptions of Eternal assemblies such that, while mortals' actual presence in Eternity remains unclear, it becomes impossible to deny their presence in these gatherings, and so of death in them. Second, he makes clear that mortals may intellectually and imaginatively enter the Eternal world. Together, these changes amplify and develop the possibilities suggested by the "wide road" image in *Milton*.

38 Blake establishes both points in an extended series of episodes in chapter 2, beginning with a debate among Eternals and ending with his descriptions, as author, of the four chief cathedral cities and, as narrator, of the twenty-four cities associated with them (32 [36].43-36 [40].57, E 179-83). These episodes lead from an assertion of the Eternals' aloof existence to a recognition of humans as part of the Divine Family and as conscious of the Eternal realm.

24. See 17 [19].27, E 111; 31 [34].33, 48, 51, E 130-31.

39 The section opens with a dispute among Eternal beings, essentially on judgment versus mercy. As with the dispute at *The Four Zoas*'s harvest feast, which it recalls, the immediate topic is gender among the Zoas but the underlying issue is rejection or acceptance of mortal humans and their lives as lived in generation. "[M]any of the Eternal Ones," we are told, satirize the "Zoa's of Albion" for deferring to their "Daughters," who "are Vegetable only fit for burning." The terms, of course, apply to mortal humans as well as to the Zoas. In response, "those in Great Eternity who contemplate on Death / Said thus. What seems to Be: Is: To those to whom / It seems to Be," producing torments and "Eternal Death," but "the Divine Mercy / Steps beyond and Redeems Man in the Body of Jesus Amen" (32 [36].43-55, E 179). Beyond the overt issue of acceptance or rejection of dismissive judgment, the salient point is that these Eternals accept death and sexuality, the defining qualities of mortal human life, as no bar to "the Divine Mercy," although still remaining aloof themselves from mortal life.

40 The argument now takes a turn, moving from mercy to active sympathy and engagement. "One" of the Divine Family, soon revealed as Los, first berates Albion because he "forbid[s] with Laws / Our Emanations" (probably referring to Albion's imposition of Moral Law), but "when he saw blue death in Albions feet, / Again he join'd the Divine Body, following merciful; / While Albion fled more indignant! revengeful" (33 [37].1-12, E 179). The significant points are that Los is counted as one of the "Divine Family" or "Divine Body," though he is gendered as well as divided from his Spectre, and that he and the Divine Family do not extend mercy but follow Albion to help and appeal to him. The accompanying images of Albion in the Saviour's arms and the Spectre hovering over Jerusalem (see illus. 3) do not show the plate's events directly but, rather, the consequences for the whole poem of the choice between aloofness and care.[25]

41 The ensuing evocation of the Saviour or Divine Family who attend Albion (34 [38].10-13, E 179-80) states that he/they display "Eternal Vision! the Divine Similitude! / In loves and tears of brothers, sisters, sons, fathers, and friends" (lines 11-12). Those mentioned can with difficulty be imagined as unembodied immortals, but more naturally (in both senses) as living humans, a point underlined by the similarity of this passage to the comparable list of those who call to Albion at the poem's start (4.11-12, E 146). If those loves and tears are expressions of the Divine Similitude ("*In* loves and tears …"; emphasis added), then so too are those who show them, at least in this state of exalted empathy, and Blake is saying that humans in their mortal, "Vegetable" forms, scorned by "many of the Eternal Ones," are among those in this family, parts of Blake's divine but also immanent Jesus. This is the person/group who appeal to Albion as "One Man all the Universal Family" (34 [38]. 19, E 180).

42 Blake now further expands his account of mortal participation in the Divine Family. Appearing as author, he testifies to his own "Vision of God upon my pleasant valleys": "I behold London; a Human awful wonder of God! / He says: Return, Albion, return! I give myself for thee" (34 [38].28-30, E 180). London's ensuing self-defining description—"My streets are my, Ideas of Imagination," "my Inhabitants; Affections, / The children of my thoughts, walking within my blood-vessels" (34 [38].31, 33-34, E 180)—makes clear that London's components are the ideas and affections of mortal human individuals, families, and groups. ("[S]treets" and, by parallelism, "Inhabitants" are literal.) These human thoughts and emotions are equivalent to the "loves and tears" of families and friends presented as the Saviour or Divine Family, and, therefore, London as such, in this state of awareness, is part of that family. London's speech, Blake states, still in his own voice, is the meaning of three decades of his work:

> So spoke London, immortal Guardian! I heard in Lambeths shades:
> In Felpham I heard and saw the Visions of Albion
> I write in South Molton Street, what I both see and hear
> In regions of Humanity, in Londons opening streets.
> (34 [38].40-43, E 180)

43 Blake's descriptions of London's companion cities, starting with the remaining chief cities, continue his emphasis on their mortal inhabitants. Alongside London stand "Canterbury! venerable parent of men," "York, crown'd with loving kindness," and "Edinburgh, cloth'd / With fortitude" and marked by those "Who give themselves, in Golgotha, Victims to Justice"—most likely, as David Erdman argues, an allusion to the 1793–94 treason trials there (lines 45, 51-52, 54, E 180-81; Erdman, *Prophet* 476). Each phrase suggests not simply the city as spiritual entity, but its relation to its human occupants and their activities. Blake's explanatory description, "for Cities / Are Men, fathers of multitudes" (lines 46-47, E 180), makes clear that the cities' membership in the Divine Family includes their mortal occupants. Their participation, as the example of Edinburgh implies, may be as courageous and terrifying as Ololon's descent from Eden to Or-Ulro, and it is undertaken in their mortal bodies.

44 Finally, Blake underlines the human component of the Divine Family with the introduction of the remaining twenty-four cathedral cities, who act sometimes with and some-

25. On cultural contexts and those in *Jerusalem*, see the Paley edition of *Jerusalem* (188).

3. Blake, *Jerusalem* copy E, object 37. 22.6 x 16.3 cm. Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection, B1992.8.1(37). Image courtesy of the *William Blake Archive*.

times separately from the four chief cities, in a major episode starting on plate 36 [40]:

> And these the Twenty-four in whom the Divine Family
> Appear'd; and they were One in Him. A Human Vision!
> Human Divine, Jesus the Saviour, blessed for ever and
> ever. (36 [40].45-47, E 182)

As part of the Divine Family and of Blake's composite Jesus, the twenty-four are spiritual entities. Yet Blake's wording leaves unclear whether the Divine Family is manifested "in" (as a part or aspect of) the cities as entities, "in" (within) them in those who live there, or both. The ambiguity is also inherent in the earlier presentation of London and its sister cities ("my Inhabitants; Affections, / The children of my thoughts, walking within my blood-vessels"), and so both meanings seem valid. Almost immediately, in fact, the example of Winchester, the second named among the twenty-four, indicates that Zoic figures can act as members of the Divine Family when incarnate as mortal, sexual bodies. As Winchester stands "devoting himself for Albion," his "Emanations / Submi[t] to be call'd Enitharmons daughters, and be born / In vegetable mould: created by the Hammer and Loom / In Bowlahoola & Allamanda where the Dead wail" (36 [40].53, 54-57, E 182-83). Winchester's emanations, then, participate in the Family in mortal, sexual form. Overall, descriptions of the Family consistently imply that mortals form part of it.

45 Besides establishing that mortals may act within divine assemblies, Blake makes clear their awareness of and participation in Eternity. The living persons who act as part of the Saviour/Divine Family's attendance on and appeal to Albion (34 [38], above) share in the Family's "Eternal Vision" and its "contracting" and "expanding" senses (lines 11, 17-19, E 180). Here, as always for Blake, such "infinite" senses (line 17) are a marker of full, or Eternal, humanity. Further, in the incarnation of Winchester's Emanations in "vegetable" form, it is not suggested that, having become mortal and sexual, they "No more … beheld Eternity" or "forgot their eternal life," as *Urizen* stipulated for Los when sexually divided and for Urizen's mortal descendants (20.2, 25.42, E 80, 83). Most comprehensively, Blake's description of the four chief cities asserts that within them, "In every bosom a Universe expands, as wings / Let down at will around, and call'd the Universal Tent" (34 [38].49-50, E 180). As "every bosom" shows, Blake means not simply the spiritual cities, but the individuals, families, and groups within them. The use of "Tent" reverses prior accounts of the tent as excluding non-Eternals (*Urizen* chs. 5-6, *The Four Zoas* Night 1). Moreover, the key description, "In every bosom a Universe expands," echoes an earlier one of Los's sons and daughters as having qualities like those of Eternal beings, including that "Every one [is] a translucent Wonder: a Universe within, / Increasing inwards" (14.17-18, E 158). In both cases, the inner "Universe" bespeaks Eternal awareness—within themselves, they perceive everything, which is what Eternal perception sees.[26] All who take part in the Saviour/Divine Family, then, can view Eternity. Blake thus has opened his two-level cosmos to contact and communication in both directions—from the Eternal to the mortal world and from that to the Eternal. Logically, it would seem, this is the furthest the relationship can develop prior to an eschatological change to a new reality; that is, until this event, the great majority of earth's people do not develop Eternal awareness, and those who do are a minority.

Eternity: *Jerusalem*

46 At the end of *Jerusalem*, Blake does present such a change, and further shows the renovated, Eternal humanity he imagines as brought into being by it. This is the only place, other than *Urizen* 3.36-39, where he describes the defining life conditions of Eternity. Here, he modifies that earlier description, maintaining one of its terms, flexible senses; jettisoning a second, the limitation of Eternal beings to an immaterial world; and correcting and adding to the third, "Death was not, but eternal life sprung" (*Urizen* 3.39).

47 The overview of Eternal existence in *Jerusalem*'s final text plates (98-99) is brief but comprehensive, covering life, death, and afterlife, and it reaches from earth to interplanetary space (99.3), yet it is most focused on the eschatological new earth. We see this, first, in the prominence, for those who "convers[e] together in Visionary forms dramatic," of "Creating Space, Creating Time"—preeminently the domains of materiality and mortal life. We see it also in the humanization of the natural world and the abolition of human tyranny and exploitation, forming a mutualist human society without government of any kind (98.28, 31, 42-44, 46-54, E 257-58). We see this earthly focus, finally, in Blake's picture of Eternal life. This reading proposes that, in this eschatological existence, those Blake sees as Eternals include both mortal and immortal beings. The former—infinite and flexible in perception and possessing Eternal powers—live, age, die, and are reborn. After death and regeneration, they assumedly are immortal and immaterial, alongside other such Eternals. About the latter, less is said. Blake certainly does not suggest that they cease to exist, nor that they become incarnate or are regenerated in material form (reincarnated), yet they may participate imaginatively in the life-death-regeneration sequence just mentioned,

26. While not calling the sons and daughters Eternal beings, Blake gives them several other qualities similar to those of such beings, such as translucence (above) and "gate[s]" to the vegetable world—that is, they are non-vegetable outside the gates (14.19-24, E 158).

since they share a collective existence with those who undergo it directly. These immortal Eternals, again assumedly, occupy an immaterial plane, and, therefore, this remains a two-level, or at least two-sector, cosmos. The relevant texts for our analysis are, first:

> And every Man stood Fourfold. each Four Faces had. One to the West
> One toward the East One to the South One to the North. …
> . . . . . .
> South stood the Nerves of the Eye. East in Rivers of bliss the Nerves of the
> Expansive Nostrils West, flowd the Parent Sense the Tongue. North stood
> The labyrinthine Ear. (98.12-13, 16-18, E 257)

Second:

> Creating Space, Creating Time according to the wonders Divine
> Of Human Imagination, throughout all the Three Regions immense
> Of Childhood, Manhood & Old Age[;] & the all tremendous unfathomable Non Ens
> Of Death was seen in regenerations terrific or complacent … (lines 31-34, E 258)

Last:

> all
> Human Forms identified, living going forth & returning wearied
> Into the Planetary lives of Years Months Days & Hours reposing
> And then Awaking into his Bosom in the Life of Immortality. (99.1-4, E 258)

Though these are familiar texts, we should examine them afresh, in a purposefully "naïve" reading that views them without the preconception that Eternal life must be only immortal and immaterial. The first segment clearly presents an Eternal form of "Man," using Blake's later imagery of fourfold existence and referring to the senses as flexile ("Expansive," "labyrinthine"), as also implied by the later reference to "the Expansion or Contraction, the Translucence or / Opakeness of Nervous fibres" (lines 36-37, E 258). Importantly, though the senses' directional markers identify them with Zoas, the senses appear as those of all Eternal beings, the Zoas having resumed their roles as aspects of collective humanity.

48 The second segment, part of the "Visionary forms dramatic" section (lines 28-40), on its face suggests that Eternal beings live through the life stages ("Regions") of youth, maturity, and age; die into nonentity; and undergo regeneration. If directly compared with the first segment, as has rarely been done, these provisions further suggest that such beings may possess infinite senses within a mortal body. It is not necessary to assume that these mortals—or immortals, for that matter—factually possess four faces and senses oriented to the compass points, any more than to make similar assumptions about the "enlarged & numerous" senses of *Marriage*'s "ancient Poets." Blake is speaking imaginatively, indicating the all-inclusive quality of Eternal perception and literalizing its fourfold character.

49 The last segment shares the same implied meaning, that "Human Forms" live through some span in which they may explore Eternity—since they then "return" (line 2) to the planetary world of time—and then die ("repos[e]") and wake as immortals. As just noted, the segment further specifies a framework of material creation and measurable time (line 3), as "Creating Space, Creating Time" in the prior passage (98.31) also does. Finally, this segment, by considering death or "repos[e]" and regeneration or "Awaking … in the Life of Immortality," confirms the continuing two-sector nature of Blake's cosmos.

50 The "Three Regions," specifically, have proven problematic for interpreters, who have either related them to aspects of *Jerusalem* not otherwise mentioned in these plates, such as "Regions" of Ulro or the chapters of the poem (Doskow 167; Kiralis 147) or have omitted analysis (Paley 64, 282). Morton Paley may regard the whole "Visionary forms" passage simply as discourse, since he approaches it in terms of *Jerusalem*'s language.[27] However, the overall context suggests that the forms of "Man" and their visionary conversation are creating the conditions of their own Eternal life, and that, besides immortal existence, these include, for mortals, childhood, maturity, age, death as non-being, and regeneration. The present reading thus accounts comprehensively for the texts discussed.

Conclusions and Assessment

51 The ending to *Jerusalem* serves to complete both its own and *Milton*'s revisions of *The Four Zoas* and *Urizen*. We should now understand that the division between views of Eternal beings in *Urizen* is real, and that Urizen's questions on mortality and "burnings" reflect Blake's portrayal of mortal lives with something like Eternal vision in earlier and concurrent works. We should also understand that the

27. Karl Kiralis was the first to read lines 28-40 as reviewing the contents of *Jerusalem*. This approach may have influenced Paley's, although he disputes Kiralis's particulars (282). See Spector 18 and 27n29 for references to *Jerusalem* 98.32-34 and 99.1-4 without or with partial discussion.

presence of this view of Eternal beings in *Urizen* is spectral (in the ordinary sense), since Blake was in the process of altering his former approach to argue that only immortal beings have such powers and that they are separated from mortals by barriers of their own creation (the "tent").

52 We should see further that in *The Four Zoas* Blake developed his sense of the intermediate beings, the Zoas—immortal but no longer with Eternal awareness—to what could be called a grotesque extreme, one that in any case involves dramatizing an assumedly rectifying slaughter of human populations. In this presentation, mortal beings are passive and indeed helpless, whether as victims of the Zoas' actions or as beneficiaries (the "wine").

53 Finally, we should understand that in *Milton* and *Jerusalem* (with a few suggestions in *The Four Zoas*), Blake dismantles much of what he built in *Urizen* and *The Four Zoas*. While maintaining his two-level universe, he places Eternal beings under a duty of care for and aid to mortal humans ("duly every morn / We visit him"; "labour well the teeming Earth") and he specifies the presence of living human beings in divine assemblies and their ability to view Eternal reality ("In every bosom a Universe expands"). And in *Jerusalem*'s conclusion, he revises his view of Eternal reality so that Eternal beings on earth, with fourfold senses and Eternal awareness, live, die, and are reborn—also as Eternal beings. We now need to clarify how the sequence of Blake's works dealing with these issues fits together.

54 Two sets of comparisons will help, one backwards from *Jerusalem* to *Songs of Innocence*, the second forwards from *The Four Zoas* to *Jerusalem*. If we ask, first, what life in the material eschatological world of *Jerusalem* 98-99 might look like, we realize that Blake has already given part of the answer:

> Old John with white hair
> Does laugh away care,
> Sitting under the oak,
> Among the old folk,
> They laugh at our play,
> And soon they all say.
> Such such were the joys.
> When we all girls & boys,
> In our youth-time were seen,
> On the Ecchoing Green.
>
> ("The Ecchoing Green" lines 11-20, E 8)

To live in such a world, whether as child or as "old folk," would be much like living in the world of mutuality presupposed in *Jerusalem*'s last plates. In the poem's vision, one may grow old and die as part of a continuing community, one that existed before, and will assumedly remain long after, one's own life. To do this, in mutuality with its other inhabitants, is at least a part of Blake's idea of Eternity (see illus. 4.)

55 Although "The Ecchoing Green" is an idealization, we should realize that, in *Songs of Innocence*, Blake already had communicated an essential component of what he would later see as the earthly life of Eternity. Heather Glen, in her study of *Innocence* as "Blake's fullest imaginative expression of the 'Divine Vision' of human *potentia*" (129), seems right in her judgment of the poem:

> "[J]oys" here lie not in individual pleasure but in an "ecchoing" sense of mutual recognition—a sense which the old, having in their time received … are able, unenviously, to give.… And the unresentful recognition of it as an "ecchoing" place—one which has been occupied by others before … affirms the possibility of a mutually created "World of Imagination" which "is Infinite & Eternal …." (138-40, partly quoting *A Vision of the Last Judgment* p. 69, E 555)[28]

56 A second aspect of Blake's later sense of Eternity is visible in the *Innocence* poem "Night," in which an upper world is not closed from, but intimately in touch with, ours. The scenario is of shepherds facing night in the fields, where "silent moves / The feet of angels bright." The shepherd speaker knows the angels cannot save their lambs from predators, but can "Recieve each mild spirit, / New worlds to inherit." There, they meet the comforter-lion, whose "ruddy eyes, / Shall flow with tears of gold," and whose "bright mane for ever, / Shall shine like the gold, / As I guard o'er the fold" (E 13-14). This comforter is not (as he might first seem) a figure for Blake's savior, present in many of these *Songs*. Rather, this extraordinary poem portrays the Comforter, or Paraclete, of John 14-16, sent to sustain the faithful in the darkness of this world. Such contact with the divine—pervasive in *Innocence*—provides the same fluidity of access to Eternity that is partly restored in the main plots of *Milton* and *Jerusalem*, and restored fully in *Jerusalem*'s ending. In "Night," then, as in "The Ecchoing Green," we see a similarity in poetic content and vision of reality linking Blake's early and later works, one differing from those governing his works from *Urizen* to *The Four Zoas*.

57 Turning to these works, a second comparison is in order: between the poetic and cultural vision of *The Four Zoas* and Blake's later view of it, described earlier as recognition of a wrong path. In a sense, the whole development of Blake's work analyzed here constitutes such a recognition. But more concrete evidence, at least regarding Night 9, lies in

28. Glen quotes Keynes's edition, p. 605, identically worded and without Erdman's angle brackets around "of Imagination."

4. Blake, "The Ecchoing Green," second plate, from *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* copy Z, object 7. 10.9 x 6.8 cm. Library of Congress, Lessing J. Rosenwald Collection, PR4144.S6 1826. Image courtesy of the *William Blake Archive*.

two episodes in *Jerusalem* chapter 2. The first narrates the twenty-eight cities' attempt "with kindest violence to bear him [Albion] back / Against his will thro Los's Gate to Eden," only to have Albion resist, the earth grow dark, and the Family Divine intervene to safeguard Albion (39 [44].1-20, E 186).[29] The second incident is Los's long walk through London or "the interiors of Albions / Bosom," during which he sees "every Minute Particular of Albion degraded & murderd / But saw not by whom; they were hidden within in the minute particulars / Of which they had possessd themselves" (45 [31].3-4, 7-9, E 194) and asks:

> What shall I do! what could I do, if I could find these Criminals
> I could not dare to take vengeance; for all things are so constructed
> And builded by the Divine hand, that the sinner shall always escape,
> And he who takes vengeance alone is the criminal of Providence … (45 [31].29-32, E 194)

Despite the differences between the episodes—forcing Albion against his will, Los considering vengeance—and between both episodes and *The Four Zoas* Night 9, the two *Jerusalem* sequences recognizably reject and repudiate the core of the earlier work's harvest-vintage narration. Specifically, the first rejects the Zoas' claim of force, the second the presumption that those cut down are the deserving.

58 These two comparisons reveal distinct developmental arcs in Blake's work. The first runs from early work forward, is interrupted for a major period (1794 to 1804–07), and is resumed and completed in *Milton* and *Jerusalem*. In this arc, awareness of Eternity, and intellectual-imaginative participation in it, are common to mortal and immortal beings, and these groups interact closely. In this developmental trajectory belong the non-dominant view of Eternals in *Urizen* and Blake's presentations in *Milton* and *Jerusalem*, including *Jerusalem* 98-99.

59 The second arc is shorter. It reaches from *Urizen* to *The Four Zoas* and then breaks off. It draws not only on *Songs of Experience*'s portrayal of an absence of awareness of Eternity, as discussed earlier, but also on its elements of defiance and of envisioned future or alternative existence (for example, "Holy Thursday" lines 13-16; proems to "The Little Girl Lost" and "A Little Girl Lost"). These feed into *Urizen*'s awakening of "All things … / … to life" in response to Orc's cries (20.28-29, E 80), and become the rebellious principle in *The Four Zoas*. In essence, then, this poem constituted Blake's effort to show how oppression can spark rebellion and an ultimate reformation of humanity, based entirely on human processes undertaken by a humanity lacking awareness of Eternity or the divine. This situation, we have seen, impelled Blake's presentation of the Zoas as supernal actors accomplishing what humanity could not. Arguably, *The Four Zoas* retains the stamp of these origins even in its later, revised form. We can conclude, however, that in Blake's own eyes the attempt to show human renovation on these premises finally failed. Blake, we know, made an incomplete effort to introduce ideas of providence and divine inspiration into the poem, apparently feeling the inadequacy of a schema based only on human faculties, and then left the poem unfinalized. Further, if the argument above is correct, *Jerusalem* chapter 2 rejects and critiques key aspects of *The Four Zoas* Night 9. These considerations identify the second arc as abortive and point to the first as the main direction of Blake's work.

60 Blake did not find it easy to relinquish *The Four Zoas*'s paradigm, as his ten-year struggle to make the poem work shows. In some way, then, he must have believed mortal humans were indeed barred by their materiality from perceiving Eternity. There are aspects of his final synthesis, too, that he probably could not have formulated or admitted at the time of *Urizen*, including its sequences, in Eternal life, of childhood, maturity, old age, death, and regeneration and of return, repose, and awaking to immortality (*Jerusalem* 98-99). Nonetheless, his growing sense of the urgency of divine awareness for human renovation pushed toward that synthesis; once accepted, the need to communicate calls out for breaching the barriers between mortals and Eternals, as *Milton* and *Jerusalem* do with their treatments of descent and mortal access. From that point, the further affirmation of earthly Eternals' life-death-regeneration cycles, though no small step, becomes possible and even unavoidable.

61 Who, then, are Blake's Eternals? If this study's major points are right, we can say with some certainty that *Urizen*'s dominant view is one Blake later largely overturned, and that *Milton*'s and *Jerusalem*'s return to the two-level, permeable cosmos of early works, including in *Jerusalem* 98-99, represents the final form of his consideration of the nature of Eternal beings. Further, the conception of mortal humans with "enlarged" or "Expansive" perceptions, begun in early work, remains at the end, a seed idea retained over his lifetime (*Marriage* 11, *Jerusalem* 98.17, E 38, 257). Percival, then, was basically right, long ago, in his three-part schema (45-46, quoted earlier). Approached from the standpoint of

29. Prior plates specify the cities as actors—Bristol and Bath, sixth and seventh of those previously named among the twenty-four, then the other seventeen (E 182-85), and, conjecturally, the four leading cities, bring the total to the "Twenty-eight" mentioned at 37 [41].23, E 183. The Zoas are also active here (37 [41].26 and following, E 183-84); Los appeals first to them and then to the cities, but "they" is used confusingly for both groups.

Eternity—as in Percival's study—the groups named have always existed. From Blake's more complex Eternal and historical perspective, access to Eternity has always been possible for some mortals; for the whole of earthly humanity, it takes the full span of history to reclaim what was theirs all along.

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Installation view, *William Blakes Universum*, Hamburger Kunsthalle. Photo: Christoph Irrgang, Hamburg.

A R T I C L E

Blake and Exhibitions, 2024

By Luisa Calè

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1 In 2024 Blake's work was exposed in British, European, and global settings. His role as a foundational artist in the British School was explored in two different directions in London. The rehang of Tate Britain included a recentering and reenvisioning of British art, including the commissioning of a mural by Chris Ofili and his dialogue with Blake (17 April 2023–2 June 2024).[1] While the Fitzwilliam copy of Blake's life mask was on display in the British and German instantiations of *William Blake's Universe*, the National Portrait Gallery copy marked his role among Old Master precedents and inspirations in *Francis Bacon: Human Presence*.

2 Blake's European dimensions were tested through two major initiatives: *William Blake's Universe* explored the European roots and resonances of his work through a dialogue with German art, thanks to a partnership between the Fitzwilliam Museum and the Hamburger Kunsthalle. The exhibitions in Cambridge and Hamburg identified European traditions in academic training underpinning neoclassical art as an approach to the past, set Blake's continental proph-

1. Reviewed in Luisa Calè, "Blake and Exhibitions, 2023," *Blake*, vol. 58, no. 1, summer 2024, https://doi.org/10.47761/biq.366. For a contrast with Blake's previous location, adjacent to Turner, see Michael Glover, "William Blake, Our Contemporary," *Hyperallergic*, 26 Sept. 2023, hyperallergic.com/847018/william-blake-our-contemporary-tate-britain.

ecies in the revolutionary present, and captured understandings of the future by tracing a mystical vein in European Romantic art with shared roots in the work of Jacob Böhme. The Tate partnered with the Reggia di Venaria outside Turin and chose the theme of dreams to present its collection of Blakes and British Romantic art in a grandiose European palace setting.

3 A focus on the underworld featured Blake within domestic and grand-tour settings in which the geological imagination is informed by folk, religious, and scientific lore. At the Reggia di Venaria, a section titled "Satan and the Underworld" displayed a range of works by Blake and his contemporaries, including James Barry's Miltonic "Satan, Sin, and Death." However, the exhibition could not include Blake's two watercolors specifically depicting that subject from *Paradise Lost*, since all loans were from the Tate, which does not own Blake's versions. By contrast, *Satan Arousing the Rebel Angels*, illustrating *Paradise Lost* book 1, was loaned from the Victoria and Albert Museum to document interest in the vertical axis of travel to the underworld in the Louvre-Lens exhibition about subterranean worlds.

4 Blake's illustrations to John Gabriel Stedman's *Narrative, of a Five Years' Expedition, against the Revolted Negroes of Surinam* (1796) continued to exercise creative, critical, and curatorial practice in 2024. After his representations of the inhuman treatment of slaves were included in *Reinventing the Américas: Construct. Erase. Repeat* at the Getty Center, Los Angeles (23 August 2022–8 January 2023) as part of a colonial archive of European encounters with America, this corpus was on view in the UK and Germany, where approaches ranged from the use of a trigger warning about the book at the Fitzwilliam to the decolonial aesthetics of self-reflection informing the display in Hamburg. Shanghai-born artist Hu Yun widened the scope of Blake's Stedman compositions within the global legacies of colonial exploration in his retrospective at Rockbund Art Museum, in a building that had formerly housed the natural history collection of the Royal Asiatic Society.

William Blake's Universe
Curated by David Bindman and Esther Chadwick
Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge
23 February–19 May 2024

Catalogue: Bindman, David, and Esther Chadwick, editors. *William Blake's Universe*. Fitzwilliam Museum/Philip Wilson Publishers, 2024.

This exhibition brought the Fitzwilliam Blake collection into dialogue with German mysticism, documenting a shared mystical source in the corpus of Jacob Böhme—evidenced by Cambridge copies of the Law edition illustrated by Dionysius Andreas Freher—and the parallel development of British and German millenarian Romantic visions in the corpuses of Blake, Caspar David Friedrich, and Philipp Otto Runge. This comparative European approach brought into view a classical idiom rooted in the artists' academic training in London, Copenhagen, and Dresden.[2] Comparisons between individual works and shared themes produced bold and illuminating juxtapositions. Blake's mediated encounter with Michelangelo was evidenced by a wall hang bringing together three versions of the subject of Joseph of Arimathea (an engraving attributed to Nicolas Beatrizet, and two by Blake, dated 1773 and 1810–25). On the wall at the other end of the room were versions of the *Laocoön* as an encyclopædia plate, an engraving surrounded by Blake's aphoristic marginalia, and a drawing. The exhibition featured two copies of "Albion Rose," one placed next to Jacques-Louis Perée's "Droits de l'homme" ("Rights of Man") (1795–96) and another in dialogue with Friedrich's *Lebensalter* (*Ages of Life*, but translated as *The Ages of Man* in the exhibition) (c. 1826).[3]

James S. Deville, *Head of William Blake*, 1823
Fitzwilliam Museum, M.7-1947

Catherine Blake, *Portrait of the Young William Blake*, c. 1830? (Butlin #C3)
Fitzwilliam Museum, PD.14-1953

John Flaxman, *Portrait of William Blake*, 1804
Fitzwilliam Museum, 828.f.37

John Linnell, *William Blake*, 1821
Fitzwilliam Museum, PD.61-1950

John Linnell, *Head and Shoulders of William Blake*, 1820
Fitzwilliam Museum, PD.57-1950

John Linnell, *Portrait of Blake at Hampstead*, c. 1825
Fitzwilliam Museum, PD.58-1950

The Past: Antiquity and the Gothic

"Joseph of Arimathea among the Rocks of Albion":
First state, 1773
Second state, c. 1810–25
Fitzwilliam Museum, P.391-1985, P.392-1985

2. See cat. no. 15, p. 43, for Runge's studying in Copenhagen; p. 44, no. 18, for the academy in Dresden.
3. For a full review, see Luisa Calè, "*William Blake's Universe*, Fitzwilliam Museum, 23 February–19 May 2024; *William Blake's Universe*, edited by David Bindman and Esther Chadwick," *Blake*, vol. 58, no. 3, winter 2024–25, https://doi.org/10.47761/biq.376.

Aminadab, Called "The Reposing Traveller," after Michelangelo and Adamo Scultori, c. 1785 (Butlin #170 verso)
British Museum, 1867,1012.205

The Apotheosis of Bacchus, after d'Hancarville, c. 1779–85 (Butlin #174)
British Museum, 1867,1012.207

Joseph's Brethren Bowing Down before Him, c. 1784–85 (Butlin #155)
Fitzwilliam Museum, 456A

Joseph Ordering Simeon to Be Bound, c. 1784–85 (Butlin #156)
Fitzwilliam Museum, 456B

Joseph Making Himself Known to His Brethren, c. 1784–85 (Butlin #157)
Fitzwilliam Museum, 456C

"Homer Invoking the Muse," after Flaxman, for Flaxman, *Iliad*, 1805
Fitzwilliam Museum

"Head of a Damned Soul," after Fuseli, c. 1789–90
Fitzwilliam Museum, P.423-1985

"Tornado," after Fuseli, for Darwin, *The Botanic Garden*, 1795
Fitzwilliam Museum, P.546-1985

Hyperion (*"The Bowman"*), late 1790s (Butlin #336)
Fitzwilliam Museum, PD.167-1985

Ugolino and His Sons in Prison, wash drawing, c. 1780–85 (Butlin #208)
Hamburger Kunsthalle, 1980-128

Ugolino and His Sons in Prison, tempera, 1826–27 (Butlin #805)
Fitzwilliam Museum, PD.5-1978

Engravings for the *Divine Comedy*, 1826–27:
"The Circle of the Corrupt Officials: The Devils Mauling Each Other"
"The Circle of the Lustful: Paolo and Francesca"
Fitzwilliam Museum, P.812-R, P.810-R

On Homer's Poetry [and] *On Virgil*, c. 1822
Fitzwilliam Museum, P.711-1985

יה *& his two Sons Satan & Adam* (*Laocoön*), c. 1826–27
Fitzwilliam Museum, P.398-1985

For Rees's *Cyclopædia*, 1820:
"Sculpture" (Venus de Medici, Apollo Belvedere, Laocoön)
"Sculpture" (Durga Slaying Mahishasura, An Etruscan Patera, A Colossal Statue at Thebes, Persian Sculpture at Persepolis, A Chinese Statue)
Fitzwilliam Museum, P.579-1985, P.739-1985

Free Version of the Laocoön, c. 1825 (Butlin #681)
Fitzwilliam Museum, PD.29-2020

The Present: Europe in Flames

America, a Prophecy copy O, composed 1793, printed c. 1821:
Frontispiece
Title page
"A Prophecy"
"The morning comes"
"The terror answerd"
"Thus wept the Angel voice"
"Over the hills"
Fitzwilliam Museum, P.127-1950 (1, 2, 5, 8, 10, 12, 18)

For Stedman, *Narrative*, 1796:
"Europe Supported by Africa and America," hand colored
"Group Imported to be Sold for Slaves"
Cambridge University Library, Keynes.H.4.12; British Museum, 2006,0830.49

"The Little Black Boy," printed recto/verso
Fitzwilliam Museum, P.679-1985

Visions of the Daughters of Albion copy P, composed 1793, printed c. 1818, open to the title page
Fitzwilliam Museum, P.126-1950

The Song of Los copy A, composed and printed 1795:
Frontispiece
Title page
King and Queen on a Lily
Los Rests from His Labours
British Museum, 1856,0209.409, 410, 413, 416

Europe copy K, composed 1794, printed c. 1821, all eighteen prints on display
Fitzwilliam Museum, P.127-1950 (19-36)

"F[rench] Revolution," after Ryley, for *Bellamy's Picturesque Magazine*, 1793
Fitzwilliam Museum, P.544-1985

Death on a Pale Horse, c. 1800 (Butlin #517)
Fitzwilliam Museum, 765

The House of Death, c. 1795 (Butlin #322)
Fitzwilliam Museum, 1769

"Albion Rose," from the so-called Large Book of Designs, 1794–96 (Butlin #262.1)
British Museum, 1856,0209.417

The Future: Spiritual Renewal

The Soldiers Casting Lots for Christ's Garments, 1800 (Butlin #495)
Fitzwilliam Museum, PD.30-1949

The Angel of the Divine Presence Clothing Adam and Eve with Coats of Skins, 1803 (Butlin #436)
Fitzwilliam Museum, PD.29-1949

The Ascension, c. 1805–06 (Butlin #505)
Fitzwilliam Museum, PD.32-1949

Watercolors for *Paradise Regained*, c. 1816–18, all twelve on display (Butlin #544)
Fitzwilliam Museum, PD.14-1950 to PD.25-1950

An Allegory of the Spiritual Condition of Man, 1811? (Butlin #673)
Fitzwilliam Museum, PD.27-1949

Illustrations of the Book of Job, 1823–26:
"Job and His Family"
"Job's Evil Dreams"
"When the Morning Stars Sang Together"
"Job and His Daughters"
"Job and His Family Restored to Prosperity"
Fitzwilliam Museum, P.454-1985 (2, 12, 15, 21, 22)

Samuel Palmer, *The Magic Apple Tree*, c. 1830
Fitzwilliam Museum, 1490

Samuel Palmer, *Coming from Evening Church*, 1830
Tate, N03697

Jerusalem copy B, composed 1804–20, printed 1821, frontispiece
Private collection

Jerusalem, frontispiece, proof impression
Fitzwilliam Museum, P.24-2018

Photo by Thomas Adank; reproduced by kind permission of the Fitzwilliam Museum.

Jerusalem copy B, composed 1804–20, printed 1821:
Title page
Pl. 6, "His Spectre driv'n by the Starry Wheels"
Pl. 11, "To labours mighty, with vast strength"
Pl. 14, "One hair nor particle of dust"
Pl. 25, "And there was heard a great lamenting in Beulah"
Private collection

Jerusalem copy H, composed 1804–20, printed c. 1832, pl. 28, "Every ornament of perfection"
Fitzwilliam Museum, P.5054-R

Jerusalem, pl. 37, "And One stood forth"
Fitzwilliam Museum, P.708-1985

Jerusalem, pl. 51, Vala, Hyle, and Skofeld
Fitzwilliam Museum, P.709-1985

Vala, Hyle, and Skofeld, and Another Figure, c. 1810
Hamburger Kunsthalle, 1976-258

Jerusalem, pl. 100
Fitzwilliam Museum, P.710-1985

"Albion Rose," second state
British Museum, 1894,0612.27

胡昀: 远山 / Hu Yun: *Mount Analogue*
Rockbund Art Museum, Shanghai
23 March–25 August 2024

Untitled (from the narrative of a five years expedition) (2016–17), a creative intervention on Blake's illustrations to Stedman's *Narrative* by Shanghai-born artist Hu Yun, featured in the first chapter, "China Journal," of the project "Complex Geographies" at the Rockbund Art Museum, "which in 1933 served as the location for China's first natural history museum—the Royal Asiatic Society Museum."[4] The exhibition was titled after René Daumal's *Le Mont Analogue* (1952), originally subtitled in translation "An Authentic Narrative," then retranslated under the title *Mount Analogue: A Tale of Non-Euclidian and Symbolically Authentic Mountaineering Adventures*, which generalizes the French "alpine adventures" for a global public.[5] The ascension narrative, arranged over three floors, was given continuity by *The Hollow-Men*, a site-specific installation of sails mounted in the hollow in the middle of the floors of the building, evoking the colonial travel that brought the natural history collection together. In this context of colonial exploration and encounter, Hu Yun's engagement with Blake became part of a wider study, exposing official histories, taxonomies, archives, and foundational figures in colonial natural history.[6]

Hu Yun's reenvisioning of Blake was placed on a mezzanine above *The Hollow-Men*. The seven works framed on the wall are obtained by an art of deletion or redaction, which takes out the colonial bodies from Blake's compositions for Stedman's *Narrative*: "Taking out certain elements in the original drawings by Blake, Hu Yun intentionally leaves viewers with plenty of blankness. Such abstraction points directly to the violence behind taxonomy and selective recording."[7]

Untitled (from the narrative of a five years expedition), 2016–17
Ink on tracing paper, 7 pieces, 26.5 × 19 cm. (image), 52 × 36 cm. (framed)
Wallpaper dimensions variable

Mondes souterrains: 20,000 lieux sous la terre / Subterranean Worlds: 20,000 Leagues under the Earth
Curated by Alexandre Estaquet-Legrand, Jean-Jacques Terrin, and Gautier Verbeke
Musée du Louvre-Lens
27 March–22 July 2024

The exhibition was conceived as a "path of initiation," a "physical experience" for visitors, who, "cut off from the world," "discover[ed] chasms and caves." It used *The Fall of the Titans* (anonymous copy, retouched by Peter Paul Rubens, of a drawing by Pieter Coecke van Aelst) to document the underworld described in Hesiod's *Theogony* (eighth century BCE).

Satan Arousing the Rebel Angels, one of twelve watercolors commissioned by Thomas Butts, was displayed in a section named "Descent into the World Beyond" to capture the association of the underworld with hell: "Civilizations have

4. www.rockbundartmuseum.org/exhibition/hu-yun-mount-analogue.
5. René Daumal, *Le Mont Analogue: Récit véridique*, Gallimard, 1952, translated into English by Roger Shattuck in 1959. Subsequent editions bear the subtitle *Roman d'aventures alpines, non euclidiennes et symboliquement authentiques*, reflected in the changed English title *Mount Analogue: A Tale of Non-Euclidian and Symbolically Authentic Mountaineering Adventures*, translated by Carol Cosman, Overlook Press, 2004.
6. For the exhibition's engagement with colonial natural history and disciplinary formations, see Jennifer Piejko, "Hu Yun Turns to the Unfinished Novel," *Frieze*, no. 245, 11 June 2024, www.frieze.com/article/hu-yun-mount-analogue-2024-review.
7. Aike Gallery, photos of Rockbund Art Museum installation, *Instagram*, 26 May 2024, www.instagram.com/p/C7brmvsRCnj.

All Rockbund Art Museum installation views: Hu Yun, *Mount Analogue*, 23 March–25 August 2024. © Rockbund Art Museum, Shanghai. Photo: Yan Tao.

Photo: © Musée du Louvre-Lens/Emmanuel Watteau.

conceived the abyss as the realm of death where the dead hope to find eternal life or resurrection. Reflecting the hierarchies of mortal worlds, these infra-worlds have their divinities, but, braving the rules of life and death, some gods and heroes have tried to trespass their doors to travel in subterranean worlds."[8] Blake's muscular Satan exemplifies the heroic decision to renew the onslaught of the rebel angels.

Watercolors for *Paradise Lost*, Butts set, 1808:
Satan Arousing the Rebel Angels (Butlin #536.1)
Victoria and Albert Museum, FA.697

8. Quoted from the visitor guide; the translation is mine.

William Blakes Universum
Curated by Andreas Stolzenburg in collaboration with David Bindman and Esther Chadwick
Hamburger Kunsthalle
14 June–8 September 2024

Catalogue: Stolzenburg, Andreas, in collaboration with David Bindman and Esther Chadwick, editors. *William Blakes Universum*. Hamburger Kunsthalle/Hatje Cantz, 2024.

The collaboration between the Fitzwilliam and the Hamburger Kunsthalle served a mutual interest in establishing a dialogue between Blake and German Romantic art. Almost fifty years since a groundbreaking Blake exhibition commissioned by the Kunsthalle's then director Werner Hofmann as part of a cycle on British Romantic art and curated by David Bindman (1975), Bindman joined forces with Esther Chadwick and Andreas Stolzenburg to reinvent Blake in a German and European context for a different generation, after Brexit. The Fitzwilliam took the partnership as an opportunity to present the work of Philipp Otto Runge to the British public, whereas fewer Runge works

All Hamburger Kunsthalle photos: Christoph Irrgang, Hamburg.

were exhibited in Hamburg. Conversely, despite the pioneering work of Henry Crabb Robinson in introducing Blake to the German reading public in an article published in *Vaterländisches Museum* (1811), the Kunsthalle claimed that "[Blake's] work is still little known outside of England."[9] Both exhibitions prided themselves on the display of objects from Sir Geoffrey Keynes's bequest to the Fitzwilliam; for the Kunsthalle, "This exhibition will be the first public showing of the entire Blake collection of the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge together with the bequest of the well-known Blake collector Geoffrey Keynes."[10]

German reception of *William Blakes Universum* noted the coincidence with the 250th anniversary of Caspar David Friedrich's birth[11] and applauded the exhibition's dialogue with German art to claim Blake as a "true European,"[12] despite his never having traveled outside England. Yet reviewers also expected an explicit engagement with Blake's contemporary legacy as a "painter, poet, mystic, proto-hippie,"[13] and "anarchistic rebel."[14] A number of reviews wanted the exhibition to engage with his significance in pop culture, "from Aldous Huxley to the Doors, from Patti Smith to Ridley Scott."[15] If it "lacked the thunderous sound of rock music,"[16] its vibes were activated by an iconic use of "The Ancient of Days," "reminiscent of an album by a heavy metal band."[17] One review contrasted the status of Blake's "Jerusalem" hymn as an "unofficial national anthem" to his countercultural power in music, film, and book arts: "The Doors also set his verses to music, Jim Jarmusch created a cinematic monument to him with *Dead Man*. His poetry also influenced Allen Ginsberg and Bob Dylan, and Blake pioneered the graphic novel genre."[18]

To bring Blake's world to a contemporary audience, Hamburg's initiatives included commissioning a delightful graphic novel about Blake's life by local comic-book artist Noëlle Kröger, who centered the narrative around Blake's collaboration with his wife, Catherine, remediating some of his visual inventions within the comic-book panels. While the Fitzwilliam familiarized Blake's character by means of short glosses and an abridgment of the action in the captions below the plates of the continental prophecies, the Kunsthalle produced a glossary on one of the exhibition's walls. "A Note on Gender Images" acknowledged Blake's "queer potentials and interpretations," yet claimed that

> [t]he characteristics of the allegorical figures in Blake's mythology are based on ideas of masculinity and femininity that appear stereotypical—or even sexist and misogynistic—from today's perspective.… The allegories employed by Blake in his mythical worlds always present contemporary variations of the historically evolved binary system of gender.

Hopefully, the upcoming bicentenary will be an opportunity to translate recent research on queer Blake into curatorial initiatives that revisit the gender dynamics and queer sensibilities to be found and reinvented in his corpus.

The Kunsthalle's most original intervention consisted in its approach to the illustrations to Stedman's *Narrative*. Both in Cambridge and in Hamburg, how to mediate Blake's engagement with slavery was a curatorial problem that raised questions in contemporary decolonial aesthetics. The Fitzwilliam opted for a trigger warning written on the wall above the glass vitrine with the Stedman plates, which were deliberately placed horizontally, activating an "ethics of horizontality" to deny such subjects the honor of verticality, echoing the deposition and then horizontal display of statues associated with slavery.[19] In Hamburg the vitrine

9. www.hamburger-kunsthalle.de/en/william-blakes-universe, accessed 10 Sept. 2025. This claim is surprising, given the evidence discussed in *The Reception of William Blake in Europe*, edited by Sibylle Erle and Morton D. Paley, 2 vols., Bloomsbury Academic, 2019.

10. www.hamburger-kunsthalle.de/en/william-blakes-universe, accessed 10 Sept. 2025.

11. Nicola Kuhn, "Ausstellung über William Blake; Die Götter treten gegeneinander an," *Der Tagesspiegel*, 21 June 2024. The Friedrich anniversary was celebrated with a retrospective at the Hamburger Kunsthalle (15 Dec. 2023–1 April 2024, www.hamburger-kunsthalle.de/de/caspar-david-friedrich), preceding *William Blakes Universum* but overlapping with the Fitzwilliam's *William Blake's Universe*. The Metropolitan Museum of Art also marked the occasion with *Caspar David Friedrich: The Soul of Nature*, "organized in cooperation with the Alte Nationalgalerie of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden, and Hamburger Kunsthalle …" (8 Feb.–11 May 2025, www.metmuseum.org/exhibitions/caspar-david-friedrich-the-soul-of-nature).

12. Vera Fengler, "'Ich sehe was, was du nicht siehst'; Das Kunstspiel zum Mitmachen—jeden Montag im Abendblatt. Heute: William Blake, 'Der Alte der Tage; Europa, eine Prophezeiung,'" *Hamburger Abendblatt*, 15 July 2024.

13. Peter Richter, "William Blake in Hamburg; Beim Propheten der Bärte; Die Hamburger Kunsthalle entdeckt schon zum zweiten Mal den Maler, Dichter, Mystiker und Proto-Hippie William Blake," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 7 Aug. 2024.

14. Wolfgang Krischke, "Anarchistischer Rebell und Künder esoterischer Visionen," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 3 July 2024.

15. See Krischke.

16. See Kuhn.

17. See Fengler.

18. See Kuhn.

19. On the "ethics of horizontality," see Luisa Calè, "*William Blake's Universe*: An Interview with David Bindman and Esther Chadwick," *Blake*, vol. 57, no. 3, winter 2023–24, https://doi.org/10.47761/biq.352. The statue of Bristol slave-trader Edward Colston was toppled in 2020, went on temporary display in the horizontal rather than the vertical position until January 2022, and that solution was made permanent in spring 2024 after Bristol inhabitants were surveyed about and approved this decolonial curatorial strategy: see Chloe Harcombe and

with the Stedman prints was placed beneath protective cloths, under a wall text:

> The images in this display case are concealed as they contain racist depictions that are directed against Black people. We have not made them directly visible for this reason, but the fabric can be lifted to view them. How does this change the way we see? What impact does this intervention have on the way you view the depiction?
>
> In addition, there are racial epithets on the sheets. These are terms introduced by white people to devalue and exclude groups and people by emphasising supposed inequality and producing inequality.

While this concealment might appear to restrict, Sibylle Erle argues that the choice to lift the cloths activated the viewer's participation.[20] The glass vitrine is a museological device that isolates and protects the object from spectators, yet the reflective interference of the glass adds the spectators' faces to the display. At the Kunsthalle this interference was enhanced by a radical intervention that brought the most original and creative curatorial practice in decolonial aesthetics to Blake studies.

The decision to add a mirror to the Stedman display was the product of a process of consultation involving the gallery's Education Department in collaboration with freelance curator Christopher Nixon,[21] who suggested Pedro Lasch's *Black Mirror* experiments.[22] The decolonial introduction of mirrors into the exhibition space magnifies

Alice Bouverie, "Edward Colston Statue Goes on Permanent Display in Bristol Museum," *BBC News, Bristol*, 14 Mar. 2024, www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-bristol-68569148.

20. See Sibylle Erle, "Blake in Hamburg," *VALA*, no. 5, 2024, pp. 134-36.

21. Curator of the Colonial Past and Postcolonial Present at the Stiftung Historische Museen Hamburg, 2020–21 (zugang-gestalten.org/sprecherinnen/christopher-nixon); author of *Den Blick erwidern. Epiphanie und Ästhetik postkolonial*, Passagen Verlag, 2023.

22. For mention of Lasch's *Black Mirror*, see also Erle, "Blake in Hamburg." For details of the process, I am grateful to Julia Kersting, curatorial assistant at the Hamburger Kunsthalle, who was responsible for the organization and implementation of this display.

viewers' discomfort, making them see themselves reflected in scenes of colonial violence and exploitation, addressing them as participants rather than detached observers. To support such a practice of self-reflection in *William Blakes Universum*, the gallery added this label to the Stedman display:

> We don't just look at the images through the mirror in this display case. We see ourselves. The mirror throws our gaze back at us. It is intended to encourage us to become aware of our voyeuristic, eager, curious gaze at these depictions and invite us to reflect on our own gaze. Who is looking at whom here? Who is the subject, who is the object of observation? Because the way people and bodies are depicted here is also the result of a constructed and culturally learnt colonial point of view, a colonial regime of looking.
> (Integrating a mirror here was inspired by the complex project *Black Mirror* by the artist Pedro Lasch, ongoing since 2007.)

This invitation to decolonize the gaze exposed, interrogated, and subverted subject positions and ways of seeing in "a colonial regime of looking." Lasch argues that *Black Mirror/Espejo Negro*, "with its play of transparencies and reflections, makes impossible any clear separation between past-present, artwork-viewer-environment…."[23] Lifting the protective cloths brought viewers in contact with the display, implicating them in the cruelties of slavery captured by Blake.

Slow Looking
Samek Art Museum, Bucknell University, Lewisburg
4 September–8 December 2024

Showcasing a bequest from Bucknell alum Stuart Coyne, this exhibition advocated slow looking by trying to evoke the wall hangs of Coyne's San Francisco apartment. "Christ Descending into the Grave" and "The Soul Hovering over

23. Quoted from pedrolasch.com/blackmirror.html#en; for further information, see *Black Mirror/Espejo Negro*, edited by Pedro Lasch, John Hope Franklin Humanities Institute/Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University, 2010.

the Body," two etchings by Louis Schiavonetti after Blake's inventions for Robert Blair's *The Grave*, featured at the center of a hang including Hogarth's "The Sleeping Congregation."

Schiavonetti after Blake, published in Blair, *The Grave*, 1813:
"Christ Descending into the Grave"
"The Soul Hovering over the Body, Reluctantly Parting with Life"
Samek Art Museum, 2023.5.19, 2023.5.20

Dürer to Matisse: 400 Years of European Prints
Curated by Dana Cowen
Ackland Art Museum, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
27 September 2024–5 January 2025

This exhibition selected samples from *Illustrations of the Book of Job* for a survey of printmaking and "art historical movements from the Renaissance to Cubism and beyond."[24] Blake's engravings were put into conversation with Dürer's

24. ackland.org/exhibition/durer-to-matisse-400-years-of-european-prints.

Photo: © Samek Art Museum, Bucknell University.

Photo: Ackland Art Museum, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

and works in various print media by Rembrandt van Rijn, Giovanni Battista Piranesi, Francisco de Goya, Edgar Degas, Mary Cassatt, Vincent van Gogh, Käthe Kollwitz, Edvard Munch, and Pablo Picasso.

Illustrations of the Book of Job, 1823–26:
"Satan Going Forth from the Presence of the Lord"[25]
"Job and His Wife Restored to Prosperity"
Ackland Art Museum, 58.1.1067.1, 58.1.1067.14

Francis Bacon: Human Presence
Curated by Rosie Broadley
National Portrait Gallery, London
10 October 2024–19 January 2025

Catalogue: Broadley, Rosie, editor. *Francis Bacon: Human Presence*. National Portrait Gallery, 2024.

Francis Bacon: Human Presence documented Bacon's encounter with Old Masters. The impact of Blake was signaled by his life mask, made by James Deville in 1823, owned by John Linnell, and acquired by the National Portrait Gallery in 1918. In the exhibition, the life mask complemented *Study for Portrait II (after the Life Mask of William Blake)* (1955), which Bacon painted in response to a commission from the composer Gerard Schurmann.[26] Bacon kept a plaster cast purchased from the museum shop in his studio, but preferred to work from a photograph.

James S. Deville, *Head of William Blake*, 1823
National Portrait Gallery, NPG 1809

Francis Bacon, *Study for Portrait II (after the Life Mask of William Blake)*, 1955
Tate, T02414

25. Thirty-six prints from the museum, including "Satan Going Forth," were displayed at other North Carolina universities in 2023, as documented in Calè, "Blake and Exhibitions, 2023."

26. Exhibit labels, www.npg.org.uk/assets/uploads/files/Francis-Bacon_LARGE%20PRINT_GUIDE.pdf, p. 39.

Belle da Costa Greene: A Librarian's Legacy
Curated by Philip S. Palmer and Erica Ciallela
Morgan Library and Museum, New York
25 October 2024–4 May 2025

Catalogue: Ciallela, Erica, and Philip S. Palmer, editors. *Belle da Costa Greene: A Librarian's Legacy*. Morgan Library and Museum/DelMonico Books, 2024.

Blake's watercolor *The Lord Answering Job out of the Whirlwind*[27] featured among the acquisitions of the Morgan's inaugural librarian, Belle da Costa Greene (1879–1950), daughter of the first black graduate of Harvard College, whose family changed their name "to pass as white in a racist and segregated America."[28] Greene joined the library in 1905 and oversaw its development after J. P. Morgan's death in 1913, working as director after J. P. Morgan, Jr., turned the library into a public institution in 1924. In a letter to Morgan Sr. in 1909, the same year in which she acquired the Blake prints, she announced the acquisition of the only surviving manuscript of Edgar Allan Poe's "The Raven" and went on to articulate her ambition for the Morgan Library. She viewed the British Museum and the Bibliothèque Nationale de France as her only rivals when it came to purchasing incunables, bindings, and the classics.[29]

Watercolors for the book of Job, Butts set:
The Lord Answering Job out of the Whirlwind, c. 1805–06 (Butlin #550.13)
When the Morning Stars Sang Together, c. 1805–06 (Butlin #550.14)
Morgan Library and Museum, 2001.75, 2001.76

27. After three months, the library substituted *When the Morning Stars Sang Together*. Many thanks to Sheelagh Bevan, Andrew W. Mellon Curator of Printed Books and Bindings at the Morgan, for this information.
28. www.themorgan.org/exhibitions/belle-da-costa-greene.
29. Exhibition audio stop 11, "Belle Greene Builds the Collection," www.themorgan.org/exhibitions/online/belle-da-costa-greene/11.

Photo: © Morgan Library and Museum. Photography by Carmen González Fraile, 2024.

Blake e la sua epoca. Viaggi nel tempo del sogno / In the Age of William Blake. Visionary Journeys
Curated by Alice Insley
Reggia di Venaria, Turin
31 October 2024–2 February 2025

Catalogue: Insley, Alice, editor. *Blake e la sua epoca. Viaggi nel tempo del sogno*. Hopefulmonster, 2024.

This first Italian Blake retrospective invited the viewer to envision Blake's art in a European palace built to embody the royal ambition of the Savoy family before the unification of Italy, emulating some architectonic features of Versailles. In stark contrast with Blake's politics and the viewing conditions of Blake's works in his own time, this bold contrafactual setting afforded yet another opportunity to think about the role he might have had in public art: it projected *The Spiritual Form of Pitt* on a flimsy fabric fluttering from above, a ghostly haunting presence for a European dwelling. Drawing on the Tate collection, the exhibition introduced Blake through British Romantic art and British Romantic art through Blake.[30] It subsequently moved to the Museum of Fine Arts in Budapest in September 2025 in what amounts to the first exhibition of Blake originals in Hungary,[31] and will next be shown at the National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin, in 2026.

Introduction

Blake, *The House of Death*, 1795–c. 1805 (Butlin #320)
Tate, N05060

Blake, *The Night of Enitharmon's Joy*, formerly *Hecate*, c. 1795 (Butlin #316)
Tate, N05056

Blake, *Satan Exulting over Eve*, c. 1795 (Butlin #291)
Tate, T07213

Horror and Peril

John Hamilton Mortimer, *Banditti Going Out in the Morning*, 1773
Tate, T08277

Philip James de Loutherbourg, *Travellers Attacked by Banditti*, 1781
Tate, T00921

In the style of John Hamilton Mortimer, *Rocky Landscape with Banditti*, c. 1770–80
Tate, T00342

Nathaniel Dance, *Two Women in a Dungeon*
Tate, T08444

John Hamilton Mortimer, *The Captive*
Tate, T10125

Attributed to George Richmond, *Fettered Nude Figure Reclining by a Rock*, c. 1825
Tate, A00838

James Barry, *Study for* Philoctetes on the Island of Lemnos, 1770
Tate, T08127

George Romney, *John Howard Visiting a Lazaretto*, c. 1791–92
Tate, T03547

Blake, *The House of Death*, c. 1790 (Butlin #259)
Tate, N05192

Henry Fuseli, *Lady Macbeth Seizing the Daggers*, exhibited 1812?
Tate, T00733

Blake, *The Blasphemer*, c. 1800 (Butlin #446)
Tate, N05195

Blake, watercolor for the *Divine Comedy*, 1824–27: *The Punishment of the Thieves* (Butlin #812.102)
Tate, N03364

Blake, *The Body of Abel Found by Adam and Eve*, c. 1826 (Butlin #806)
Tate, N05888

Samuel Colman, *The Death of Amelia*, 1804?
Tate, T02109

William Westall, *The Commencement of the Deluge*, exhibited 1848
Tate, N01877

Philip James de Loutherbourg, *An Avalanche in the Alps*, 1803
Tate, T00772

Francis Danby, *The Deluge*, c. 1840?
Tate, N06134

30. For a full review, see Luisa Calè, "*Blake e la sua epoca. Viaggi nel tempo del sogno*, La Reggia di Venaria, 31 October 2024–2 February 2025; *Blake e la sua epoca*, edited by Alice Insley," *Blake*, vol. 59, no. 1, summer 2025, https://doi.org/10.47761/biq.391.
31. See Calè, "*Blake e la sua epoca*" n4.


BLAKE
e la sua epoca
Viaggi nel tempo del sogno
(particolare) William Blake, Oberon, Titania e Puck con le Fate che danzano, 1786 ca., acquarello e grafite su carta
Tate: Presentato da Alfred A. de Pass in memoria di sua moglie Ethel 1910
Mostra organizzata
in collaborazione con la Tate, UK
Reggia di Venaria
31 Ottobre 2024 — 2 Febbraio 2025
La Venaria Reale
Residenze Reali Sabaude
Reggia di Venaria, part of the Residences of the Royal House of Savoy, World Heritage since 1997
unesco
World Heritage Site
Ministero della Cultura
Regione Piemonte
Città di Venaria Reale
Fondazione Compagnia di San Paolo
Fondazione 1563
Residenze Reali Sabaude Piemonte

Alexander Cozens, *A Shipwreck Fantasy:* Inscrutable
Tate, T08772

François Louis Thomas Francia, *A Shipwreck*
Tate, T08915

Jacob More, *The Deluge*, 1787
Tate, T12758

Samuel Colman, *The Destruction of the Temple*, c. 1830–40
Tate, T01980

Fantastical Creatures

John Hamilton Mortimer, *Caliban?*, 1770s
Tate, T09101

John Hamilton Mortimer, *Caricature Heads*
Tate, T09097

John Hamilton Mortimer, *Fish Devouring Shell Food*
Tate, T09124

John Hamilton Mortimer, *A Sea Monster with Fish*
Tate, T10131

Attributed to Master of the Giants, *Unknown Mythological Subject*
Tate, T01843

John Varley, *Sketch for* Treatise on Zodiacal Physiognomy, 1828
Tate, T07251

Blake, *The Head of the Ghost of a Flea*, c. 1819 (Butlin #692.98)
Tate, N05184

John Linnell, *The Man who Built the Pyramids (after William Blake)*, c. 1825
Tate, N05185

Blake, *The Ghost of a Flea*, c. 1819–20 (Butlin #750)
Tate, N05889

Thomas Rowlandson, *The Judge*
Tate, T08531

Thomas Rowlandson, *Queen Anne's Bounty*
Tate, T09201

Blake, *Illustrations of the Book of Job*, 1823–26, reprinted 1874:
"Behemoth and Leviathan"
Tate, A00026

Susanna Duncombe, *The Ghost Scene from* The Castle of Otranto
Tate, T04244

John Hamilton Mortimer, *Three Skeletons*
Tate, T10127

British School, *Lord William and the Ghost of His Nephew*
Tate, T09855

Nathaniel Dance, *The Ghost of Mrs. Swellenberg's Uncle*
Tate, T08415

Nathaniel Dance, *A Monster Emerging from a Cave*
Tate, T08436

Nathaniel Dance, *A Dog-Headed Monster in a Cave, a Lilliputian Figure Below*
Tate, T08437

Enchantments

Henry Fuseli, *The Shepherd's Dream, from* Paradise Lost, 1793
Tate, T00876

George Romney, *Tom Hayley as Robin Goodfellow*, 1789–92
Tate, N05850

George Romney, *Lady Hamilton as Cassandra*, c. 1785–86
Tate, N01668

Henry Fuseli, *The Debutante*, 1807
Tate, N03396

Henry Fuseli, *Charis Phykomené*, 1791
Tate, T10440

Henry Singleton, *Ariel on a Bat's Back*, exhibited 1819
Tate, N01027

Blake, *Oberon, Titania, and Puck with Fairies Dancing*, c. 1786 (Butlin #161)
Tate, N02686

Blake, Design from *Visions of the Daughters of Albion*, pl. 7 [Bentley; Erdman pl. 4], c. 1795 (Butlin #265)
Tate, N03374

Blake, Design from *The Book of Urizen*, pl. 2, "'Teach these Souls to Fly,'" 1796, c. 1818 (Butlin #261.5)
Tate, N03696

William Young Ottley, *A Flight of Angels*
Tate, T09144

J. M. W. Turner, *A Subject from the Runic Superstitions*, exhibited 1808
Tate, N00464

Theodor von Holst, *The Fairy Lovers*, c. 1840
Tate, T01518

Theodor von Holst, *Fantasy Based on Goethe's* Faust, 1834
Tate, T05747

William Etty, *The Fairy of the Fountain*, 1845
Tate, N04108

Blake, Design from *The Book of Thel*, pl. 7 [Bentley; Erdman pl. 5], "'Doth God take Care of these,'" 1796, c. 1818
Tate, T13000

Blake, Design from *The Book of Urizen*, pl. 19, "'Is the Female death'" / "'Become new Life,'" 1796, c. 1818
Tate, T12998

After Joshua Reynolds, *Puck or Robin Goodfellow*
Tate, N05384

Romanticizing the Past

Benjamin West, *The Bard*, 1778
Tate, T01900

Blake, *The Bard, from Gray*, 1809? (Butlin #655)
Tate, N03551

Blake, *Lear and Cordelia in Prison*, c. 1779 (Butlin #53)
Tate, N05189

Robert Blake, *The Preaching of Warning*, c. 1785? (Butlin #R6 recto)
Tate, A00003

Richard Westall, *A Gaelic Warrior Pointing to a Vision*
Tate, T08653

Nathaniel Dance, *Macbeth Entering the Witches' Cavern*
Tate, T08445

Thomas Girtin, *A Subject from Ossian*
Tate, T08935

J. M. W. Turner, *From Spenser's* Fairie Queene, c. 1807–08
Tate, D08139

William James Müller, *Stonehenge*
Tate, N02385

Samuel Palmer, *Tintagel Castle*, 1848
Tate, T13441

Edward Calvert, "The Bride," 1828
Tate, A00157

Samuel Palmer, *A Hilly Scene*, c. 1826–28
Tate, N05805

The Gothic

Thomas Girtin, *Guisborough Priory, Yorkshire*, 1801
Tate, T00993

Edward Hawke Locker, *Riveaulx Abbey*, 1802
Tate, T08202

Francis Towne, *Netley Abbey*, 1809
Tate, T08194

J. M. W. Turner, *Salisbury: A Gothic Porch in a Garden*, 1798?
Tate, D02350

Alexander Cozens, *The Enchanted Castle*
Tate, T08042

Robert Ker Porter, *An Ancient Castle*, c. 1799–1800
Tate, T08532

John Sell Cotman, *An Ancient Castle*
Tate, T08122

George Cuitt, Jr., *Window in Conway Castle*, 1807
Tate, T08756

Circle of Dr. Thomas Monro, *A Ruin and Trees by a Pool: Moonlight*
Tate, D00856

Blake, *Detailed Drawings for* A Figure Standing in a Gothic Apse, c. 1819 (Butlin #692.22)
Tate, T01335

Blake, *Judas Betrays Him*, c. 1803–05 (Butlin #491)
Tate, T06606

Blake, *The Entombment*, c. 1805 (Butlin #498)
Tate, N05896

Blake, *Bathsheba at the Bath*, c. 1799–1800 (Butlin #390)
Tate, N03007

Satan and the Underworld

Nathaniel Dance, *A Devil with Torch and Spear*
Tate, T08433

Nathaniel Dance, *A Devil with a Spear*
Tate, T08434

Blake, *Satan Smiting Job with Sore Boils*, c. 1826 (Butlin #807)
Tate, N03340

James Barry, "Satan, Sin, and Death," c. 1792–95
Tate, T06578

Blake, *Satan in His Original Glory*, c. 1805 (Butlin #469)
Tate, N05892

John Robert Cozens, *Satan Summoning His Legions*, c. 1776
Tate, T08231

John Robert Cozens, *A Milton Subject, Unfinished*
Tate, T08232

John Charles Denham, *A Haystack Resembling a Devil*
Tate, T10448

George Cumberland, *Inside the Peak Cavern, Castleton, Derbyshire*, c. 1820
Tate, T02304

Blake, *The Spiritual Form of Pitt Guiding Behemoth*, 1805? (Butlin #651)
Tate, N01110

Blake, watercolors for the *Divine Comedy*, 1824–27:
Plutus (Butlin #812.14)
The Primaeval Giants Sunk in the Soil (Butlin #812.60)
The Wood of the Self-Murderers: The Harpies and the Suicides (Butlin #812.24)
The Devils, with Dante and Virgil by the Side of the Pool (Butlin #812.40)
The Inscription over the Gate (Butlin #812.4)
Tate, N03355, N03363, N03356, N03358, N03352

John St. John Long, *The Temptation in the Wilderness*, 1824
Tate, T04169

Theodor von Holst, *Charon*, c. 1837
Tate, T15482

J. M. W. Turner, *The Cave of Despair*, c. 1835
Tate, N05522

Formerly attributed to John Martin, *The Fallen Angels Entering Pandemonium, from* Paradise Lost *Book 1*, exhibited 1841?
Tate, N05435

Blake, Design from *The Book of Urizen*, pl. 11, "'Every thing is an attempt'" / "'To be Human,'" 1796, c. 1818
Tate, T13003

Blake, Engravings for the *Divine Comedy*, 1826–27, reprinted 1892:
"Ciampolo the Barrator Tormented by the Devils"
"The Six-Footed Serpent Attacking Agnolo Brunelleschi"
"The Pit of Disease: The Falsifiers"
"The Serpent Attacking Buoso Donati"
"The Baffled Devils Fighting"
Tate, A00006, A00008, A00010, A00009, A00007

Blake, *Illustrations of the Book of Job*, 1823–26, reprinted 1874:
"The Fall of Satan"
Tate, A00027

David Scott, "The By-Way to Hell"
Tate, N02405

Edward Dayes, *The Fall of the Rebel Angels*, 1798
Tate, T05210

Consorzio delle Residenze Reali Sabaude/Fotografo Andrea Guermani.

A R T I C L E

Blake's Lawgiver, Newton's System, Reynolds's Justice

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1 THE figure of the Lawgiver plays a significant role in William Blake's carnivalesque early text, now known to scholarship as *An Island in the Moon*. Offered here are documentary and iconographic materials principally drawn from metropolitan sources of the 1780s that bear both on the identity of this character and, at more length, on the contemporary meanings of the epithet Blake chose: "Steelyard the Lawgiver." The initial section of this note presents some biographical information that might help reinforce what is now the common identification with John Flaxman, an artist then Blake's close friend and benevolent supporter, resident in Soho on Wardour Street near the Broad Street house Blake occupied in 1784–85. Following the influential proposal of David Erdman, circumstantial textual and iconographic evidence has often been used to bolster the decoding of Steelyard as Flaxman: the character's citations of currently modish texts of literature and philosophy; his errant study of works such as Edward Young's *Night Thoughts*; the songs he offers to the company; the "merry meeting" at Steelyard's own house in chapter 11. Something has been made, too, of the juxtaposition of the scenes from Joseph Addison's *Cato*, evoked in chapter 8 of *Island*, with Flaxman's 1779 self-portrait at his table, furnished with a pile of books and a human skull. Considerations are also offered here that tell against at least one alternative reading, which sees instead the character Inflammable Gass as a representation of Flaxman.[1]

2 However, it is certainly not to be assumed that each of the figures in Blake's satire corresponds exactly to a single encrypted, if playfully transfigured, individual. Some commentators have urged that the cast of *Island* should not best be seen as detailed portraits of particular members of Blake's coterie, but rather as subversive and playful conceits through which complex ethical and material roles could be explored. On this showing, the text is to be read as a precociously sophisticated satire, its ingenious plot development inhabited by composite moralized figures.[2] So the balance of this discussion reflects on the somewhat more telling issue of the symbolic meanings of the steelyard in 1780s London. The links between this literally and figuratively ambiguous device and law and lawgiving could have possessed an important set of contemporary connotations for Blake and his circle. Of special interest is the display of the steelyard as an emblem linked immediately to two of Blake's principal imaginative interlocutors and opponents, the supreme natural philosopher Isaac Newton and the dominant academician Joshua Reynolds.[3] These figurations of the device might not bear so directly on the identification of Steelyard as a specific individual, yet they do add to the significance to be attributed to Blake's use of the term in the aesthetic, religious, and political contexts of the period. That issue of the steelyard's resonances and its links with law occupies the latter and somewhat more substantial section here.

3 Consider first the key term "lawgiver." Erdman reckons that the artist and statuary Flaxman might well be seen as a lawgiver, concerned at one point with his "parish business," because, as the engraver and memoirist John Thomas Smith briefly recalls, Flaxman's fellow parishioners of St. Anne's, Soho, had elected him collector of the watch rate, the local contributory charge for street watchmen. In that Westminster parish, unusually, all ratepayers, male and female, were entitled to vote in an open vestry poll for parochial officers. The cost of the team of watchmen who patrolled the streets every night dressed in white coats and caps was substantial, prompting a new public subscription in 1791 to meet the charges. Eminent local residents, including Reynolds nearby at Leicester Square, were among these contributors.[4]

4 Like much of the material with which Blake experimented in *Island*, details of the political and social networks of 1780s London in the fraught conjuncture of postwar reform and urban crisis informed and may be illuminated by these jokey references. The role of the parish watchman was a focus of considerable legislative concern in this period. During the fiercely contested Westminster election of spring 1784, the opposition leader Charles James Fox was portrayed in graphic print as a parish watchman resistant

1. Erdman, *Prophet* 109-13; Blake, *Island*, edited by Phillips, 10, 80; Castanedo 261-63. See Blake, *Island*, edited by Phillips, 40-41 (ch. 8, line 1) and E 456.

2. Campbell; Rawlinson 104-07.

3. For London's geography and Newton and Reynolds as Blake's "great mental antagonists," see Michael 29.

4. Smith 2: 436-37; Rimbault 202-07.

to the regime's tyrannies. The following year, the government sought unsuccessfully to pass an act to overhaul metropolitan policing and centralize its surveillance, against which London lobbyists protested as an infringement of their freedoms. Blake himself would later turn in considerable force to such issues of metropolitan order, Satan's "Watch Fiends," and their relation to legal authority. Steelyard's opening line in *Island*—"It was a shameful thing that acts of parliament should be in a free state"—reflects on the relation between law and liberty.[5]

5 On the assumption that Steelyard the Lawgiver corresponds to a single known individual, and if the identification with Flaxman be accepted, there is a little more biographical evidence available to prompt connections between his affairs and those of the system of the law. In the 1784 Westminster election he voted for the government candidates, against Fox. In the election six years later, by contrast, Blake backed Fox. Erdman has noted how many radical artists, such as George Cumberland and James Barry, addressed their dedications to Fox and his cause. Flaxman did not. Named a "good and lawful man," an established Westminster resident of standing, Flaxman served on a coroner's inquest into a death by fire in St. Anne's parish in January 1784 and as a member of the Middlesex jury at the Old Bailey in December 1782 and again in January 1785, when he sat in no fewer than fifteen cases. Some of these details might have become a common reference about legal affairs in Blake's circle, especially in a milieu much concerned with the powers and authority of law in art, polity, and creation.[6]

6 A few scholars have, however, queried the identification of the Lawgiver with Flaxman.[7] In a study of Blake's intellectual milieux, Keri Davies denies that a parish rate collector could properly be labeled a lawgiver, and asserts instead that Flaxman is represented in *Island* under the figure of the antiquarian Etruscan Column, not least because of the sculptor's work for the preeminent merchant of so-called Etruscan designs, Josiah Wedgwood, whose London home and showroom were round the corner in Greek Street. It was Flaxman, too, who in 1784 convinced Wedgwood to launch his scheme to copy the celebrated Portland vase, and in the same year sought to aid Blake in winning a commission for allegorical ceiling paintings of "Etruscan" design for Wedgwood's Etruria Hall.[8] It has been pointed out that the reevaluation of the provenance of these antiquities informed the extensive burlesques of antiquarianism and patrician taste in *Island*.[9]

7 Even the fact that Flaxman held such a post as parish watch-rate collector has not always been accepted. G. E. Bentley, Jr., cited a passage from Flaxman's sister-in-law Maria Denman, who in 1835 annotated Allan Cunningham's *Lives of the Most Eminent British Painters, Sculptors, and Architects* with the cautionary note that "he scrupulously avoided all parish business throughout his life."[10] Bentley did later locate archival evidence in the Westminster rate books that Flaxman was indeed made collector of the watch rate for the King Square (Soho Square) division of the parish in May 1782. But this simply prompted Bentley to conjecture that Flaxman appears in *Island* under quite a different guise, Inflammable Gass the Windfinder, since this character, portrayed as natural philosopher and chaotic showman, has "a place of profit that forces [him] to go to church."[11]

8 These ingenious views can be countered. The claim that Inflammable Gass the Windfinder not be identified as Flaxman, but rather be matched with the chemist and entrepreneur William Nicholson, has attracted some scholarly attention. Wedgwood's business representative from 1777, Nicholson spent the years from 1782 at Warwick Street in Soho and then nearby on Oxford Street. It is known that Blake engraved the vignette for his successful natural philosophy textbook in 1782.[12] In late 1783 Nicholson became secretary of a Coffee House Philosophical Society based near St. Paul's, and subsequently on Chancery Lane, a group of chemists, natural philosophers, medics, and manufacturers, the records of whose discussions on current chemistry, electricity, steam engineering, and commerce he conscientiously kept. Furthermore, in 1785 he briefly gained profitable employment as secretary to Wedgwood's commercial lobby group, the General Chamber of Manufacturers of Great Britain. The minute books of the Philosophical Society and the biography composed by Nichol-

5. Beattie 154-59; Michael 31; Elliott 551, 556; E 451.

6. Westminster Pollbooks, 1784, www.londonlives.org/browse.jsp?div=pollbook_265-26593&terms=Flaxman#highlight; Coroners' Inquests into Suspicious Deaths, 1784, www.londonlives.org/browse.jsp?id=WACWIC65224_n20-3&div=WACWIC65224IC652240007#highlight; Proceedings of the Old Bailey, 4 Dec. 1782, www.oldbaileyonline.org/record/f17821204-1?text=flaxman; Proceedings of the Old Bailey, 12 Jan. 1785, www.oldbaileyonline.org/record/f17850112-1?text=flaxman. For dedications to Fox, see Erdman, *Prophet* 162n40.

7. Blackstone, for example, reckons that Steelyard must be the "humourless" radical philosopher William Godwin (23-24).

8. Davies 231; Irwin 22-23; Uglow 328; Bentley, *Stranger* 86.

9. Brylowe 96-97.

10. Peter Cunningham 60; Bentley, "Blake's Engravings" 162n5.

11. Bentley, *Stranger* 82 un. See Blake, *Island*, edited by Phillips, 35 (ch. 4, line 10) and E 452.

12. Baine and Baine; Heppner. Heppner (196) cites the three rules of philosophizing that Nicholson prefaces to his *Introduction to Natural Philosophy* (1: 6), comparing them with the principles that Blake denies in *There Is No Natural Religion*. Nicholson's rules are in fact copied directly from the first three rules of reasoning at the start of book 3 of Newton's *Principia* (794-95).

son's son, both now published, confirm his interests in just the range of topics satirically associated with the activities of Inflammable Gass: pneumatic and chemical phenomena, optical and thermal experiments, and, in December 1784, complex theories about the cause and directions of the winds. It may also be telling that just as in the opening chapter of *Island*, immediately before Steelyard's appearance, Inflammable Gass defends Voltaire, who "found out a number of Queries in Philosophy" and "was the Glory of France," so it is possible that Nicholson translated Voltaire's writings on Newton at the suggestion of the radical bookseller Joseph Johnson.[13]

9 The concern here is rather less in matching exotic names to defined persons. Yet, Blake's choice of epithets throughout *Island* must be taken as deliberate and pointed. The scatological opportunities offered by the nickname Inflammable Gass were evidently plentiful. In his close reading of Blake's satirical text, Nick Rawlinson claims that "inflammable air" was a "common comic term."[14] This is so, but the different term "inflammable *gas*" was itself at that moment very new indeed. Contemporary chemists, including Nicholson, typically wrote of "airs." The chemical expression "gas" as reference to some of these airs, taken over in translation from French pneumatics, first appeared only during the later 1770s, and "inflammable gas" was then almost always used in the press solely for the artificial air (our hydrogen gas) with which from 1783 first the French, then the British, filled their aerostatic balloons.[15] It has often been remarked how signally the contemporary fashionable balloon craze is registered in *Island*.[16]

10 Reflection on the hardware and practices of natural philosophy in London in the period of *Island* also decisively aids interpretation of the comparably significant term "Steelyard," where resonances might seem at first less clear. Commentators have hazarded that Blake's term might suggest "not only strength but harshness and inflexibility"; or else that the name embodies the oxymoronic juxtaposition of law and theft.[17] In fact, expositions of Newtonian mechanics in successive eighteenth-century textbooks in metropolitan natural philosophy, certainly including that of Nicholson, give details of how steelyards worked and the principles that they were supposed to embody. Chemists also often used these instruments in their cabinets and laboratories.[18]

11 The design and use of steelyards arose from very ancient devices in both eastern Asia and the Mediterranean, of significantly broad and ambiguous functions. In the imperial Roman *statera*, the direct precedent for the more recent steelyard, the principle of the familiar two-armed balance was reversed, keeping the instrument's axis fixed and making the arms unequal. The object to be assayed was hung from the shorter beam. A standard counterweight was then moved along the graduated longer beam until balance was struck. The known and unknown were somehow brought into equilibrium by reading a scale. Thus, instead of the need to provide a set of standardized weights, as in one use of the common balance, here it was necessary to calibrate the instrument itself. Steelyards' reliability demanded extensive legally imposed collective regulation of their production and use. Whereas the common balance might indeed be taken to symbolize itself, a device representing equality of judgment through an instrument of decision, the uncertain inequalities on which the steelyard relied tended to complicate or even frustrate its symbolic use.[19]

12 Steelyards were notable because they deliberately relied on the indispensable agency of the human performing the act of weighing. This stress on ingenious deliberation seems to have been their symbolic sense throughout their history, during which equal-arm balances were, in contrast, often taken to embody the more inhuman and mechanical act of judgment.[20] Furthermore, steelyards of different designs were used in eighteenth-century Europe both for bulk commodities, such as grain or coal, and for the most exquisite judgments, such as coins or jewels. They belonged both to markets and to cabinets. Devices startlingly capable of correcting and of fomenting deceit, these tools were thus objects of major concern for commercial regulators.

13 When their accuracy was doubted, steelyards were subject to public trial in the marketplace, their values witnessed and testified. Newspaper readers were assured that the very best means to check the true metal value of a coin, often altered by clipping and forgery in the Georgian monetary system, was to use a steelyard.[21] In exact contrast, Ipswich surveyors declared that customers "who buy goods weighed by steel-

13. Levere and Turner 87; Nicholson, Jr., 45; Nicholson 2: 63-71. Many thanks to Sue Durrell for her expert help on this topic.
14. Rawlinson 107.
15. Robbins; Levere and Turner 92. The earliest use of the term "inflammable gas" in the press seems to be the reprint of Antoine Deparcieux's letter on balloon ascents in the *Morning Herald*, 17 Sept. 1783, 3. Compare the *Morning Herald*, 23 Feb. 1784, 1, on the display of Montgolfier's balloon at the Lyceum on the Strand: "This brilliant and most magnificent spectacle … contains about 2000 gallons of inflammable gas, … and the whole exhibits the appearance of a huge world, invisibly suspended by Omnipotence.…"
16. England 452-53; Blake, *Island*, edited by Phillips, 14.
17. Webster 18-19; Rawlinson 133.
18. Whiston 2; Desaguliers 1: 92; Nicholson 1: 55; Beretta and Brenni 194-95.
19. Kisch 77; Büttner and Renn 767-70; Biagoli 301.
20. Leone 49-51; Vankeerberghen.
21. *Ipswich Journal*, 11 Aug. 1764, 4; *Kentish Gazette*, 13 Sept. 1774, 4.

yards may blame themselves" if they have been cheated, "that manner of weighing goods being not warranted by law," while in 1779 Birmingham bailiffs scoured the city confiscating steelyards, "they being an unlawful weight by which many frauds are committed."[22] Ambiguous in use and in design, steelyards were also highly valued objects of judgment and connoisseurship. Soon after the young monarch's accession, the eminent Fleet Street instrument maker George Adams provided George III with a well-made replica of a Roman steelyard for the royal apparatus collections (see illus. 1).

14 In 1782 the fashionable Hanover Square mechanic and designer John Joseph Merlin supplied a fine steelyard to Samuel Johnson to be used as a coin balance. Thomas Gainsborough's portrait of Merlin, exhibited at the Royal Academy the same year, shows the elegantly dressed instrument maker with the steelyard in his hands. Horace Walpole collected a Chinese steelyard for his Strawberry Hill cabinets, as documented in his published inventory of the house. The cunning merchants' device had become a commodity of polite taste.[23]

15 During the 1780s Blake would have known of at least two important symbolic uses of the steelyard on show in London, one eloquently associated with Newton and the other with Reynolds. Both figures are named in *Island*. Newton appears in the song of the "mathematician" Obtuse Angle in the ninth chapter, where he is wittily associated with other protagonists of philosophical and theological controversy in the epoch of the Glorious Revolution and its aftermath.[24] The president of the Royal Academy is briefly mentioned in the satire's seventh chapter—Blake's earliest reference to Reynolds—through Reynolds's peremptory advice to artistic tyros, in a passage inserted just before Steelyard's appearance "at his table." In Blake's cosmology

22. *Ipswich Journal*, 23 Jan. 1768, 2; *Aris's Birmingham Gazette*, 15 Feb. 1779, 3, and 11 Oct. 1779, 3.

23. Adams pl. 9, fig. 42; Walpole 107; French et al. 43, 71-72.

24. Blake, *Island*, edited by Phillips, 51 (ch. 9, line 108) and E 460; Rawlinson 146-47.

1. Steelyard at court. Model of a Roman *statera*: a steelyard made for George III by George Adams in 1762. Science Museum, London, object number 1927-1205. Image © The Board of Trustees of the Science Museum.

Newton and Reynolds were unusually singled out as figures of tyrannic power. These were two of the most important protagonists of forms of lawgivers' rule against which he would rebel, a system of power inimical to antinomian principles. Blake ultimately reckoned the sources of the aesthetic program espoused by Reynolds sprang from Newton's philosophy.[25] In both the specific cases of the steelyard's symbolism described below, the monumental designs associated with Newton and with Reynolds, the figure of this instrument was authoritatively imposed as part of a commemoration of reason's virtues within a preexisting gothic structure—Westminster Abbey and an Oxford college chapel, respectively.

16 On Newton's death in 1727, his nephew and successor as head of the Royal Mint, John Conduitt, began preparing plans for a suitable memorial for a man he judged a saint worthy of canonization. Newton had in fact immodestly made erection of the memorial a condition of Conduitt's inheritance. The great man's heir corresponded with the Augustan arbiter of taste, Alexander Pope, about the choice of an epitaph, and convinced the authorities to erect a massive monument visible to all in Westminster Abbey, to be set in the choir screen then under reconstruction by the architect Nicholas Hawksmoor. Conduitt sketched the outlines of a complex allegorical structure, ornamented below with a dramatic bas-relief displaying a series of putti employing a range of instruments to evoke Newton's achievements in optics, chemistry, astronomy, and the minting of coin. "In the Mainground," Conduitt proposed be set "a boy weighing in a stillyard … the sun against all the other planets" (see illus. 2).[26]

17 It had become common in the decorative imagery of natural philosophical and mathematical works to represent such cherubic figures at play with the hardware of experiment and calculation. Part of the point was to link natural

25. Blake, *Island*, edited by Phillips, 40 (ch. 7, line 10) and E 456. For Blake on Newton and Reynolds, see E 660; Postle, "'Sir Joshua and His Gang'" 113, 119; Thompson 113-14.

26. Conduitt; Haskell 2-3; Keynes 97.

2. Steelyard and the Newtonian system. Relief on the monument to Isaac Newton, Westminster Abbey. From right to left, putti manipulate a chemical furnace, molds for coins, an optical prism, a steelyard balancing the Sun against the planets, and a Newtonian reflecting telescope. Designed by John Conduitt 1727–28, carved by John Michael Rysbrack 1730–31. By kind permission of the dean and chapter of Westminster.

philosophy with domestic familiarity; part, more directly, was to draw attention to the equipment rather than the personnel of practical and experimental forms of knowledge. In 1711, for example, the crucial publication of a selection of Newton's writings on analysis was ornamented with images of putti at work on geometrical construction and a range of architectural and practical trades linked to Newton's own program.[27] In the case of the abbey monument, the reference of this specific use by the putto of the steelyard as balance between the Sun and its system was to the decisive proposition 8 of the third book of Newton's *Principia Mathematica*, on the infinite extent of the inverse square law of gravitation. This is the passage where Newton most powerfully seeks to demonstrate that his laws of weight and gravity govern all matter in the universe. In a remarkable corollary, he sets out to show that (as he puts it in the first edition of his work) "God placed the planets at different distances from the Sun so that each one might, according to the degree of its density, enjoy a greater or lesser amount of heat from the Sun." This is, significantly, the sole passage in the first edition of *Principia* that mentions God.[28]

18 The brief for monument and relief, which were funded by Conduitt himself, was given to the architect William Kent, then also occupied with the construction for the queen at Richmond of a gallery of worthies, including Newton. Association with the prince of philosophers was a commonplace in the commemorative and aggressive Georgian state. The abbey project was completed by the leading sculptor Michael Rysbrack. Kent's initial sketch for the memorial included the layout of the relief with the steelyard at its center, and while Rysbrack then altered some details of this scheme, he preserved this figure in pride of place beneath the reclining figure of Newton himself.[29] Unveiled in 1731, the Newton monument drew admiring comments from the London press: "Another boy is weighing the Sun and Planets with a Stilliard, the Sun being near the centre on one side, and the Planets on the other, alluding to a celebrated proposition in his *Principia*."[30]

19 The Newtonian relief, including its representation of steelyard and other apparatus, was likely copied at once for Conduitt's own residence, shown there above the fireplace and beneath Newton's bust in William Hogarth's celebrated 1732 conversation piece, a representation of a theatrical performance for visiting royalty at Conduitt's house. A further plaster copy of the relief survives above one of the doors of the fine Georgian entrance hall at Saltram House in Devon, where it was installed by the Parker family, close allies of Reynolds, as an emblem of the elementary powers of air. Indeed, the iconography was distributed well into the century. In 1792, as part of his vast Hogarth project to which he also recruited Blake, the London publisher and businessman John Boydell arranged the reproduction of the Conduitt family painting, with its image of putti at play with a steelyard.[31]

20 Guidebooks and prints kept these details of the Newtonian apotheosis in public view. A 1761 guide to the abbey, much plagiarized in subsequent decades, recorded that "the device of weighing the Sun by the Steelyard has been thought at once bold and striking."[32] Between 1774 and 1778, Blake worked in the abbey as apprentice to James Basire on the preparation of images for Richard Gough's *Sepulchral Monuments* of the tombs in Edward the Confessor's chapel, with scaffolding put up in the space behind the altar so as to complete his drawings. Blake's way to his strenuous work passed the choir screen and its spectacular monument to Newton. There was a telling contrast between the gothic tombs that preoccupied the young apprentice and the classical idiom of that sepulchre erected in honor of the master of astronomical law.[33]

21 An even more direct link between figures of steelyard and lawgiver was evident in the work of Reynolds from exactly the same period. In summer 1777 New College, Oxford commissioned the successful glass painter Thomas Jervais to produce a new set of windows for its chapel. The designs were assigned to Reynolds, who by early 1778 had set out a scheme with the figures of Faith, Hope, and Charity and the four cardinal virtues laid out across the west window's lower divisions as "a proper rustic base of foundation for the support of the Christian religion." Just as in the monumental schemes at Westminster Abbey that involved considerable changes to the medieval structure, so in the New College project the scheme demanded the removal of much of the gothic tracery from the window and its replacement with modern painted glass. By October that year Reynolds had begun to compose the original figures of the virtues, Justice among them.[34]

22 It has often been remarked that Reynolds's image of Justice for New College was startling and original, a dramatic break with the canonical form set out in such handbooks as Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia*, a new version of which appeared with Reynolds as subscriber in 1779. Reynolds's Justice is,

27. Heilbron; Bellhouse 104-08.
28. Newton 219, 814; Whiteside 131.
29. Bryant 12-23.
30. *Grub-Street Journal* no. 68, 22 Apr. 1731, copied in *Gentleman's Magazine* 1, Apr. 1731, 159.
31. Craske; Asfour.
32. Henry 180, copied in Thornton 114, which is cited in Rawlinson 119.
33. Crosby; Brylowe 92.
34. Postle, *Sir Joshua Reynolds* 168-73.

3. Steelyard and the law. Figure of Justice for the west window of the chapel of New College, Oxford. Stipple engraving by Georg Siegmund Facius and Johann Facius after Josiah Boydell after Joshua Reynolds, June 1782. Credit: Artokoloro/SuperStock.

for example, not blindfolded, a marked departure from the emblem tradition that blinded Justice to represent impartiality. Much attention has been directed to his decision to show her instead as shading her eyes, a gesture matching that in which he portrayed himself in his remarkable self-portrait painted three decades earlier, and plausibly to be interpreted as a sign of vision's judgmental discrimination.[35]

23 It has also been noted that Reynolds decided to replace the conventional pair of balance scales in the figure's hand with a steelyard, the design of which closely matches that of the model Roman *statera* made by Adams for the monarch (see illus. 3). In the discourse Reynolds delivered to the Royal Academy students in December 1778, a text Blake would later annotate with fury, the president insists that "an artist is obliged for ever to hold a balance in his hand by which he must determine the value of different qualities."[36] Reynolds completed the depiction of Justice in 1779 and it was rapidly transferred to glass, along with images of the other virtues. In April 1780, Jervais opened an exhibition of his stained glass at the celebrated showroom in Cockspur Street run by the entrepreneurial clockmaker and engineer Christopher Pinchbeck, where floors were stocked with novel machines, curios, and instruments. Alongside "an extensive variety of agreeable subjects," featuring the effects of light and fire in dark galleries illuminated by concealed lamps, Reynolds's figures of Justice and Prudence, now transferred to glass, went on show "large as life." Journalists commented that these figures "go far beyond any thing ever attempted before by any artist whatever, far surpassing even the old glass painting in our Gothick cathedrals."[37]

35. Resnik and Curtis 98; Manderson and Martinez 250-52.

36. Reynolds 278.

37. *Morning Post*, 12 Apr. 1780, 1; *Morning Chronicle*, 1 June 1780, 2. For Pinchbeck's repository, see Pérez 31.

24 Immediately afterwards, on 1 May 1780, the annual exhibition at Reynolds's own Royal Academy in the newly rebuilt Somerset House also hosted his original painting of Justice as part of the display. The work attracted considerable comment in the metropolitan press. Some were admiring: "This is a most beautiful figure, elegantly composed, and finely described." More were hostile, and it is significant that the strange choice of steelyard seemed to attract particular attention. Even Reynolds's erstwhile supporters reckoned that the depiction of such an instrument as an attribute of Justice revealed "the taste of a Petit-Maître." His critics were harsher, claiming that the image "is emblematically repugnant to the antients' ideas of Justice, all of whom represent her holding scales equally poized; but Sir Joshua has, in violation of this, decked her hands with a pair of stilliards, in imitation no doubt of the wife of a Clare-market butcher weighing out a leg of mutton to her dainty customer!" Clare Market, just across the Strand from the Royal Academy, housed a major meat market, its surroundings unambiguously associated with plebeian commerce. The marks of class and judgment in Reynolds's image, in what might well be taken to be a lawgiver with her steelyard, were seemingly unmistakable.[38]

25 The glass painting of Justice was installed in its place in the New College chapel during August 1780. Reynolds's figure stayed in public notice: in June 1782, the German emigré engravers Georg and Johann Facius completed a fine published version on the basis of a drawing by Josiah Boydell. The print was then distributed by Josiah's uncle John Boydell as part of a 1785 collection of Reynolds's images for the west window of the chapel.[39] Observers commented on the apparent contradiction between the "Gothic taste" of the ancient chapel and what they judged the "half-dress'd languishing harlots" that Reynolds and Jervais had introduced into the building. Guidebooks to the city's monuments expressed what had become a characteristically ambivalent view: in the chapel visitors could see the figure of Justice holding "in her left hand the Steelyard, a kind of balance less cumbrous, if not less vulgar, than the scales which are usually given her."[40]

26 The steelyard carried by Reynolds's Justice evidently became a public topic of debate and wit, attending to its commercial and its moral value. Blake and his closest colleagues were part of the milieux in which these values were at stake. The link between justice and the steelyard could easily become a standing joke. Blake joined the Royal Academy schools in October 1779, and his first exhibit, *Death of Earl Goodwin*, was shown the following year, where it appeared in the very same display as Reynolds's figure. Also in the 1780 exhibition was Flaxman's extraordinary sketch for a gothicized monument to Thomas Chatterton, a work then judged as "of infinite merit."[41] The controversy about the authenticity of Chatterton's Rowley poems, which preoccupied the public press in the 1777–80 period, corresponded with Flaxman's production of this commemorative scheme, shown in the same rooms as Reynolds's painting of Justice with her steelyard. The Chatterton debate makes a crucial appearance in Blake's satire, and important connections have been detected between the respective visions of Blake and Flaxman of the death of the Bristol poet and its spiritual sense.[42]

27 As the text of *An Island in the Moon* begins to reveal, Blake's own sense of place at the academy was at least complex, and his hostility to Reynolds's judgment increasingly intense and unforgiving. Blake stopped display at the academy's exhibition from 1785 for fourteen years. This conjuncture has been described as a "creative moratorium," for which *Island* might be read as an experimental and jocular exploration.[43] The figure of the steelyard, with accompanying meanings linking monumental virtue and active judgment, played its role in this set of associations. Not the least of Blake's virtues was his precocious skill at balancing law and laughter.

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